

II

NOVEMBER, 1851

(ÆT. 34)

Nov. 1. Saturday. R. W. E. says that Channing calls []¹ "seven feet of sandstone with a spoonful of wit."

It is a rare qualification to be able to state a fact simply and adequately, to digest some experience cleanly, to say "yes" and "no" with authority, to make a square edge, to conceive and suffer the truth to pass through us living and intact, even as a waterfowl an eel, as it flies over the meadows, thus stocking new waters. First of all a man must see, before he can say. Statements are made but partially. Things are said with reference to certain conventions or existing institutions, not absolutely. A fact truly and absolutely stated is taken out of the region of common sense and acquires a mythologic or universal significance. Say it and have done with it. Express it without expressing yourself. See not with the eye of science, which is barren, nor of youthful poetry, which is impotent. But taste the world and digest it. It would seem as if things got said but rarely and by chance. As you *see*, so at length will you *say*. When facts are seen superficially, they are seen as they lie in relation to certain institutions, perchance. But I would have them expressed as more deeply seen, with deeper

¹ [Name scratched out.]

references; so that the hearer or reader cannot recognize them or apprehend their significance from the platform of common life, but it will be necessary that he be in a sense translated in order to understand them; when the truth respecting his things shall naturally exhale from a man like the odor of the muskrat from the coat of the trapper. At first blush a man is not capable of reporting truth; he must be drenched and saturated with it first. What was *enthusiasm* in the young man must become *temperament* in the mature man. Without excitement, heat, or passion, he will survey the world which excited the youth and threw him off his balance. As all things are significant, so all words should be significant. It is a fault which attaches to the speaker, to speak flipantly or superficially of anything. Of what use are words which do not move the hearer, — are not oracular and fateful? A style in which the matter is all in all, and the manner nothing at all.

In your thoughts no more than in your walks do you meet men. In moods I find such privacy as in dismal swamps and on mountain-tops.

Man recognizes laws little enforced, and he condescends to obey them. In the moment that he feels his superiority to them as compulsory, he, as it were, courteously reënacts them but to obey them.

This on my way to Conantum, 2.30 P. M. It is a bright, clear, warm November day. I feel blessed. I love my life. I warm toward all nature. The woods are now much more open than when I last observed them; the leaves have fallen, and they let in light, and I see the sky through them as through a crow's wing in every direction. For

the most part only the pines and oaks (white?) retain their leaves. At a distance, accordingly, the forest is green and reddish. The crickets now sound faintly and from very deep in the sod.

Minott says that G. M. Barrett told him that Amos Baker told him that during Concord Fight he went over behind the hill to the old Whittaker place (Sam Buttrick's) and stayed. Yet he was described as the only survivor of Concord Fight. Received a pension for running away?

Fall dandelions look bright still. The grass has got a new greenness in spots. At this season there are stranger sparrows or finches about. The skunk-cabbage is already pushing up again. The alders have lost their leaves, and the willows except a few shrivelled ones.

It is a remarkable day for fine gossamer cobwebs. Here in the causeway, as I walk toward the sun, I perceive that the air is full of them streaming from off the willows and spanning the road, all stretching across the road, and yet I cannot see them in any other direction, and feel not one. It looks as if the birds would be incommoded. They have the effect of a shimmer in the air. This shimmer, moving along them as they are waved by the wind, gives the effect of a drifting storm of light. It is more like a fine snow-storm which drifts athwart your path than anything else. What is the peculiar condition of the atmosphere, to call forth this activity? If there were no sunshine, I should never find out that they existed, I should not know that I was bursting a myriad barriers. Though you break them

with your person, you feel not one. Why should this day be so distinguished?

The rain of night before last has raised the river at least two feet, and the meadows wear a late-fall look. The naked and weedy stems of the button-bush are suddenly submerged; you no longer look for pickerel from the bridges. The shallow and shrunken shore is also submerged. I see so far and distinctly, my eyes seem to slide in this clear air. The river is peculiarly sky-blue to-day, not dark as usual. It is all in the air. The cinquefoil on Conantum. Counted one hundred and twenty-five crows in one straggling flock moving westward. The red shrub oak leaves abide on the hills. The witch-hazels have mostly lost their blossoms, perhaps on account of the snow. The ground wears its red carpet under the pines. The pitch pines show new buds at the end of their plumes. How long this?

Saw a canoe birch by road beyond the Abel Minott house; distinguished it thirty rods off by the chalky whiteness of its limbs. It is of a more unspotted, transparent, and perhaps pinkish white than the common, has considerable branches as well as white ones, and its branches do not droop and curl downward like that. There will be some loose curls of bark about it. The common birch is *finely* branched and has frequently a *snarly* head; the former is a more open and free-growing tree. If at a distance you see the birch near its top forking into two or more white limbs, you may know it for a canoe birch. You can tell where it has grown after the wood has turned to mould by a small fragment of its bark still left, — if it divides readily. The common

birch is more covered with moss, has the aspect of having grown more slowly, and has many more branches. I have heard of a man in Maine who copied the whole Bible on to birch bark. It was so much easier than to write that sentence which the birch tree stands for.

Nov. 2. Sunday. The muskrat-houses are mostly covered by the rise of the river! — not a very unexpected one either. Old wells as well as walls must be among the oldest monuments of civilized man here. How old may be the most ancient well which men use to-day. Saw a canoe birch beyond Nawshawtuct, growing out of the middle of a white pine stump, which still showed the mark of the axe, sixteen inches in diameter at its bottom, or two feet from the ground, or where it had first taken root on the stump.

Nov. 4. To Saw Mill Brook by Turnpike; return by Walden.

I see why the checkerberry was so called, — *Mitchella repens* (we call it falsely partridge-berry), — for its leaves, variegated, *checker* the ground, now mingled with red berries and partially covered with the fallen leaves of the forest.

Saw Mill Brook is peculiar among our brooks as a mountain brook. For a short distance it reminds me of runs I have seen in New Hampshire. A brawling little stream tumbling through a rocky wood, ever down and down. Where the wood has been cleared, it is almost covered with the rubbish which the woodchoppers have left, the fine tree-tops, which no one cared to make into

fagots. It was quite a discovery when I first came upon this brawling mountain stream in Concord woods. Rising out of an obscure meadow in the woods, for some fifty or sixty rods of its course it is a brawling mountain stream in our quiet Concord woods, as much obstructed by rocks — rocks out of all proportion to its tiny stream — as a brook can well be. And the rocks are bared throughout the wood on either side, as if a torrent had anciently swept through here; so unlike the after character of the stream. Who would have thought that, on tracing it up from where it empties into the larger Mill Brook in the open peat meadows, it would conduct him to such a headlong and impetuous youth. Perchance it should be called a “force.”¹ It suggests what various moods may attach to the same character. Ah, if I but knew that some minds which flow so muddily in the low-land portion of their course, when they cross the high-ways, tumbled thus impetuously and musically, mixed themselves with the air in foam, but a little way back in the woods! that these dark and muddy pools, where only the pout and the leech are to be found, issued from pure trout streams higher up! that the man’s thoughts ever flowed as sparkling mountain water, that trout there loved to glance through his dimples, where the witch-hazel hangs over his stream!

This stream is here sometimes quite lost amid the rocks, which appear as if they had been arched over it, but which, in fact, it has undermined and found its way beneath, and they have merely fallen together archwise, as they were undermined.

¹ No, a force is a fall.

It is truly a raw and gusty day, and I hear a tree creak sharply like a bird, a phœbe. The hypericums stand red or lake over the brook. The jays with their scream are at home in the scenery. I see where trees have spread themselves over the rocks in a scanty covering of soil, been undermined by the brook, then blown over and, as they fell, lifted and carried over with them all the soil, together with considerable rocks. So from time to time, by these natural levers, rocks are removed from the middle of the stream to the shore. The slender chestnuts, maples, elms, and white ash trees, which last are uncommonly numerous here, are now all bare of leaves, and a few small hemlocks, with their now thin but unmixed and fresh green foliage, stand over and cheer the stream and remind me of winter, the snows which are to come and drape them and contrast with their green, and the chickadees that are to flit and lisp amid them.

Ah, the beautiful tree, the hemlock, with its green canopy, under which little grows, not exciting the cupidity of the carpenter, whose use most men have not discovered! I know of some memorable ones worth walking many miles to see. These little cheerful hemlocks, — the lisp of chickadees seems to come from them now, — each standing with its foot on the very edge of the stream, reaching sometimes part way over its channel, and here and there one has lightly stepped across. These evergreens are plainly as much for shelter for the birds as for anything else. The fallen leaves are so thick they almost fill the bed of the stream and choke it. I hear the runnel gurgling underground. As if this puny rill had ever tossed these rocks about! these storied rocks with their

fine lichens and sometimes red stains as of Indian blood on them! There are a few bright-green ferns lying flat by the sides of the brook, but it is cold, cold, withering to all else. A whitish lichen on the witch-hazel rings it here. I glimpse the frizzled tail of a red squirrel with a chestnut in its mouth on a white pine.

The ants appear to be gone into winter quarters. Here are two bushels of fine gravel, piled up in a cone, overpowering the grass, which tells of a corresponding cavity.

Nov. 6. I had on my "bad-weather clothes" at Quebec like Olaf Trygvesson, the Northman, when he went to Thing in England.¹

Nov. 7. 8 A. M. — To Long Pond with W. E. C.

[Four fifths of a page missing.]

From there we looked over the lower land and westward to the Jenkins house and Wachusett; the latter to-day a very faint blue, almost lost in the atmosphere. Entering Wayland, the sluggish country town, C. remarked that we might take the town if we had a couple of oyster-knives. We marvelled as usual at the queer-looking building which C. thought must be an engine-house, but which a boy told us was occupied as a shoemaker's shop but was built for a library. C. was much amused here by a bigger schoolboy whom we saw on the common, one of those who stretch themselves on the back seats and can chew up a whole newspaper into a spitball to plaster the wall with when the master's back

¹ [Excursions, p. 28; Riv. 34.]

is turned; made considerable fun of him, and thought this the *event* of Wayland. Soon got into a country new to us, in Wayland, opposite to Pelham or Heard's Pond, going across lots. Cedar hills and valleys near the river. A well-placed farmhouse with great old chestnuts near it, the greatest collection of large chestnuts which I remember to have seen. It is a tree full and well outlined at top, being bushy with short twigs at top, — a firm outline. Some long, moraine-like hills covered with cedars, with the hill country of Wayland on our left. The white oaks still thick with leaves turned pinkish? From a pretty high hill on the left of the road, after passing a very large field which was being plowed, a glorious view of the meadows and Nobscot, now red or purplish with its shrub oaks in this air; and Wachusett here seen in perfection, and Dudley Pond first seen on the south.


Dudley Pond is revealed due south now at noon (twelve), by its sparkling water, on both sides its promontory. The sparkles are even like fireflies in a meadow. This is not far above the opening to Pelham Pond, which also we fairly see. The white pines now look uncommonly soft. Their foliage, indeed, is not so thick as it was, but, the old leaves being fallen, and none left which are a year old, it is perchance more bright and fair. Dudley Pond, beyond the promontory, appears to be revealed by such a mirage as the coin in a basin. The sun-sparkles seen through the leafless woods on both sides this promontory, over its neck, are very large and innumerable; when one goes out, up flashes another, like a meadow full of fireflies, — dancing sparkles. When we reach the pond we find much beech wood just

cut down, last winter, and still standing on its shores. Where young beeches have been cut off four feet from the ground, to cord the wood against, I see that they have put out sprouts this summer in a dense bunch at its top; and also all those stumps which are clothed with short sprouts still covered with curled and crisped leaves are beeches. These large sparkles are magic lanterns by daylight. It is the game of "Go away Jack, come again Gill," played by the Genius of the lake, with the sun on his nail instead of a piece of paper, to amuse Nature's children with. Should it not be called Sparkle Pond? Buttonwood trees are frequent about its shores, its handsome hilly shores. This side, cedars also, on its pleasant hilly shores; and opposite, dark, dense hemlocks. Thus, in the form of its shores and, above all, in the trees which prevail about it, it is peculiar or at least wilder than the Concord ponds, and is exceedingly handsome. It has, perhaps, greater variety than any pond I know. Let it be called Peninsula Pond, nevertheless. The willow herb is there abundant, with its arching stem and its calices, or dried flowers, still attached. No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an *instep* as the beech. The lower leaves, which are an orange (?) red, hang on (dry) while the rest of the tree is bare. Chased by an ox, whom we escaped over a fence while he gored the trees instead of us, — the first time I was ever chased by his kind. It is a clear water without weeds. There is a handsomely sloping grassy shore on the west.

Close by we found Long Pond, in Wayland, Framingham, and Natick, a great body of water with singularly sandy, shelving, caving, undermined banks; and there we

ate our luncheon. The mayflower leaves we saw there, and the *Viola pedata* in blossom. We went down it a mile or two on the east side through the woods on its high bank, and then dined, looking far down to what seemed the Boston outlet (opposite to its natural outlet), where a solitary building stood on the shore. It is a wild and stretching loch, where yachts might sail, — Cochituate. It was not only larger but wilder and more novel than I had expected. In some respects unlike New England. I could hardly have told in what part of the world I was, if I had been carried there blindfolded. Yet some features, at least the composition of the soil, were familiar. The glorious sandy banks far and near, caving and sliding, — far sandy slopes, the forts of the land, — where you see the naked flesh of New England, her garment being blown aside like that of the priests (of the Levites?) when they ascend to the altar. Seen through this November sky, these sands are dear to me, worth all the gold of California, suggesting Pactolus, while the Saxonville factory-bell sounds o'er the woods. That sound perchance it is that whets my vision. The shore suggests the seashore, and two objects at a distance near the shore look like seals on a sand-bar. Dear to me to lie in, this sand; fit to preserve the bones of a race for thousands of years to come. And this is my home, my native soil; and I am a New-Englander. Of thee, O earth, are my bone and sinew made; to thee, O sun, am I brother. It must be the largest lake in Middlesex. To this dust my body will gladly return as to its origin. Here have I my habitat. I am of thee.

Returned by the south side of Dudley Pond, which looked fairer than ever, though smaller, — now so still, the afternoon somewhat advanced, Nobscot in the west in a purplish light, and the scalloped peninsula before us. When we held our heads down, this was thrown far off. This shore was crowded with hemlocks, which elsewhere I do not remember to have seen so numerous. Outside the wood there are little rounded clumps of smaller ones about. This pond must have been dear to the Indians.

At Nonesuch Pond, in Natick, we saw a boulder some thirty-two feet square by sixteen high, with a large rock leaning against it, — under which we walked, — forming a triangular frame, through which we beheld the picture of the pond. How many white men and Indians have passed  under it! Boulder Pond! Thence across lots by the Weston elm, to the bounds of Lincoln at the railroad. Saw a delicate fringed purple flower, *Gentiana crinita*, between those Weston hills, in a meadow, and after on higher land.

C. kept up an incessant strain of wit, banter, about my legs, which were so springy and unwearable, declared I had got my double legs on, that they were not cork but steel, that I should let myself to Van Amburgh, should have sent them to the World's Fair, etc., etc.; wanted to know if I could not carry my father Anchises.

The sun sets while we are perched on a high rock in the north of Weston. It soon grows finger cold. At Walden are three reflections of the bright full (or nearly) moon, one moon and two sheens further off.


Nov. 8. The dark spruce tree at Sherman's; its vicinity the site for a house.

Ah, those sun-sparkles on Dudley Pond in this November air! what a heaven to live in! Intensely brilliant, as no artificial light I have seen, like a dance of diamonds. Coarse mazes of a diamond dance seen through the trees. All objects shine to-day, even the sportsmen seen at a distance, as if a cavern were unroofed, and its crystals gave entertainment to the sun. This great seesaw of brilliants, the ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα. You look several inches into the sod. The cedarn hills. The squirrels that run across the road sport their tails like banners. The gray squirrels in their cylinders are set out in the sun. When I saw the bare sand at Cochituate I felt my relation to the soil. These are *my* sands not yet run out. Not yet will the fates turn the glass. This air have I title to taint with my decay. In this clean sand my bones will gladly lie. Like *Viola pedata*, I shall be ready to bloom again here in my Indian summer days. Here ever springing, never dying, with perennial root I stand; for the winter of the land is warm to me. While the flowers bloom again as in the spring, shall I pine? When I see her sands exposed, thrown up from beneath the surface, it touches me inwardly, it reminds me of my origin; for I am such a plant, so native to New England, methinks, as springs from the sand cast up from below.

4 P. M. — I find ice under the north side of woods nearly an inch thick, where the acorns are frozen in, which have dropped from the overhanging oaks and been saved from the squirrels, perchance by the water.¹ W. E. C.

¹ Must be rotten if they float.

says he found a ripe strawberry last week in Berkshire. Saw a frog at the Swamp Bridge on back road.

Nov. 9. The boat which we paddled that elysian day, Oct. 7th, was made of three distinct boxes shaped like bread-troughs, excepting the bow piece, which was rounded,  fastened together by screws and nuts, with stout round leather handles by which to carry the separate parts. It was made of the thinnest and lightest material, without seats or thole-pins, for portability. So that three passengers could sit in three different boats which, by turning the hand-nuts(?), they might separate and steer different ways.

The river has fallen more than a foot since I last observed it.¹ I see minute yellow cocoons on the grass, as I go across the field behind Dennis's, reminding me of some late flower, as the cinquefoil. What is the insect? I hear a cricket singing the requiem of the year under the Clamshell Bank. Soon all will be frozen up, and I shall hear no cricket chirp in the land. The very rabbit-forms and squirrel-holes will be snowed up, and walking in the winter days, in the sunny forenoons after a light snow has fallen in the night, covering up the old snow, already deep, and [when] the gentle wind from time to time shakes down a golden dust from above, I shall see still the gray squirrel or the red, still cheery and life-some, making tiny tracks over the snow-covered rails and riders, when the sun shines aslant between the stems of the pines.

In our walks C. takes out his note-book sometimes

¹ *Vide* Oct. 27.

and tries to write as I do, but all in vain. He soon puts it up again, or contents himself with scrawling some sketch of the landscape. Observing me still scribbling, he will say that he confines himself to the ideal, purely ideal remarks; he leaves the facts to me. Sometimes, too, he will say a little petulantly, "*I am universal; I have nothing to do with the particular and definite.*"¹ He is the moodiest person, perhaps, that I ever saw. As naturally whimsical as a cow is brindled, both in his tenderness and his roughness he belies himself. He can be incredibly selfish and unexpectedly generous. He is concealed, and yet there is in him far more than usual to ground conceit upon.²

I, too, would fain set down something beside facts. Facts should only be as the frame to my pictures; they should be material to the mythology which I am writing; not facts to assist men to make money, farmers to farm profitably, in any common sense; facts to tell who I am, and where I have been or what I have thought: as now the bell rings for evening meeting, and its volumes of sound, like smoke which rises from where a cannon is fired, make the tent in which I dwell. My facts shall be falsehoods to the common sense. I would so state facts that they shall be significant, shall be myths or mythologic. Facts which the mind perceived, thoughts which the body thought, — with these I deal. I, too, cherish vague and misty forms, vaguest when the cloud at which I gaze is dissipated quite and naught but the skyey depths are seen.

James P. Brown's retired pond, now shallow and

¹ [Channing, p. 66.]

² [Channing, p. 332.]

more than half dried up, seems far away and rarely visited, known to few, though not far off. It is encircled by an amphitheatre of low hills, on two opposite sides covered with high pine woods, the other sides with young white oaks and white pines respectively. I am affected by beholding there reflected this gray day, so unpretendingly, the gray stems of the pine wood on the hill-side and the sky, — that mirror, as it were a permanent picture to be seen there, a permanent piece of idealism. What were these reflections to the cows alone! Were these things made for cows' eyes mainly? You shall go over behind the hills, where you would suppose that otherwise there was no eye to behold, and find this piece of magic a constant phenomenon there. It is not merely a few favored lakes or pools that reflect the trees and skies, but the obscurest pond-hole in the most unfrequented dell does the same.

These reflections suggest that the sky underlies the hills as well as overlies them, and in another sense than in appearance. I am a little surprised on beholding this reflection, which I did not perceive for some minutes after looking into the pond, as if I had not regarded this as a constant phenomenon. What has become of Nature's common sense and love of facts, when in the very mud-puddles she reflects the skies and trees? Does that procedure recommend itself entirely to the common sense of men? Is that the way the *New England Farmer* would have arranged it?

I think it is not true, what De Quincey says of himself, that he read Greek as easily and copiously as other men do French; for as murder will out, so will a man's read-

ing, and in this author's writings the amount of reference to Greek literature does not at all correspond to such a statement.

I knew that this pond was early to freeze; I had forgotten that it reflected the hills around it. So retired! which I must think even the sordid owner does not know that he owns. It is full of little pollywogs now. Pray, when were they born?

To-day the mountains seen from the pasture above are dark blue, so dark that they look like new mountains and make a new impression, and the intervening town of Acton is seen against them in a new relation, a new neighborhood.

The new monument in Acton, rising by the side of its mountain houses, like a tall and slender chimney, looking black against the sky! I cannot associate that tall and slender column, or any column in fact, with the death of Davis and Hosmer, and Concord Fight, and the American Revolution. It should have been a large, flat stone rather, covered with lichens like an old farmer's door-step, which it took all the oxen in the town to draw. Such a column this as might fitly stand perchance in Abyssinia or Nubia, but not here in Middlesex County, where the genius of the people does not soar after that fashion. It is the Acton flue, to carry off the vapors of patriotism into the upper air, which, confined, would be deleterious to animal and vegetable health. The Davis and Hosmer Monument might have been a door-step to the Town House, and so the Concord Monument.

Pitch pine cones very beautiful, not only the fresh leather-colored ones but especially the dead gray ones

covered with lichens, the scales so regular and close, like an impenetrable coat of mail. These are very handsome to my eye; also those which have long since opened regularly and shed their seeds.

An abundance of the rattlesnake plantain in the woods by Brown's Pond, now full of a fine chaffy seed (?).

Now the leaves are gone the birds' nests are revealed, the brood being fledged and flown. There is a perfect adaptation in the material used in constructing a nest. There is one which I took from a maple on the causeway at Hubbard's Bridge. It is fastened to the twigs by white woolen strings (out of a shawl?), which it has picked up in the road, though it is more than half a mile from a house; and the sharp eyes of the bird have discovered plenty of horsehairs out of the tail or mane, with which to give it form by their spring; with fine meadow hay for body, and the reddish woolly material which invests the ferns in the spring (apparently) for lining.

Nov. 10. This morning the ground is once more whitened with snow, but it will apparently be gone in an hour or two. I live where the *Pinus rigida* grows, with its firm cones, almost as hard as iron, armed with recurved spines.

In relation to politics, to society, aye, to the whole outward world, I am tempted to ask, Why do *they* lay such stress on a particular experience which you have had? — that, after twenty-five years, you should meet Cyrus Warren again on the sidewalk! Have n't I budged an inch, then? This daily routine should go on, then, like

those — it must be conceded — vital functions of digestion, circulation of the blood, etc., which in health we know nothing about. A wise man is as unconscious of the movements in the body politic as he is of the process of digestion and the circulation of the blood in the natural body. These processes are *infra-human*. I sometimes awake to a half-consciousness of these things going on about me, — as politics, society, business, etc., etc., — as a man may become conscious of some of the processes of digestion, in a morbid state, and so have the dyspepsia, as it is called. It appears to me that those things which most engage the attention of men, as politics, for instance, are vital functions of human society, it is true, but should [be] unconsciously performed, like the vital functions of the natural body. It is as if a thinker submitted himself to be rasped by the great gizzard of creation. Politics is, as it were, the gizzard of society, full of grit and gravel, and the two political parties are its two opposite halves, which grind on each other. Not only individuals but states have thus a confirmed dyspepsia, which expresses itself, you can imagine by what sort of eloquence. Our life is not altogether a forgetting, but also, alas, to a great extent a remembering, of that which perchance we should never have been conscious of, — the consciousness of what should not be permitted to disturb a man's waking hours. As for society, why should we not meet, not always as dyspeptics, but sometimes as eupeptics?¹

No true and absolute account of things, — of the evening and the morning and all the phenomena between

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 472, 481, 482; *Misc.*, Riv. 274, 286, 287.]

them, — but ever a petty reference to man, to society, aye, often to Christianity. What these things are when men are asleep. I come from the funeral of mankind to attend to a natural phenomenon. The so much grander significance of any fact — of sun and moon and stars — when not referred to man and his needs but viewed absolutely! Sounds that are wafted from over the confines of time.

Nov. 11. When, pointing toward Cap Tourmente, I asked the name of a *habitant* whom we met, he hazarded[?] the name of Belange, or fair angel, — or perchance he referred to some other sort. At any rate, my interrogations of this nature gave vent to such a musical catalogue of sweet names — though I did not know which one to fix on — that I continued to put them to every *habitant* I met, if only for this pleasure.

Living much out-of-doors in the air, in the sun and wind, will, no doubt, produce a certain roughness of character, will cause a thicker cuticle to grow over some of the finer sensibilities of a man's nature, as on his face and hands, or those parts of his body which are exposed to the weather; as staying in the house, on the other hand, may produce a softness and smoothness, not to say thinness, of skin, accompanied by an increased sensibility to certain impressions. And no doubt it is a nice matter to proportion rightly the thick and thin skin. Perhaps we should be more susceptible to some influences important to our intellectual growth, if the sun had shone and the wind blown on us a little less. As too much manual labor callouses the hand and deprives

it of the exquisiteness of the touch. But then methinks that is a scurf that will fall off fast enough, — that the natural remedy is to be found in the proportion which the night bears to the day, the winter to the summer, etc., thought to experience.¹

2 P. M. — A bright, but cold day, finger-cold. One must next wear gloves, put his hands in winter quarters. There is a cold, silvery light on the white pines as I go through J. P. Brown's field near Jenny Dugan's. I am glad of the shelter of the thick pine wood on the Marlborough road, on the plain. The roar of the wind over the pines sounds like the surf on countless beaches, an endless shore; and at intervals it sounds like a gong resounding through halls and entries, *i. e.* there is a certain resounding woodiness in the tone. How the wind roars among the shrouds of the wood! The sky looks mild and fair enough from this shelter. Every withered blade of grass and every dry weed, as well as pine-needle, reflects light. The lately oark woods are open and light; the sun shines in upon the stems of trees which it has not shone on since spring. Around the edges of ponds the weeds are dead, and there, too, the light penetrates. The atmosphere is less moist and gross, and light is universally dispersed. We are greatly indebted to these transition seasons or states of the atmosphere, which show us thus phenomena which belong not to the summer or the winter of any climate. The brilliancy of the autumn is wonderful, this flashing brilliancy, as if the atmosphere were phosphoric.

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 210; Riv. 257.]

When I have been confined to my chamber for the greater part of several days by some employment, or perchance by the ague, till I felt weary and house-worn, I have been conscious of a certain softness to which I am otherwise and commonly a stranger, in which the gates were loosened to some emotions; and if I were to become a confirmed invalid, I see how some sympathy with mankind and society might spring up. Yet what is my softness good for, even to tears. It is not I, but nature in me. I laughed at myself the other day to think that I cried while reading a pathetic story. I was no more affected in spirit than I frequently am, methinks. The tears were merely a phenomenon of the bowels, and I felt that that expression of my sympathy, so unusual with me, was something mean, and such as I should be ashamed to have the subject of it understand. I had a cold in my head withal, about those days. I found that I had some bowels, but then it was because my bowels were out of order.

The *fall* of the year is over, and now let us see if we shall have any Indian summer.

White Pond is prepared for winter. Now that most other trees have lost their leaves, the evergreens are more conspicuous about its shores and on its capes. The view of the southern horizon from the lane this side still attracts me, but not so much as before I had explored those Wayland hills, which look so much fairer, perhaps, than they are. To-day you may write a chapter on the advantages of travelling, and to-morrow you may write another chapter on the advantages of not travelling. The horizon has one kind of beauty and attraction to him

who has never explored the hills and mountains in it, and another, I fear a less ethereal and glorious one, to him who has. That blue mountain in the horizon is certainly the most heavenly, the most elysian, which we have not climbed, on which we have not camped for a night. But only our horizon is moved thus further off, and if our whole life should prove thus a failure, the future which is to atone for all, where still there must be some success, will be more glorious still.

"Says I to myself" should be the motto of my journal.

It is fatal to the writer to be too much possessed by his thought. Things must lie a little remote to be described.

Nov. 12. Write often, write upon a thousand themes, rather than long at a time, not trying to turn too many feeble somersets in the air, — and so come down upon your head at last. Antæus-like, be not long absent from the ground. Those sentences are good and well discharged which are like so many little resiliencies from the spring floor of our life, — a distinct fruit and kernel itself, springing from terra firma. Let there be as many distinct plants as the soil and the light can sustain. Take as many bounds in a day as possible. Sentences uttered with your back to the wall. Those are the admirable bounds when the performer has lately touched the spring-board. A good bound into the air from the air [*sic*] is a good and wholesome experience, but what shall we say to a man's leaping off precipices in the attempt to fly? He comes down like lead. In the meanwhile, you have got your feet planted upon the rock, with the rock also

at your back, and, as in the case of King James and Roderick Dhu, can say, —

“Come one, come all! this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I.”

Such, uttered or not, is the strength of your sentence. Sentences in which there is no strain. A fluttering and inconstant and *quasi* inspiration, and ever memorable Icarian fall, in which your helpless wings are expanded merely by your swift descent into the *pelagos* beneath.

C. is one who will not stoop to rise (to change the subject). He wants something for which he will not pay the going price. He will only learn slowly by failure, — not a noble, but disgraceful, failure.¹ This is not a noble method of learning, to be educated by inevitable suffering, like De Quincey, for instance. Better dive like a muskrat into the mud, and pile up a few weeds to sit on during the floods, a foundation of your own laying, a house of your own building, however cold and cheerless.

Methinks the hawk that soars so loftily and circles so steadily and apparently without effort has earned this power by faithfully creeping on the ground as a reptile in a former state of existence. You must creep before you can run; you must run before you can fly. Better one effective bound upward with elastic limbs from the valley than a jumping from the mountain-tops in the attempt to fly. The observatories are not built high but deep; the foundation is equal to the superstructure. It is more important to a distinct vision that it be steady than that it be from an elevated point of view.

Walking through Ebby Hubbard's wood this after-

¹ [Channing, pp. 332, 333.]

noon, with Minott, who was actually taking a walk for amusement and exercise, he said, on seeing some white pines blown down, that you might know that ground had been cultivated, by the trees being torn up so, for otherwise they would have rooted themselves more strongly. Saw some very handsome canoe birches there, the largest I know, a foot in diameter and forty or fifty feet high. The large ones have a reddish cast, perhaps from some small lichen. Their fringes and curls give them an agreeable appearance. Observed a peculiarity in some white oaks. Though they had a firm and close bark near the ground, the bark was very coarse and scaly, in loose flakes, above. Much coarser than the swamp white oak. Minott has a story for every woodland path. He has hunted in them all. Where we walked last, he had once caught a partridge by the *wing*!

7 P. M. — To Conantum.

A still, cold night. The light of the rising moon in the east. Moonrise is a faint sunrise. And what shall we name the faint aurora that precedes the moonrise? The ground is frozen and echoes to my tread. There are absolutely no crickets to be heard now. They are heard, then, till the ground freezes. To-day I heard for the first time this season the crackling, vibrating sound which resounds from thin ice when a stone is cast upon it. So far have we got toward winter. It is doubtful if they who have not pulled their turnips will have a chance to get them. It is not of much use to drive the cows to pasture. I can fancy that I hear the booming of ice in the ponds. I hear no sound of any bird now at night, but sometimes

some creature stirring, — a rabbit, or skunk, or fox, — betrayed now by the dry leaves which lie so thick and light. The openness of the leafless woods is particularly apparent now by moonlight; they are nearly as bright as the open field. It is worth the while always to go to the waterside when there is but little light in the heavens and see the heavens and the stars reflected. There is double the light that there is elsewhere, and the reflection has the force of a great silent companion. There is no fog now o' nights. I thought to-night that I saw glow-worms in the grass, on the side of the hill; was almost certain of it, and tried to lay my hand on them, but found it was the moonlight reflected from (apparently) the fine frost crystals on the withered grass, and they were so fine that they went and came like glow-worms. It had precisely the effect of twinkling glow-worms. They gleamed just long enough for glow-worms.

Nov. 13. To Fair Haven Hill.

A cold and dark afternoon, the sun being behind clouds in the west. The landscape is barren of objects, the trees being leafless, and so little light in the sky for variety. Such a day as will almost oblige a man to eat his own heart. A day in which you must hold on to life by your teeth. You can hardly ruck up any skin on Nature's bones. The sap is down; she won't peel. Now is the time to cut timber for yokes and ox-bows, leaving the tough bark on, — yokes for your own neck. Finding yourself yoked to Matter and to Time. Truly a hard day, hard times these! Not a mosquito left. Not an insect to hum. Crickets gone into winter quarters. Friends

long since gone there, and you left to walk on frozen ground, with your hands in your pockets. Ah, but is not this a glorious time for your deep inward fires? And will not your green hickory and white oak burn clear in this frosty air? Now is not your manhood taxed by the great Assessor? Taxed for having a soul, a ratable soul. A day when you cannot pluck a flower, cannot dig a parsnip, nor pull a turnip, for the frozen ground! What do the thoughts find to live on? What avails you now the fire you stole from heaven? Does not each thought become a vulture to gnaw your vitals? No Indian summer have we had this November. I see but few traces of the perennial spring. Now is there nothing, not even the cold beauty of ice crystals and snowy architecture, nothing but the echo of your steps over the frozen ground, no voice of birds nor frogs. You are dry as a farrow cow. The earth will not admit a spade. All fields lie fallow. Shall not your mind? True, the freezing ground is being prepared for immeasurable snows, but there are brave thoughts within you that shall remain to rustle the winter through like white oak leaves upon your boughs, or like scrub oaks that remind the traveller of a fire upon the hillsides; or evergreen thoughts, cold even in mid-summer, by their nature shall contrast the more fairly with the snow. Some warm springs shall still tinkle and fume, and send their column of vapor to the skies.

The walker now fares like cows in the pastures, where is no grass but hay; he gets nothing but an appetite. If we must return to hay, pray let us have that which has been stored in barns, which has not lost its sweetness. The poet needs to have more stomachs than the cow,

for for him no fodder is stored in barns. He relies upon his instinct, which teaches him to paw away the snow to come at the withered grass.

Methinks man came very near being made a dormant creature, just as some of these animals. The ground squirrel, for instance, which lays up vast stores, is yet found to be half dormant, if you dig him out. Now for the oily nuts of thought which you have stored up.

The mountains are of an uncommonly dark blue to-day. Perhaps this is owing, not only to the greater clearness of the atmosphere, which brings them nearer, but to the absence of the leaves! They are many miles nearer for it. A little mistiness occasioned by warmth would set them further off and make them fainter.

I see snow on the Peterboro hills, reflecting the sun. It is pleasant thus to look from afar into winter. We look at a condition which we have not reached. Notwithstanding the poverty of the immediate landscape, in the horizon it is simplicity and grandeur. I look into valleys white with snow and now lit up by the sun, while all this country is in shade. This accounts for the cold northwest wind.

There is a great gap in the mountain range just south of the two Peterboro hills. Methinks I have been through it, and that a road runs there. At any rate, humble as these mountains are compared with some, yet at this distance I am convinced that they answer the purpose of Andes; and, seen in the horizon, I know of nothing more grand and stupendous than this great mountain gate or pass, a great cleft or sinus in the blue banks, as in a dark evening cloud, fit portal to lead

from one country, from one quarter of the earth, to another, where the children of the Israelites may file through. Little does the New Hampshire farmer who drives over that road realize through what a sublime gap he is passing. You would almost as soon think of a road to wind through and over a dark evening cloud. This prospect of the mountains from our low hills is what I would rather have than pastures on the mountain-sides such as my neighbors own, aye, than townships at their base. Instead that I drive my cattle up in May, I turn my eyes that way. My eyes pasture there, and straightway the yearling thoughts come back. The grass they feed on never withers, for though they are not evergreen, they're ever blue to me. For though not evergreen to you, to me they're ever blue.

I do not fear my thoughts will die,
For never yet it was so dry
As to scorch the azure of the sky.
It knows no withering and no drought,
Though all eyes crop, it ne'er gives out.
My eyes my flocks are;
Mountains my crops are.
I do not fear my flocks will stray,
For they were made to roam the day,
For they can wander with the latest light,
Yet be at home at night.

Just spent a couple of hours (eight to ten) with Miss Mary Emerson at Holbrook's. The wittiest and most vivacious woman that I know, certainly that woman among my acquaintance whom it is most profitable to

meet, the least frivolous, who will most surely provoke to good conversation and the expression of what is in you. She is singular, among women at least, in being really and perseveringly interested to know what thinkers think. She relates herself surely to the intellectual where she goes. It is perhaps her greatest praise and peculiarity that she, more surely than any other woman, gives her companion occasion to utter his best thought. In spite of her own biases, she can entertain a large thought with hospitality, and is not prevented by any intellectuality in it, as women commonly are. In short, she is a genius, as woman seldom is, reminding you less often of her sex than any woman whom I know. In that sense she is capable of a masculine appreciation of poetry and philosophy. I never talked with any other woman who I thought accompanied me so far in describing a poetic experience. Miss Fuller is the only woman I think of in this connection, and of her rather from her fame than from any knowledge of her. Miss Emerson expressed to-night a singular want of respect for her own sex, saying that they were frivolous almost without exception, that woman was the weaker vessel, etc.; that into whatever family she might go, she depended more upon the "clown" for society than upon the lady of the house. Men are more likely to have opinions of their own.

The cattle-train came down last night from Vermont with snow nearly a foot thick upon it. It is as if, in the fall of the year, a swift traveller should come out of the north with snow upon his coat. So it snows. Such, some years, may be our first snow.

Just in proportion to the outward poverty is the in-

ward wealth. In cold weather fire burns with a clearer flame.

Nov. 14. Friday. Surveying the Ministerial Lot in the southwestern part of the town. Unexpectedly find Heywood's Pond frozen over thinly, it being shallow and coldly placed.

In the evening went to a party. It is a bad place to go to, — thirty or forty persons, mostly young women, in a small room, warm and noisy. Was introduced to two young women. The first one was as lively and loquacious as a chickadee; had been accustomed to the society of watering-places, and therefore could get no refreshment out of such a dry fellow as I. The other was said to be pretty-looking, but I rarely look people in their faces, and, moreover, I could not hear what she said, there was such a clacking, — could only see the motion of her lips when I looked that way. I could imagine better places for conversation, where there should be a certain degree of silence surrounding you, and less than forty talking at once. Why, this afternoon, even, I did better. There was old Mr. Joseph Hosmer and I ate our luncheon of cracker and cheese together in the woods. I heard all he said, though it was not much, to be sure, and he could hear me. And then he talked out of such a glorious repose, taking a leisurely bite at the cracker and cheese between his words; and so some of him was communicated to me, and some of me to him, I trust.

These parties, I think, are a part of the machinery of modern society, that young people may be brought together to form marriage connections.

What is the use of going to see people whom yet you never see, and who never see you? I begin to suspect that it is not necessary that we should see one another.

Some of my friends make singular blunders. They go out of their way to talk with certain young women of whom they think, or have heard, that they are pretty, and take pains to introduce me to them. That may be a reason why they should look at them, but it is not a reason why they should talk with them. I confess that I am lacking a sense, perchance, in this respect, and I derive no pleasure from talking with a young woman half an hour simply because she has regular features. The society of young women is the most unprofitable I have ever tried. They are so light and flighty that you can never be sure whether they are there or not there. I prefer to talk with the more staid and settled, *settled for life*, in every sense.

I met a man yesterday afternoon in the road who behaved as if he was deaf, and I talked with him in the cold in a loud tone for fifteen minutes, but that uncertainty about his ears, and the necessity I felt to talk loudly, took off the fine edge of what I had to say and prevented my saying anything satisfactory. It is bad enough when your neighbor does not understand you, but if there is any uncertainty as to whether he hears you, so that you are obliged to become your own auditor, you are so much the poorer speaker, and so there is a double failure.

Nov. 15. Here is a rainy day, which keeps me in the house.

Asked Therien this afternoon if he had got a new idea

this summer. "Good Lord!" says he, "a man that has to work as I do, if he does not forget the ideas he has had, he will do well. Maybe the man you work with is inclined to race; then, by gorry, your mind must be there; you think of weeds."¹

I am pleased to read in Stoevers's Life of Linnæus (Trapp's translation) that his father, being the first learned man of his family, changed his family name and borrowed that of Linnæus (Linden-tree-man) from a lofty linden tree which stood near his native place, — "a custom," he says, "not unfrequent in Sweden, to take fresh appellations from natural objects." What more fit than that the advent of a new man into a family should acquire for it, and transmit to his posterity, a new patronymic? Such a custom suggests, if it does not argue, an unabated vigor in the race, relating it to those primitive times when men did, indeed, acquire a name, as memorable and distinct as their characters. It is refreshing to get to a man whom you will not be satisfied to call John's son or Johnson's son, but a new name applicable to himself alone, he being the first of his kind. We may say there have been but so many men as there are surnames, and of all the John-Smiths there has been but one true John Smith, and he of course is dead. Get yourself therefore a name, and better a nickname than none at all. There was one enterprising boy came to school to me whose name was "Buster," and an honorable name it was. He was the only boy in the school, to my knowledge, who was named.²

¹ [Walden, p. 165; Riv. 233.]

² [Excursions, pp. 236, 237; Riv. 290. See also Journal, vol. ii, p. 407.]

What shall we say of the comparative intellectual vigor of the ancients and moderns, when we read of Theophrastus, the father of botany, that he composed more than two hundred treatises in the third century before Christ and the seventeenth before printing, about twenty of which remain, and that these fill six volumes in folio printed at Venice? Among the last are two works on natural history and the generation of plants. What a stimulus to a literary man to read his works! They *were opera*, not an essay or two, which you can carry between your thumb and finger.

Dioscorides (according to Stoeve), who lived in the first century after Christ, was the first to inquire into the medicinal properties of plants, "the literary father of the *materia medica*." His work remains. And next comes Pliny the Elder, and "by his own avowal (?), his natural history is a compilation from about twenty-five hundred (?) different authors." Conrad Gesner, of the Sixteenth Century, the first botanist of note among the moderns; also a naturalist generally. In this century botany first "became a regular academical study."

I think it would be a good discipline for Channing, who writes poetry in a sublimo-slipshod style, to write Latin, for then he would be compelled to say something always, and frequently have recourse to his grammar and dictionary. Methinks that what a man might write in a dead language could be more surely translated into good sense in his own language, than his own language could be translated into good Latin, or the dead language.

Nov. 16. Sunday. It is remarkable that the highest intellectual mood which the world tolerates is the perception of the truth of the most ancient revelations, now in some respects out of date; but any direct revelation, any original thoughts, it hates like virtue. The fathers and the mothers of the town would rather hear the young man or young woman at their tables express reverence for some old statement of the truth than utter a direct revelation themselves. They don't want to have any prophets born into their families, — damn them! So far as thinking is concerned, surely original thinking is the divinest thing. Rather we should reverently watch for the least motions, the least scintillations, of thought in this sluggish world, and men should run to and fro on the occasion more than at an earthquake. We check and repress the divinity that stirs within us, to fall down and worship the divinity that is dead without us. I go to see many a good man or good woman, so called, and utter freely that thought which alone it was given to me to utter; but there was a man who lived a long, long time ago, and his name was Moses, and another whose name was Christ, and if your thought does not, or does not appear to, coincide with what they said, the good man or the good woman has no ears to hear you. They think they love God! It is only his old clothes, of which they make scarecrows for the children. Where will they come nearer to God than in those very children?

A man lately preached here against the abuse of the Sabbath and recommended to walk in the fields and dance on that [day], — good advice enough, which may take effect after a while. But with the mass of men the

reason is convinced long before the life is. They may see the Church and the Sabbath to be false, but nothing else to be true. One woman in the neighborhood says, "Nobody can hear Mr. — preach, — hear him through, — without seeing that he is a good man." "Well, is there any truth in what he says?" asks another. "Oh, yes, it's true enough, but then it won't do; you know it won't do. Now there's our George, he's got the whole of it; and when I say, 'Come, George, put on your things and go along to meeting,' he says, 'No, Mother, I'm going out into the fields.' It won't do." The fact is, this woman has not character and religion enough to exert a controlling influence over her children by her example, and knows of no such police as the Church and the minister.

If it were not for death and funerals, I think the institution of the Church would not stand longer. The necessity that men be decently buried — our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters and children (notwithstanding the danger that they be buried alive) — will long, if not forever, prevent our laying violent hands on it. If salaries were stopped off, and men walked out of this world bodily at last, the minister and his vocation would be gone. What is the churchyard but a graveyard? Imagine a church at the other end of the town, without any carrion beneath or beside it, but all the dead regularly carried to the bone-mill! The cry that comes up from the churches in all the great cities in the world is, "How they stink!"

What more fatal vengeance could Linnæus have taken than to give the names of his enemies to pernicious and unsightly plants, thus simply putting upon record

for as long as the Linnæan system shall prevail who were his friends and foes? It was enough to record the fact that they were opposed to him. To this they could not themselves have objected, nor could he have taken a more fatal vengeance. (*Vide* Scraps.)

Noticed this afternoon that where a pitch pine three inches in diameter had been cut down last winter, it had sent out more than a hundred horizontal plumes about a foot long close together and on every side. Plenty of ripe checkerberries now. Do they blossom again in the spring? ¹ The ferns, which are almost the only green things left now, love the crevices and seams of moist cliffs and boulders and adorn them very much. They become more conspicuous now than at any season.

I had a thought this morning before I awoke. I endeavored to retain it in my mind's grasp after I became conscious, yet I doubted, while I lay on my back, whether my mind could apprehend it when I should stand erect. It is a far more difficult feat to get up without spilling your morning thought, than that which is often practiced of taking a cup of water from behind your head as you lie on your back and drinking from it. It was the thought I endeavored to express on the first page of to-day.

Thinkers and writers are in foolish haste to come before the world with crude works. Young men are persuaded by their friends, or by their own restless ambition, to write a course of lectures in a summer against the ensuing winter; and what it took the lecturer a summer to write, it will take his audience but an hour to

¹ Only once.

forget. If time is short, then you have no time to waste.

That sounds like a fine mode of expressing gratitude referred to by Linnaeus. Hermann was a botanist who gave up his place to Tournefort, who was unprovided for. "Hermann," says Linnaeus, "came afterwards to Paris, and Tournefort in honor of him ordered the fountains to play in the royal garden."

Nov. 17. All things tend to flow to him who can make the best use of them, even away from their legal owner. A thief, finding with the property of the Italian naturalist Donati, whom he had robbed abroad, a collection of rare African seeds, forwarded them to Linnaeus from Marseilles. Donati suffered shipwreck and never returned.

Nov. 18. Surveying these days the Ministerial Lot.

Now at sundown I hear the hooting of an owl,—*hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo*.¹ It sounds like the hooting of an idiot or a maniac broke loose. This is faintly answered in a different strain, apparently from a greater distance, almost as if it were the echo, *i. e.* so far as the *succession* is concerned. This is my music each evening. I heard it last evening. The men who help me call it the "hooting owl" and think it is the cat owl. It is a sound admirably suited [to] the swamp and to the twilight woods, suggesting a vast undeveloped nature which men have not recognized nor satisfied. I rejoice that there are owls. They represent the stark, twilight, unsatisfied thoughts

¹ [*Walden*, p. 139; Riv. 196.]

I have. Let owls do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. This sound faintly suggests the infinite roominess of nature, that there is a world in which owls live. Yet how few are seen, even by the hunters! The sun has shone for a day over this savage swamp, where the single spruce stands covered with usnea moss, which a Concord merchant mortgaged once to the trustees of the ministerial fund and lost, but now for a different race of creatures a new day dawns over this wilderness, which one would have thought was sufficiently dismal before. Here hawks also circle by day, and chickadees are heard, and rabbits and partridges abound.¹

The chopper who works in the woods all day for many weeks or months at a time becomes intimately acquainted with them in his way. He is more open in some respects to the impressions they are fitted to make than the naturalist who goes to see them. He is not liable to exaggerate insignificant features. He really forgets himself, forgets to observe, and at night he *dreams* of the swamp, its phenomena and events. Not so the naturalist; enough of his unconscious life does not pass there.

A man can hardly be said to be *there* if he *knows* that he is there, or to go there if he knows where he is going. The man who is bent upon his work is frequently in the best attitude to observe what is irrelevant to his work. (*Mem.* Wordsworth's observations on relaxed attention.) You must be conversant with things for a long time to know much about them, like the moss which has hung from the spruce, and as the partridge and the rabbit are acquainted with the thickets and at length have acquired

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 138, 139; Riv. 196, 197.]

the color of the places they frequent. If the man of science can put all his knowledge into propositions, the woodman has a great deal of incommunicable knowledge.

Deacon Brown told me to-day of a tall, raw-boned fellow by the name of Hosmer who used to help draw the seine behind the Jones house, who once, when he had hauled it without getting a single shad, held up a little perch in sport above his face, to show what he had got. At that moment the perch wiggled and dropped right down his throat head foremost, and nearly suffocated him; and it was only after considerable time, during which the man suffered much, that he was extracted or forced down. He was in a worse predicament than a fish hawk would have been.

In the woods south of the swamp are many great holes made by digging for foxes.

Nov. 19. Old Mr. Joseph Hosmer, who helped me to-day, said that he used to know all about the lots, but since they've chopped off so much, and the woods have grown up, he finds himself lost. Thirty or forty years ago, when he went to meeting, he knew every face in the meeting-house, even the boys and girls, they looked so much like their parents; but after ten or twelve years they would have outgrown his knowledge entirely (they would have altered so), but he knew the old folks still, because they held their own and did n't alter. Just so he could tell the boundaries of the old wood which had n't been cut down, but the young wood altered so much in a few years that he could n't tell anything about it. When

I asked him why the old road which went by this swamp was so roundabout, he said he would answer me as Mr. ——— did him in a similar case once, — “Why, if they had made it straight, they would n't have left any room for improvement.”

Standing by Harrington's pond-hole in the swamp, which had skimmed over, we saw that there were many holes through the thin black ice, of various sizes, from a few inches to more than a foot in diameter, all of which were *perfectly* circular. Mr. H. asked me if I could account for it. As we stood considering, we jarred the boggy ground and made a dimple in the water, and this accident, we thought, betrayed the cause of it; *i. e.* the circular wavelets so wore off the edges of the ice when once a hole was made. The ice was very thin, and the holes were perfect disks. But what jarred the ground and shook the water? Perhaps the wind which shook the spruce and pine trees which stood in the quaking ground, as well as the little life in the water itself, and the wind on the ice and water itself. There was a more permanent form created by the dimple, but not yet a shellfish.

Nov. 20. It is often said that melody can be heard farther than noise, and the finest melody farther than the coarsest. I think there is truth in this, and that accordingly those strains of the piano which reach me here in my attic stir me so much more than the sounds which I should hear if I were below in the parlor, because they are so much purer and diviner melody. They who sit farthest off from the noisy and bustling world are not at pains to distinguish what is sweet and musical, for that

alone can reach them; that chiefly comes down to posterity.

Hard and steady and engrossing labor with the hands, especially out of doors, is invaluable to the literary man and serves him directly. Here I have been for six days surveying in the woods, and yet when I get home at evening, somewhat weary at last, and beginning to feel that I have nerves, I find myself more susceptible than usual to the finest influences, as music and poetry. The very air can intoxicate me, or the least sight or sound, as if my finer senses had acquired an appetite by their fast.

As I was riding to the Ministerial Lot this morning, about 8.30 A. M., I observed that the white clouds were disposed raywise in the west and also in the east, — as if the sun's rays had split and so arranged them? A striking symmetry in the heavens. What its law? Mr. J. Hosmer tells me that one spring he saw a red squirrel gnaw the bark of a maple and then suck the juice, and this he repeated many times.

What is the bush where we dined in Poplar Hollow? Hosmer tells of finding a kind of apple, with an apple seed (?) to it, on scabish which had been injured or cut off. Thinks plowed ground more moist than grass ground. That there are more leaves on the ground on the north side of a hill than on the other sides, and that the trees thrive more there, perhaps because the winds cause the leaves to fall there.

Nov. 21. My mother says that, visiting once at Captain Pulsifer's at the North End, two sea-captains' wives told the girl, when the things were carried out to

be replenished, not to turn out their slops, as it would drown their husbands who were at sea.

Frank Brown showed me to-day the velvet duck (white-winged coot) and the surf duck. These two, as well as the scaup (?) duck, he says are called coots. Saw also a fine brant, a shore lark, a pine grosbeak, kittiwake gull and Bonaparte's ditto (the last very like the first but smaller), all shot at Clark's Island; also a little brown creeper with a woodpecker tail and curved bill, killed here.

Old Mr. Joseph Hosmer, who lives where Hadley did, remembers when there were two or three times as many inhabitants in that part of the town as there are now: a blacksmith with his shop in front where he now lives, a goldsmith (Oliver Wheeler?) at the fork in the road just beyond him, one *in front* of Tarbell's, one in the orchard on the south side of the lane in front of Tarbell's, one, Nathan Wheeler, further on the right of the old road by the balm-of-Gilead, three between Tarbell's and J. P. Brown's, a tavern at Loring's, a store at the Dodge cottage that was burnt, also at Derby's (?), etc., etc. The farms were smaller then. One man now often holds two or three old farms. We walk in a deserted country.

The Major Heywood and mill roads together turn out of the Marlborough road just beyond the Desert. The former keeps the left to the powder-mills, the latter the right to the sawmill. The main road beyond Loring's used to be called Law's Path, where is Law's Brook (south branch of Nagog, *i. e.* Fort Pond?). The old roads furrow the Second Division woods like trenches.

Better men never lecture than they hire to come here. Why don't they ask Edmund Hosmer or George Minott? I would rather hear them decline than most of these hirelings lecture.

Nov. 22. The milkweed pods by the roadside are yet but half emptied of their silky contents. For months the gales are dispersing their seeds, though we have had snow.

Saw E. Hosmer this afternoon making a road for himself along a hillside (I being on my way to Saw Mill Brook). He turned over a stone, and I saw under it many crickets and ants still lively, which had gone into winter quarters there apparently. There were many little galleries leading under the stone, indenting the hardened earth like veins. (*Mem.* Turn over a rock in midwinter and see if you can find them.) That is the reason, then, that I have not heard the crickets lately. I have frequently seen them lurking under the caves or portico of a stone, even in midsummer.

At the brook the partridge-berries checker the ground with their leaves, now interspersed with red berries. The cress at the bottom of the brook is doubly beautiful now, because it is green while most other plants are sere. It rises and falls and waves with the current. There are many young hornbeams there which still retain their withered leaves. As I returned through Hosmer's field, the sun was setting just beneath a black cloud by which it had been obscured, and as it had been a cold and windy afternoon, its light, which fell suddenly on some white pines between me and it, lighting them up like a shim-

mering fire, and also on the oak leaves and chestnut stems, was quite a circumstance. It was from the contrast between the dark and comfortless afternoon and this bright and cheerful light, almost fire. The eastern hills and woods, too, were clothed in a still golden light. The light of the setting sun, just emerged from a cloud and suddenly falling on and lighting up the needles of the white pine between you and it, after a raw and louring afternoon near the beginning of winter, is a memorable phenomenon. A sort of Indian summer in the day, which thus far has been denied to the year. After a cold gray day this cheering light almost warms us by its resemblance to fire.

Nov. 23. Sunday. The trees (counting all three inches in diameter) in Conantum Swamp are:—

Bass	6
Black ash	8
Elm	16 (See if all are really elms.)
Red (?) oak	2
White ash	2
Walnut	3
Apple.....	5
Maple	9
Hornbeam.....	2
Swamp white (?) oak	1

Dogwood also there is, and cone-bearing willow, and what kind of winterberry with a light-colored bark?

Another such a sunset to-night as the last, while I was on Conantum.

Nov. 24. Setting stakes in the swamp (Ministerial). Saw seven black ducks fly out of the peat-hole. Saw there also a tortoise still stirring, the painted tortoise, I believe.

Found on the south side of the swamp the *Lygodium palmatum*, which Bigelow calls the only climbing fern in our latitude, an evergreen, called (with others) snake-tongue, as I find in Loudon.

The Irishman who helped me says, when I ask why his countrymen do not learn trades, — do something but the plainest and hardest work, — they are too old to learn trades when they come here.

Nov. 25. This morning the ground is again covered with snow, deeper than before.

In the afternoon walked to the east part of Lincoln. Saw a tree on the turnpike full of hickory-nuts which had an agreeable appearance. Saw also quite a flock of the pine grosbeak, a plump and handsome bird as big as a robin. When returning between Bear Hill and the railroad, the sun had set and there was a very clear amber light in the west, and, turning about, we were surprised at the darkness in the east, the crescent of night, almost as if the air were thick, a thick snow-storm were gathering, which, as we had faced the west, we were not prepared for; yet the air was clear.

That kind of sunset which I witnessed on Saturday and Sunday is perhaps peculiar to the late autumn. The sun is unseen behind a hill. Only this bright white light like a fire falls on the trembling needles of the pine.

When surveying in the swamp on the 20th last, at

sundown, I heard the owls. Hosmer said: "If you ever minded it, it is about the surest sign of rain that there is. Don't you know that last Friday night you heard them and spoke of them, and the next day it rained?" This time there were other signs of rain in abundance. "But night before last," said I, "when you were not here, they hooted louder than ever, and we have had no rain yet." At any rate, it rained hard the 21st, and by that rain the river was raised much higher than it has been this fall.

Nov. 30. Sunday. A rather cold and windy afternoon, with some snow not yet melted on the ground. Under the south side of the hill between Brown's and Tarbell's, in a warm nook, disturbed three large gray squirrels and some partridges, who had all sought out this bare and warm place. While the squirrels hid themselves in the tree-tops, I sat on an oak stump by an old cellar-hole and mused. This squirrel is always an unexpectedly large animal to see frisking about. My eye wanders across the valley to the pine woods which fringe the opposite side, and in their aspect my eye finds something which addresses itself to my nature. Methinks that in my mood I was asking Nature to give me a sign. I do not know exactly what it was that attracted my eye. I experienced a transient gladness, at any rate, at something which I saw. I am sure that my eye rested with pleasure on the white pines, now reflecting a silvery light, the infinite stories of their boughs, tier above tier, a sort of basaltic structure, a crumbling precipice of pine horizontally stratified. Each pine is like a great green feather stuck in the ground. A myriad white pine

boughs extend themselves horizontally, one above and behind another, each bearing its burden of silvery sunlight, with darker seams between them, as if it were a great crumbling piny precipice thus stratified. On this my eyes pastured, while the squirrels were up the trees behind me. That, at any rate, it was that I got by my afternoon walk, a certain recognition from the pine, some congratulation. Where is my home? It is indistinct as an old cellar-hole, now a faint indentation merely in a farmer's field, which he has plowed into and rounded off its edges years ago, and I sit by the old site on the stump of an oak which once grew there. Such is the nature where we have lived. Thick birch groves stand here and there, dark brown (?) now with white lines more or less distinct.

The *Lygodium palmatum* is quite abundant on that side of the swamp, twining round the goldenrods, etc., etc.