IV

JANUARY, 1852

(ÆT. 34)

Jan. 1. Mr. Frost did not like Mrs. S——'s lecture last night; did not like what she said about the clergy. Said it was too *transcendental* for him. This is the profane swearing of such men.

I have observed that one mood is the natural critic of another. When possessed with a strong feeling on any subject foreign to the one I may be writing on, I know very well what of good and what of bad I have written on the latter. It looks to me now as it will ten years hence. My life is then earnest and will tolerate no makeshifts nor nonsense. What is tinsel or euphuism or irrelevant is revealed to such a touchstone. In the light of a strong feeling, all things take their places, and truth of every kind is seen for such. Now let me read my verses, and I will tell you if the god has had a hand in them. I wish to survey my composition for a moment from the least favorable point of view. I wish to be translated to the future, and look at my work as it were at a structure on the plain, to observe what portions have crumbled under the influence of the elements.

9.30 P. M. — To Fair Haven.
Moon little more than half full. Not a cloud in the

sky. It is a remarkably warm night for the season, the ground almost entirely bare. The stars are dazzlingly bright. The fault may be in my own barrenness, but methinks there is a certain poverty about the winter night's sky. The stars of higher magnitude are more bright and dazzling, and therefore appear more near and numerable, while those that appear indistinct and infinitely remote in the summer, imparting the impression of unfathomability to the sky, are scarcely seen at all. The front halls of heaven are so brilliantly lighted that they quite eclipse the more remote. The sky has fallen many degrees.

The river has risen and flooded the meadows again. The white pines, now seen against the moon, with their *single* foliage, look thin.

These are some of the differences between this and the autumn or summer nights: the stiffened glebe under my feet, the dazzle and seeming nearness of the stars, the duller gleam from ice on rivers and ponds, the white spots in the fields and streaks by the wall-sides where are the remains of drifts, yet unmelted. Perhaps the only thing that spoke to me on this walk was the bare, lichen-covered gray rock at the Cliff, in the moonlight, naked and almost warm as in summer.

I have so much faith in the power of truth to communicate itself, that I should not believe a friend if he should tell me that he had given credit to an unjust rumor concerning me. Suspect! Ah! yes, you may suspect a thousand things, but I well know that that which you suspect most confidently of all, is just the

truth. Your other doubts but flavor this your main suspicion; they are the condiments which, taken alone, do simply bite the tongue.

McKean has sawed another of the pines under Fair Haven. He says it made eighty-two feet in length of mill-logs, and was so straight that it would have made a first-rate mast eighty feet long. I told him that Nathan Hosmer had told me that he once helped saw down a pine three feet in diameter, that they sawed it clean through and it still stood on the stump, and it took two men to push it over. McKean could understand how this might be done by wedging. He says that he often runs his saw straight through a tree without wedges and without its pinching to within an eighth of an inch of the other side before it breaks. To do this you must begin on the side toward which the tree leans. Of course it does not lean any more so as to pinch the saw till you have got beyond the heart. It will then make room for itself and be relieved by the tipping of the tree. A green hand would begin on the other side and so split the tree up the middle.

The worst kind of *chigo*, or tick, to get under your skin is yourself in an irritable mood.

I believe it was Chalmers who said, speaking of Coleridge, that for his part he wanted ideas which he could see all round and not such as he must look at away up in the heavens. Such a man, one would say, would never look at the moon, because she never turns her other side to us, but holds it steadily toward the heavens beyond; and the light which comes from ideas

which have their orbit as distant from the earth, and which is no less cheering and enlightening to the benighted traveller than that of the moon and stars, is naturally reproached or nicknamed as moonshine by such. Ideas that soar above the earth cannot be seen all round, but ever have one side turned toward the heavens. They are moonshine, are they? Very well, then, do your night travelling when there is no moon to light you; but I will be thankful for the light that reaches me from the star of least magnitude. I will be thankful that I see so much as one side of a celestial idea, one side of the rainbow and the sunset sky, the *face* of God alone.[1]

Jan. 3. Oak-apples are a winter fruit. The leaves being gone, they are now conspicuous and shine in the sun. Some trees are quite full of them. Do they not suggest that all vegetable fruit is but the albumen about young animal life?

The ground has been bare for some days, and the weather warm. The river has risen, and now the meadows are frozen so as to bear, — a dark, thin, but rather opaque ice, as if covered with steam, — and I see now travelling, sweeping, coursing over it, in long winrows, fine pellets of snow, like cotton, fine, round, and dry, which I do not detect in the air before they fall. They lodge against a rail and make a small drift. So once more the skating will be spoiled.

A spirit sweeps the string of the telegraph harp, and strains of music are drawn out endlessly like the wire

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 324; Riv. 398, 399.]

itself. We have no need to refer music and poetry to Greece for an origin now. What becomes of the story of a tortoise-shell on the seashore now? The world is young, and music is its infant voice. I do not despair of such a world where you have only to stretch an ordinary wire from tree to tree to hear such strains drawn from it by New England breezes as make Greece and all antiquity seem poor in melody. Why was it made that man should be thrilled to his inmost being by the vibrating of a wire? Are not inspiration and ecstasy a more rapid vibration of the nerves swept by the inrushing excited spirit, whether zephyral or boreal in its character.

Jan. 4. To Fair Haven on the ice partially covered with snow.

The cracks in the ice showing a white cleavage. What is their law? Somewhat like foliage, but too rectangular, like the characters of some Oriental language. I feel as if I could get grammar and dictionary and go into it. They are of the form which a thin flake of ice takes in melting, somewhat rectangular with an irregular edge.

The pond is covered, — dappled or sprinkled, — more than half covered, with flat drifts or patches of snow which has lodged, of graceful curving outlines. One would like to skim over it like a hawk, and detect their law.

Jan. 5. To-day the trees are white with snow — I mean their stems and branches — and have the true

wintry look, on the storm side. Not till this has the winter come to the forest. They look like the small frostwork in the path and on the windows now, especially the oak woods at a distance, and you see better the form which their branches take. That is a picture of winter, and now you may put a cottage under them and roof it with snow-drifts, and let the smoke curl up amid the boughs in the morning.

Sitting on the Cliffs, I see plainly for the first time that the island in Fair Haven is the triangular point of a hill cut off, and forty or fifty rods west, on the mainland, I see the still almost raw and shelving edge of the bank, the raw sand-scar as if sodded over the past summer, — as a man cuts off a piece of pudding on his plate, — as if the intermediate portion of the hill had sunk and left a cranberry meadow.

It is with singular emotions that I stand on this Cliff and reflect in what age of the world this revolution, the evidence of which is of to-day, was evidenced by a raw and shelving sand-bank.

After this revolution how long came the settlers out of England to Musketaquid, came our political revolution and Concord Fight? After the natural elements were quiet, perchance.

It was a dark day, the heavens shut out with dense snow-clouds and the trees wetting me with the melting snow, when I went through Brown's wood on Fair Haven, which they are cutting off, and suddenly looking through the woods between the stems of the trees, I thought I saw an extensive fire in the western horizon. It was a bright coppery-yellow fair-weather cloud along

the edge of the horizon, gold with some alloy of copper, in such contrast with the remaining clouds as to suggest nothing less than fire. On that side the clouds which covered our day, low in the horizon with a dun and smoke-like edge, were rolled up like a curtain with heavy folds, revealing this further bright curtain beyond.

Jan. 7. Last evening, walked to Lincoln to lecture in a driving snow-storm, but the invisible moon gave light through the thickest of it. I observed how richly the snow lay on the cedars.

This afternoon, in dells of the wood and on the lee side of the woods, where the wind has not disturbed it, the snow still lies on the trees as richly as I ever saw it. It was just moist enough to stick. The pitch pines wear it best, their plumes hang down like the feathers of the ostrich or the tail of the cassowary, so purely white, — I am sorry that I cannot say *snowy* white, for in purity it is like nothing but itself. From contrast with the dark needles and stems of the trees, whiter than ever on the ground. Even the bare apple tree limbs and twigs in the hollows support each a little ridge of snow, a collar of snow, five or six inches high. The trees are bent under the weight into a great variety of postures, — arches, etc. Their branches and tops are so consolidated by the burden of snow, and they stand in such new attitudes, the tops often like canopies or parasols, agglomerated, that they remind me of the pictures of palms and other Oriental trees. In some places bent to the ground on each side, quite closing the path, bowed

not with grief but in a contented wintry sleep; looking often, when the tops or branches or plumes only are bent, like travellers facing the storm, whose heads and shoulders are covered with a white mantle and whose drapery falls about them revealing protuberances here and there, — forehead or elbows. Travellers bending to the storm under white mantles through which you can tell where their heads and elbows are. Sometimes the lower limbs of the pitch pine, divested of plumes, under such plumes and canopies, bear each their ridge of snow, crossing and interlacing each other like latticework, so that you cannot look more than a rod into the rich tracery. The sunlight, breaking forth at sundown on these snowed [*sic*] trees, is faint and uncertain like a sprinkling of red oak leaves, — a whitish glow on the snow and the oak leaves. I hardly know if it is shining on the oak leaves or not.

Now from the shanty plain I see the sun descending into the west. There is something new, a *snow*-bow, in the east, on the snow-clouds, merely a *white* bow, hardly any color distinguishable. But in the west what inconceivable crystalline purity of blue sky! (C. says it is color of a robin's egg); and I see feathery clouds on this ground, some travelling north, others directly in the opposite direction, though apparently close together. Some of these cloudlets are waifs and droppings from rainbows, clear rainbow through and through, spun out of the fibre of the rainbow, or, rather, as if the children of the west had been pulling rainbow (instead of tow) that had done service, old junk of rainbow, and cast it into flox.

And then such fantastic feathery scrawls of gauze-like vapor on this elysian ground! We never tire of the drama of sunset. I go forth each afternoon and look into the west a quarter of an hour before sunset, with fresh curiosity, to see what new picture will be painted there, what new panorama exhibited, what new dissolving views. Can Washington Street or Broadway show anything as good? Every day a new picture is painted and framed, held up for half an hour, in such lights as the Great Artist chooses, and then withdrawn, and the curtain falls.

And then the sun goes down, and long the afterglow gives light. And then the damask curtains glow along the western window. And now the first star is lit, and I go home.

Jan. 8. I notice that almost every track which I made yesterday in the snow — perhaps ten inches deep — has got a dead leaf in it, though none is to be seen on the snow around.

Even as early as 3 o'clock these winter afternoons the axes in the woods sound like nightfall, like the sound of a twilight labor.

Reading from my manuscripts to Miss Emerson this evening and using the word "god," in one instance, in perchance a merely heathenish sense, she inquired hastily in a tone of dignified anxiety, "Is that god spelt with a little *g*?" Fortunately it was. (I had brought in the word "god" without any solemnity of voice or connection.) So I went on as if nothing had happened.

I perceive that the livid lettuce-leaved lichen which I gathered the other day has dried almost an ash or satin, with no green about [it], — has bleached.

Jan. 9. The sky shut out by snow-clouds. It spits a little snow and then holds up. Where a path has been shovelled through drifts in the road, and the cakes of snow piled up, I see little azures, little heavens, in the crannies and crevices. The deeper they are, and the larger masses they are surrounded by, the darker-blue they are. Some are a very light blue with a tinge of green. Methinks I oftenest see this when it is snowing. At any rate the atmosphere must be in a peculiar state. Apparently the snow absorbs the other rays and reflects the blue. It has strained the air, and only the blue rays have passed through the sieve. Is, then, the blue water of Walden snow-water? I see the heaven hiding in nooks and crevices in the snow. Into every track which the teamster makes, this elysian, empyrean atmosphere rushes. The blue of my eye sympathizes with this blue in the snow.

The great pine woods have a peculiar appearance this afternoon. This rather fine snow has lodged in their limbs and given them a grayish look, but as it lies thicker along the core of the limb, it has the appearance, at a distance, of dim white lines lying at various angles like a vast network over the woods, or, rather, like cobwebs seen on the grass in summer mornings. A kind of film over them.

I never saw the pitch pines better snowed up. They look like Chinese pagodas.

"The majestic prerogative which Linnæus was possessed of," says Stoever, "to confer titles in the vegetable kingdom," did not escape the criticism of Haller, who says: "We would reserve all those garlands for those alone who are real and experienced botanists. Nor would we ever assign such a denomination to the mere hopes conceived of men who have not passed the ordeal of merit."

Jan. 11. What need to travel? There are no sierras equal to the clouds in the sunset sky. And are not these substantial enough? In a low or level country, perchance, the forms of the clouds supply the place of mountains and precipices to the eye, the grosser atmosphere makes a mountainous country in the sky.

The glory of these afternoons, though the sky may be mostly overcast, is in the ineffably clear blue, or else pale greenish-yellow, patches of sky in the west just before sunset. The whole cope of heaven seen at once is never so elysian. Windows to heaven, the heavenward windows of the earth. The end of the day is truly Hesperian.

R. W. E. showed me yesterday a letter from H. Greenough, the sculptor, on architecture, which he liked very much. Greenough's idea was to make architectural ornaments have a core of truth, a necessity and hence a beauty. All very well, as I told R. W. E., from Greenough's point of view, but only a little better than the common dilettantism.[1] I was afraid I should say hard things if I said more.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 51; Riv. 75.]

We sometimes find ourselves living fast, — unprofitably and coarsely even, — as we catch ourselves eating our meals in unaccountable haste. But in one sense we cannot live too leisurely. Let me not live as if time was short. Catch the pace of the seasons; have leisure to attend to every phenomenon of nature, and to entertain every thought that comes to you. Let your life be a leisurely progress through the realms of nature, even in guest-quarters.

This reminds me that the old Northman kings did in fact board round a good part of the time, as schoolmasters sometimes with us.

But as for Greenough, I felt as if it was dilettantism, and he was such a reformer in architecture as Channing in social matters. He began at the cornice. It was only how to put a core of truth within the ornaments, that every sugar-plum might in fact have an almond or carroway seed in it, and not how the inhabitant, the indweller, might be true and let the ornaments take care of themselves. He seemed to me to lean over the cornice and timidly whisper this half truth to the rude indwellers, who really knew it more interiorly than he. What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the character and necessities of the indweller and builder, without even a thought for mere ornament, but an unconscious nobleness and truthfulness of character and life; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded and accompanied, aye, created, by a like unconscious beauty of life. One of the most beautiful buildings in this country is a logger's

hut in the woods, and equally beautiful will be the citizen's suburban box, when the life of the indweller shall be as simple and as agreeable to the imagination, and there is as little straining after effect in the style of his dwelling. Much it concerns a man, forsooth, how a few sticks are slanted under him or over him, what colors are daubed upon his box! One man says, in his despair, "Take up a handful of the earth at your feet, and paint your house that color!" What an abundance of leisure he must have on his hands! An enterprise to improve the style of cottage architecture! Grow your own house, I say. Build it after an Orphean fashion. When R. W. E. and Greenough have got a few blocks finished and advertised, I will look at them. When they have got my ornaments ready I will wear them. What do you take up a handful of dirt for? Why don't you paint your house with your blood? with your sweat? Thin not the paint with *spirits* of turpentine. There's a deal of nonsense abroad.[1]

The question is not where did the traveller go? what places did he see? — it would be difficult to choose between places — but who was the traveller? how did he travel? how genuine an experience did he get? For travelling is, in the main, like as if you stayed at home, and then the question is how do you live and conduct yourself at home? What I mean is that it might be hard to decide whether I would travel to Lake Superior, or Labrador, or Florida. Perhaps none would be worth the while, if I went by the usual mode. But if I travel in a simple, primitive, original manner, standing in a

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 51–53; Riv. 75–78.]

truer relation to men and nature, travel away from the old and commonplace, get some honest experience of life, if only out of my feet and homesickness, then it becomes less important whither I go or how far. I so see the world from a new and more commanding point of view. Perhaps it is easier to live a true and natural life while travelling, — as one can move about less awkwardly than he can stand still.

Jan. 12. *Monday.* C. says that he studied lichens a little while, but he found that if you pursued that study you must give up man. It was so thin, and there was so little of man in it! Why, the whole of it was n't more than an inch thick.

He went to hear Noggs [?] the other night. It was the poorest lecture he ever heard. Did n't know why he did n't come out. But then he found himself in a handsome hall well lighted and warmed, and thought it would be cheaper to spend the evening there than to go home.

I sometimes think that I may go forth and walk hard and earnestly, and live a more substantial life and get a glorious experience; be much abroad in heat and cold, day and night; live more, expend more atmospheres, be weary often, etc., etc. But then swiftly the thought comes to me, Go not so far out of your way for a truer life; keep strictly onward in that path alone which your genius points out. Do the things which lie nearest to you, but which are difficult to do. Live a purer, a more thoughtful and laborious life, more true to your friends and neighbors, more noble and magnanimous, and that will be better than a wild walk. To live in relations of truth and sincerity with men is to dwell in a frontier country. What a wild and unfrequented wilderness that would be! What Saguenays of magnanimity that might be explored! Men talk about travelling this way or that, as if seeing were all in the eyes, and a man could sufficiently report what he stood bodily before, when the seeing depends ever on the being. All report of travel is the report of victory or defeat, of a contest with every event and phenomenon and how you came out of it. A blind man who possesses inward truth and consistency will see more than one who has faultless eyes but no serious and laborious astronomer to look through them. As if the eyes were the only part of a man that travelled! Men convert their property into cash, ministers fall sick to obtain the assistance of their parishes, all chaffer with sea-captains, etc., as if the whole object were to get conveyed to some part of the world a pair of eyes merely. A telescope conveyed to and set up at the Cape of Good Hope at great expense, and only a Bushman to look through it. Nothing like a little internal activity called life — if it were only walking much in a day — to keep the eyes in good order; no such collyrium.

Jan. 13. James Wood, Jr., told me this afternoon of a white pine in Carlisle which the owner was offered thirty dollars for and refused. He had bought the lot for the sake of the tree, which he left standing.

Here I am on the Cliffs at half past three or four o'clock. The snow more than a foot deep over all the

land. Few if any leave the beaten paths. A few clouds are floating overhead, downy and dark. Clear sky and bright sun, and yet no redness. Remarkable, yet admirable, moderation that this should be confined to the morning and evening. Greeks were they who did it. A mother-o'-pearl tint is the utmost they will give you at midday, and this but rarely. Singular enough, twenty minutes later, looking up, I saw a long, light-textured cloud stretching from north to south, with a dunnish mass and an enlightened border, with its under edge toward the west all beautiful mother-o'-pearl, as remarkable as a rainbow, stretching over half the heavens; and underneath it, in the west, were flitting mother-o'-pearl clouds, which change their loose-textured form and melt rapidly away, never any so fast, even while I write. Before I can complete this sentence, I look up and they are gone, like smoke or rather the steam from the engine in the winter air. Even a considerable cloud, like a fabulous Atlantis or unfortunate isle in the Hesperian sea, is dissolved and dispersed in a minute or two, and nothing is left but the pure ether. Then another comes by magic, is born out of the pure blue empyrean, with beautiful mother-o'-pearl tints, where not a shred of vapor was to be seen before, not enough to stain a glass or polished steel blade. It grows more light and porous; the blue deeps are seen through it here and there; only a few flocks are left; and now these too have disappeared, and no one knows whither it is gone. You are compelled to look at the sky, for the earth is invisible.

Would not snow-drifts be a good study, — their

philosophy and poetry? Are they not worthy of a chapter? Are they always built up, or not rather carved out of the heaps of snow by the wind passing through the chinks in the walls? I do not see yet but they are builded. They are a sort of ripple-marks which the atmospheric sea makes on the snow-covered bottom.

Why can't I go to his office and talk with James Wood and learn his facts? But I should impose a certain restraint on him. We are strictly confined to our men; to whom we give liberty. I saw him with E. Wood snaking trees out of the woods on Fair Haven, — rude Northman work, with their chains and skids, in which Elijah Wood took the lead. If a tree stood in the way it was cut down, and pushed aside as it fell that it might not strike the oxen, though it might scare the horse, who began to dash through the woods with his rattling harness on, reckless and horse-like, ready to harm himself if not others, instinctively apprehending harm from that operation, — ready to impale himself upon the first stake and expose his bloody bowels to the air and spoil that piece of workmanship that he is, — a ghastly sight. So little prudence have horses, like some men. I knew one once, tied to a post, that, when a cannon [was] fired, reared and came down upon the post's sharp top, which pierced clean through and came out at his back, impaling him; and so he met his fate, and his equine spirit departed. As reckless as a horse that is "started."

We forget to strive and aspire, to do better ever than is expected of us. I cannot stay to be congratulated. I would leave the world behind me. We must with-

draw from our flatterers, even from our friends. They drag us down. It is rare that we use our thinking faculty as resolutely as an Irishman his spade. To please our friends and relatives we turn out our silver ore in cartloads, while we neglect to work our mines of gold known only to ourselves far up in the Sierras, where we pulled up a bush in our mountain walk, and saw the glittering treasure. Let us return thither. Let it be the price of our freedom to make that known.

Jan. 14. When I see the dead stems of the tansy, goldenrod, johnswort, asters, hardhack, etc., etc., rising above the snow by the roadside, sometimes in dense masses, which carry me back in imagination to their green summer life, I put faintly a question which I do not yet hear answered, Why stand they there? Why should the dead corn-stalks occupy the field longer than the green and living did? Many of them are granaries for the birds. It suggests that man is not an annual. He sees the annual plants wither. Nor does his sap cease to flow in the winter as does that of the trees, though, perhaps, even he may be slightly dormant at that season. It is to most a season to some extent of inactivity. He lays up his stores, and is perhaps a little chilled. On the approach of spring there is an increased flow of spirits, of blood, in his veins.

Here is a dense mass of dry tansy stems, attached still to the same roots which sustained them in summer, but what an interval between these and those. Here are no yellow disks; here are no green leaves; here is no strong odor to remind some of funerals.

Here is a change as great as can well be imagined. Bare, brown, scentless stalks, with the dry heads still adhering. Color, scent, and flavor gone.

We are related to all nature, animate and inanimate, and accordingly we share to some extent the nature of the dormant creatures. We all feel somewhat confined by the winter; the nights are longer, and we sleep more. We also wear more clothes. Yet the thought is not less active; perhaps it is more so.

What an effect the sight of green grass in the winter has on us! as at the spring by the Corner road.

Clouds are our mountains, and the child who had lived in a plain always and had never seen a mountain would find that he was prepared for the sight of them by his familiarity with clouds.

This dark, dull veil which shuts out the sky makes a favorable light and a frame under which to view those sailing island clouds in the clearer west.

I love to see now a cock of deep-reddish meadow-hay full of ferns and other meadow plants of the coarsest kind. My imagination supplies the green and the hum of bees. What a memento of summer such a haycock! To stand beside a haycock covered with snow in winter, through which the dry meadow plants peep out! And yet our hopes survive.

The snow flowing over the walls and across the road looks like a mist before me. In some places the wind passing through the chinks of the walls appears to have burst or cut through old snow-heaps, and so carved out these fantastic forms.[1]

[1] *Vide* forward to the 17th [p. 199].

Standing on the hill on the Baker Farm to-day, the level shrub oak plain under Fair Haven appeared as if Walden and other smaller ponds, and perhaps Fair Haven, had anciently sunk down in it, and the Cliffs been pushed up, for the level is continued in many cases even over extensive hollows. The shrub oaks here have lost their leaves, *i. e.* the small scrubby kind on this hill. I can see at a distance above the level of the snow a few bushes and grasses which mark the edge of the river. They seem to write the word *rivus* there. That is all or most to indicate that there is a river there. It is betrayed by that thin sedgy and willowy line or border marking the snow yonder.

As usual, there was no blueness in the ruts and crevices in the snow to-day. What kind of atmosphere does this require? When I observed it the other day, it was a rather moist air, some snow falling, the sky completely overcast, and the weather not very cold. It is one of the most interesting phenomena of the winter.

I noticed to-night, about sundown, that the clouds in the eastern horizon were the deepest indigo-blue of any I ever saw. Commencing with a pale blue or slate in the west, the color deepened toward the east.

The Governor, Bout*well* (?), lectured before the Lyceum to-night. Quite democratic. He wore no badge of his office. I believe that not even his brass buttons were official, but, perchance, worn with some respect to his station. If he could have divested himself a little more completely in his tone and manner of a sense of the dignity which belonged to his office, it would have been better still.

Jan. 15. We have heard a deal about English comfort. But may you not trace these stories home to some wealthy Sardanapalus who was able to pay for obsequious attendance and for every luxury? How far does it describe merely the tact and selfishness of the wealthy class? Ask the great mass of Englishmen and travellers, whose vote alone is conclusive, concerning the comfort they enjoyed in second and third class accommodations in steamboats and railroads and eating and lodging houses. Lord Somebody-or-other may have made himself comfortable, but the very style of his living makes it necessary that the great majority of his countrymen should be uncomfortable.

Are the second-class cars, the second-class accommodations on board steamboats, etc., *i. e.* the only class that can be compared with our own, remarkable for their comfort?

I do not know but the poet is he who generates poems. By continence he rises to creation on a higher level, a supernatural level.

When King Olaf the Saint was about to fight with the bonders to recover his lost kingdom, his scalds, who stood about him, composed songs about the events which would soon be taking place. Thormod's song concluded thus, —

> "One viking cheer! — then, stead of words,
> We'll speak with our death-dealing swords."

"These songs," says the chronicler, "were immediately got by heart by the army." Surely the scald's office was a significant and an honorable one then.

"This night the king lay with his army around him

on the field, — and lay long awake in prayer to God, and slept but little. Towards morning a slumber fell on him, and when he awoke daylight was shooting up. The king thought it too early to awaken the army, and asked where Thormod the scald was. Thormod was at hand, and asked what was the king's pleasure. 'Sing us a song,' said the king. Thormod raised himself up, and sang so loud that the whole army could hear him. He began to sing the old Biarkamal [composed and sung by Biarke before an old battle].[1]

. . . . . .

"Then the troops awoke, and when the song was ended the people thanked him for it; and it pleased many, as it was suitable to the time and occasion, and they called it the house-carle's whet."

For the first time this winter I notice snow-fleas this afternoon in Walden Wood. Wherever I go they are to be seen, especially in the deepest ruts and foot-tracks. Their number is almost infinite. It is a rather warm and moist afternoon, and feels like rain. I suppose that some peculiarity in the weather has called them forth from the bark of the trees.

It is good to see Minott's hens pecking and scratching the ground. What never-failing health they suggest! Even the sick hen is so naturally sick — like a green leaf turning to brown. No wonder men love to have hens about them and hear their creaking note. They are even laying eggs from time to time still — the undespairing race!

[1] [The brackets are Thoreau's.]

Minott was telling me to-day about his going across lots on snow-shoes. Why do they not use them now? He thinks the snows are not so deep.

It is a good school the farmers' sons go to these afternoons, loading and hauling great mill-logs bigger than any cannon, — a sort of battle in the forest. I think there must be an excitement derived from their labor such as they cannot tell. After reading of the life and battles of the Northmen in Snorro Sturleson's Chronicle, these labors most remind me of that. Some of these logs are for pumps; most are for boards and timbers and spiles for bridges. I met one old pupil of mine stretched at his length upon a vast ballista, or battering-ram, of a log, while one yoke and loaded sled went on alone before and another followed behind. How they renew and wear out the paths through the woods! They think I'm loafing. I think they are drudging for gain. But no doubt our employment is more alike than we suspect, and we are each serving the great Master's ends more than our own. I have my work in the woods where I meet them, though my logs do not go to the same mill. I make a different use of skids. These men, too, who are sledding wood and sawing the logs into lengths in the woods, appear to me employed more after the old Northman fashion than the mechanics in their shops or the merchants behind their counters. There are many more men now in the woods than in summer.

The weather has been moderate for a fortnight. The overlapping snow-drifts by the path-sides remind me of some marble tombs and carving I have seen. I see where from time to time the teamster has laid his

whip in them. He stains the spotless purity of the snow with his tobacco-juice.

In an account of a Chinese funeral, it is said the friends who attended "observed no particular order in their march." That seems a more natural and fitter way, more grief-like. The ranks should be broken. What must be the state of morals in that country where custom requires the chief mourner to put on the outward signs of extreme grief when he does not feel it, to throw himself on the ground and sob and howl though not a tear is shed, and require the support of others as he walks! What refuge can there be for truth in such a country?

Jan. 16. I see that to some men their relation to mankind is all-important. It is fatal in their eyes to outrage the opinions and customs of their fellow-men. Failure and success are, therefore, never proved by them by absolute and universal tests. I feel myself not so vitally related to my fellow-men. I impinge on them but by a point on one side. It is not a Siamese-twin ligature that binds me to them. It is unsafe to defer so much to mankind and the opinions of society, for these are always and without exception heathenish and barbarous, seen from the heights of philosophy. A wise man sees as clearly the heathenism and barbarity of his own countrymen as those of the nations to whom his countrymen send missionaries. The Englishman and American are subject to equally many national superstitions with the Hindoo and Chinese. My countrymen are to me foreigners. I have but little more sympathy with them than with the mob of India or of China.

All nations are remiss in their duties and fall short of their standards. Madame Pfeiffer says of the Parsees, or Fire-Worshippers, in Bombay, who should all have been on hand on the esplanade to greet the first rays of the sun, that she found only a few here and there, and some did not make their appearance till 9 o'clock.

I see no important difference between the assumed gravity and the bought funeral sermon of the parish clergyman and the howlings and strikings of the breast of the hired mourning women of the East.

Bill Wheeler had two clumps for feet and progressed slowly, by short steps, having frozen his feet once, as I understood. Him I have been sure to meet once in five years, progressing into the town on his stubs, holding the middle of the road as if he drove an invisible herd before him, especially on a military day, — out of what confines, whose hired man having been, I never knew, — in what remote barn having quartered all these years. He seemed to belong to a different caste from other men, and reminded me of both the Indian Pariah and martyr. I understood that somebody was found to give him his drink for the few chores he could do. His meat was never referred to, he had so sublimed his life. One day since this, not long ago, I saw in my walk a kind of shelter such as woodmen might use, in the woods by the Great Meadows, made of meadow-hay cast over a rude frame. Thrusting my head in at

a hole, as I am wont to do in such cases, I found Bill Wheeler there curled up asleep on the hay, who, being suddenly wakened from a sound sleep, rubbed his eyes and inquired if I found any game, thinking I was sporting. I came away reflecting much on that man's life, — how he communicated with none; how now, perchance, he did chores for none; how low he lived, perhaps from a deep principle, that he might be some mighty philosopher, greater than Socrates or Diogenes, simplifying life, returning to nature, having turned his back on towns; how many things he had put off, — luxuries, comforts, human society, even his feet, — wrestling with his thoughts. I felt even as Diogenes when he saw the boy drinking out of his hands, and threw away his cup. Here was one who went alone, did no work, and had no relatives that I knew of, was not ambitious that I could see, did not depend on the good opinion of men. Must he not see things with an impartial eye, disinterested, as a toad observes the gardener? Perchance here is one of a sect of philosophers, the only one, so simple, so abstracted in thought and life from his contemporaries, that his wisdom is indeed foolishness to them. Who knows but in his solitary meadow-hay bunk he indulges, in thought, only in triumphant satires on men? Who knows but here is a superiority to literature and such things, unexpressed and inexpressible? Who has resolved to humble and mortify himself as never man was humbled and mortified. Whose very vividness of perception, clear knowledge, and insight have made him dumb, leaving no common consciousness and ground of parlance with

his kind, — or, rather, his unlike kindred! Whose news plainly is not my news nor yours. I was not sure for a moment but here was a philosopher who had left far behind him the philosophers of Greece and India, and I envied him his advantageous point of view. I was not to be deceived by a few stupid words, of course, and apparent besottedness. It was his position and career that I contemplated.

Channing has great respect for McKean, he stands on so low a level. Says he's great for conversation. He never says anything, hardly answers a question, but keeps at work; never exaggerates, nor uses an exclamation, and does as he agrees to. He appears to have got his shoulder to the wheel of the universe. But the other day he went greater lengths with me, as he and Barry were sawing down a pine, both kneeling of necessity. I said it was wet work for the knees in the snow. He observed, looking up at me, "We pray without ceasing."

But to return to Bill. I would have liked to know what view he took of life. A month or two after this, as I heard, he was found dead among the brush over back of the hill, — so far decomposed that his coffin was carried to his body and it was put into it with pitchforks. I have my misgivings still that he may have died a Brahmin's death, dwelling at the roots of trees at last, and been absorbed into the spirit of Brahm; though I have since been assured that he suffered from disappointed love, — was what is called love-cracked, — than which can there be any nobler suffering, any fairer death, for a human creature? — that that made

him to drink, froze his feet, and did all the rest for him. Why have not the world the benefit of his long trial?

Jan. 17. One day two young women — a Sunday — stopped at the door of my hut and asked for some water. I answered that I had no cold water but I would lend them a dipper.[1] They never returned the dipper, and I had a right to suppose that they came to steal. They were a disgrace to their sex and to humanity. Pariahs of the moral world. Evil spirits that thirsted not for water but threw the dipper into the lake. Such as Dante saw. What the lake to them but liquid fire and brimstone? They will never know peace till they have returned the dipper. In all the worlds this is decreed.

"Evergreens" would be a good title for some of my things, — or "Gill-go-over-the-Ground," or "Wintergreen," or "Checkerberry," or "Usnea Lichens," etc., etc. "Iter Canadense."

One day an inoffensive, simple-minded pauper from the almshouse, who, with others, I often saw used as fencing-stuff, standing or sitting on a bushel in the fields to keep cattle from straying, visited me, and expressed a wish to live as I did. He told me in the simplest manner (and therefore quite superior to anything that is called humility — it was too simple and truthful for that) that he was "deficient in intellect." These were his words. The Lord had made him so, and yet he supposed that the Lord cared for him as much as for another. Said he: "I have always been so from my childhood; I never had much mind. It was the Lord's

[1] [See *Walden*, p. 167; Riv. 234.]

will, I suppose. I am weak in the head. I was not like other children." I have rarely been so fortunate as to meet a fellow-man on such promising ground. It was so solemnly true all that he said.[1]

The other day, the 14th, as I was passing the further Garfield house beyond Holden's, with my pantaloons, as usual, tucked into my boots (there was no path beyond Holden's), I heard some persons in Garfield's shed, but did not look round, and when I had got a rod or two beyond, I heard some one call out impudently from the shed, quite loud, something like "Holloa, mister! what do you think of the walking?" I turned round directly, and saw three men standing in the shed. I was resolved to discomfit them, — that they should prove their manhood, if they had any, and find something to say, though they had nothing before, that they should make amends to the universe by feeling cheap. They should either say to my face and eye what they had said to my back, or they should feel the meanness of having to change their tone. So I called out, looking at one, "Do you wish to speak to me, sir?" No answer. So I stepped a little nearer and repeated the question, when one replied, "Yes, sir." So I advanced with alacrity up the path they had shovelled. In the meanwhile one ran into the house. I thought I had seen the nearest one [before]. He called me by name, faintly and with hesitation, and held out his hand half unconsciously, which I did not decline, and I inquired gravely if he wished to say anything to me. He could only wave me to the other and

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 167, 168; Riv. 235, 236.]

mutter, "My brother." I approached *him* and repeated the question. He looked as if he were shrinking into a nutshell; a pitiable object he was. He looked away from me while he began to frame some business, some surveying, that he might wish to have done. I saw that he was drunk, that his brother was ashamed of him, and I turned my back on him in the outset of this indirect but drunken apology.

When Madame Pfeiffer arrived in Asiatic Russia, she felt the necessity of wearing other than a travelling dress, when she went to meet the authorities, for, as she remarks, she "was now in a civilized country, where . . . people are judged of by their clothes." This is another barbarous trait.[1]

It seemed that from such a basis as the poor weak-headed pauper had laid, — such a basis of truth and frankness, — an intercourse might go forward to something better than the intercourse of sages.[2]

It was on the 4th of July [3] that I put a few articles of furniture into a hay-rigging, some of which I had made myself, and commenced housekeeping.

There is the world-wide fact that, from the mass of men, the appearance of wealth, dress, and equipage alone command respect. They who yield it are the heathen who need to have missionaries sent to them; [4] and they who cannot afford to live and travel but in this *respectable* way are, if possible, more pitiable still.

In proportion as I have celestial thoughts, is the necessity for me to be out and behold the western sky

[1] [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 168; Riv. 236.]
[3] [See *Walden*, p. 91; Riv. 133.] [4] [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38.]

before sunset these winter days. That is the symbol of the unclouded mind that knows neither winter nor summer. What is your thought like? That is the hue, that the purity, and transparency, and distance from earthly taint of my inmost mind, for whatever we see without is a symbol of something within, and that which is farthest off is the symbol of what is deepest within. The lover of contemplation, accordingly, will gaze much into the sky. Fair thoughts and a serene mind make fair days. The rainbow is the symbol of the triumph which succeeds to a grief that has tried us to our advantage, so that at last we can smile through our tears. It is the aspect with which we come out of the house of mourning. We have found our relief in tears. As the skies appear to a man, so is his mind. Some see only clouds there; some, prodigies and portents; some rarely look up at all; their heads, like the brutes', are directed toward earth. Some behold there serenity, purity, beauty ineffable. The world run to see the panorama, when there is a panorama in the sky which few go out to see.

Methinks there might be a chapter, when I speak of hens in the thawy days and spring weather on the chips, called "Chickweed" or "Plantain."

To seagoing men the very mountains are but boats turned upside down, as the Northmen in Norway speak of the "keel-ridge of the country," *i. e.* the ridge of the mountains which divide the waters flowing east and west [1] — as if they were a boat turned bottom up.

Those western vistas through clouds to the sky show

[1] [See *Journal*, vol. iv, p. 353.]

the clearest heavens, clearer and more elysian than if the whole sky is comparatively free from clouds, for then there is wont to be a vapor more generally diffused, especially near the horizon, which, in cloudy days, is absorbed, as it were, and collected into masses; and the vistas are clearer than the unobstructed cope of heaven.

The endless variety in the forms and texture of the clouds! — some fine, some coarse grained. I saw tonight overhead, stretching two thirds across the sky, what looked like the backbone, with portions of the ribs, of a fossil monster. Every form and creature is thus shadowed forth in vapor in the heavens.

Saw a teamster coming up the Boston road this afternoon, sitting on his load, which was bags of corn or salt, apparently, behind two horses and beating his hands for warmth. He finally got off and walked behind, to make his blood circulate faster, and I saw that he was a large man. But when I came near him, I found that he was a monstrous man and dwarfed all whom he stood by, so that I did not know whether he was large or they were small. Yet, though he stood so high, he stooped considerably, more than anybody I think of, and he wore a flat glazed cap to conceal his height, and when he got into the village he sat down on his bags again. I heard him remark to a boy that it was a cold day, and it was; but I wondered that he should feel the cold so sensibly, for I thought it must take a long time to cool so large a body.

I learned that it was Kimball of Littleton, that probably he was not twenty. The family was not *large*

Wild, who took the census, said so, and that his sister said he could n't do much, — health and strength not much. It troubled him that he was so large, for people looked at him. There is at once something monstrous, in the bad sense, suggested by the sight of such a man. Great size is inhuman. It is as if a man should be born with the earth attached to him. I saw him standing up on a sled, talking with the driver, while his own team went on ahead; and I supposed from their comparative height that his companion was sitting, but he proved to be standing. Such a man is so much less human; that is what may make him sad.

Those old Northmen were not like so many men in these days, whom you can pass your hand through because they have not any backbone. When Asmund was going to kill Harek of Thiottö with a thin hatchet, King Magnus said, "'Rather take this axe of mine.' It was thick, and made like a club. 'Thou must know, Asmund,' added he, 'that there are hard bones in the old fellow.'" Asmund struck Harek on the head, and gave him his death-wound, but when he returned to the king's house, it appeared that "the whole edge of the axe was turned with the blow."

It appears to me that at a very early age the mind of man, perhaps at the same time with his body, ceases to be elastic. His intellectual power becomes something defined and limited. He does not think expansively, as he would stretch himself in his growing days. What was flexible sap hardens into heart-wood, and there is no further change. In the season of youth,

methinks, man is capable of intellectual effort and performance which surpass all rules and bounds; as the youth lays out his whole strength without fear or prudence and does not feel his limits. It is the transition from poetry to prose. The young man can run and leap; he has not learned exactly how far, he knows no limits. The grown man does not exceed his daily labor. He has no strength to waste.

Jan. 18. *Sunday.* E. Hosmer tells me that his daughter, walking with Miss Mary Emerson to some meeting or lecture, — perhaps it was Mrs. Smith's, — the latter was saying that she did not want to go, she did not think it was worth while to be running after such amusements, etc., etc. Whereupon Miss Hosmer asked, "What do you go for, then?" "None of your business," was the characteristic reply. Sometimes, when a woman was speaking where gentlemen were present, she put her hand on her and said, "Be still. I want to hear the men talk."

I still remember those wonderful sparkles at Pelham Pond. The very sportsmen in the distance, with their guns and dogs, presented some surfaces on which a sparkle could impinge, such was the transparent, flashing air. It was a most exhilarating, intoxicating air, as when poets sing of the sparkling wine.

I have seen some men in whom the usually posthumous decay appeared to have commenced. They impressed me as actually nothing alive; as if there was not salt enough in their composition to preserve them. I could not approach them without a smelling-bottle

at my nose, — not till the Fates strengthened the pickle in which they were.

While the snow is falling, the telegraph harp is resounding across the fields. As if the telegraph approached so near an attribute of divinity that music naturally attended it.

To-day, again, I saw some of the *blue* in the crevices of the snow. It is snowing, but not a moist snow. Perhaps the snow in the air, as well as on the ground, takes up the white rays and reflects the blue. There is no blue to be seen overhead, and it has as it were taken refuge in the chinks and crevices in the snow.

What is like the peep or whistle of a bird in the midst of a winter storm?

The pines, some of them, seen through this fine driving snow, have a bluish hue.

Barbarous as we esteem the Chinese, they have already built their steamboat. Swiftly the arts spread in these days. Madame Pfeiffer visited the garden of a mandarin in Canton, "in which," says she, "I was the more interested because it was the birthplace of the first Chinese steamboat, built by order of the mandarin and by Chinese workmen. The mandarin had gone through his studies in North America, where he remained for thirteen years." She was there after 1846.

Jan. 19. I felt a little wonder the other night that the large man went so as a matter of course with the human race, that he did not suspect that he belonged to some other genus, that he did not go off with some menagerie, with the elephant or the camelopard. You

do not have to go far, to grow much, to get beyond the sphere of humanity. Why he should exist as a sort of attaché to the human race. Where was the rest of his family? He was, as it were, astray. There is something comically pathetic about it. What made him think that he belonged to the human race? Did he gradually grow up to that faith? His was a vegetable growth. His face lacked expression. When his large features were done, his face still bulged out and grew this way and that, just like a mammoth squash which magnifies all its warts. Great growth of body suggests the vegetable. He was pumpkin pine, sycamore. The extra growth was squash and pumpkin all. It was more flesh than his soul could animate. There is something monstrous even about his thoughts.

The snow, which has drifted badly, ceasing about 2 o'clock, I went forth by way of Walden road, whither no sleigh or sled had passed this day, the fine, dry snow blowing and drifting still. It was pleasant to make the first tracks in this road through the woods, where all the road, except a faint depression, two long slight valleys, marking the ruts, was obliterated, — a smooth, white plain between the bordering woods, which only a few dry oak leaves coursed over. I sank into the snow for long distances more than three feet at each step. From Bare Hill I looked into the west, the sun still fifteen minutes high. The snow blowing far off in the sun, high as a house, looked like the mist that rises from rivers in the morning. I came across lots through the dry white powder from Britton's camp. Very cold on the causeway and on the hilltops. The

low western sky an Indian red, after the sun was gone.

Jan. 20. Walked down the Boston road. It was good to look off over the great unspotted fields of snow, the walls and fences almost buried in it and hardly a turf or stake left bare for the starving crows to light on. There is no track nor mark to mar its purity beyond the single sled track, except where, once in half a mile, some traveller has stepped aside for a sleigh to pass.

The farmers nowadays can cart out peat and muck over the frozen meadows. Somewhat analogous, methinks, the scholar does; drives in with tight-braced energy and winter cheer on to his now firm meadowy grounds, and carts, hauls off, the virgin loads of fertilizing soil which he threw up in the warm, soft summer. We now bring our muck out of the meadows, but it was thrown up first in summer. The scholar's and the farmer's work are strictly analogous. Easily he now conveys, sliding over the snow-clad ground, great loads of fuel and of lumber which have grown in many summers, from the forest to the town. *He* deals with the dry hay and cows, the spoils of summer meads and fields, stored in his barns, doling it out from day to day, and manufactures milk for men. When I see the farmer driving into his barn-yard with a load of muck, whose blackness contrasts strangely with the white snow, I have the thoughts which I have described. He is doing like myself. My barn-yard is my journal.

I do not know but it is too much to read one newspaper in a week, for I now take the weekly *Tribune*, and for a few days past, it seems to me, I have not dwelt in Concord; the sun, the clouds, the snow, the trees say not so much to me. You cannot serve two masters. It requires more than a day's devotion to know and to possess the wealth of a day.[1] To read of things distant and sounding betrays us into slighting these which are then apparently near and small. We learn to look abroad for our mind and spirit's daily nutriment, and what is this dull town to me? what are these plain fields and the aspects of this earth and these skies? All summer and far into the fall I unconsciously went by the newspapers and the news, and now I find it was because the morning and the evening were full of news to me. My walks were full of incidents. I attended not to the affairs of Europe, but to my own affairs in Concord fields.[2]

To see the sun rise or go down every day would preserve us sane forever, — so to relate ourselves, for our mind's and body's health, to a universal fact.[3]

Last spring our new stone bridge was said to be about to fall. The selectmen got a bridge architect to look at it and, acting on his advice, put up a barrier and warned travellers not to cross it. Of course, I believed with the rest of my neighbors that there was no *immediate* danger, for there it was standing, and the barrier knocked down, that travellers might go over,

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 471; *Misc.*, Riv. 247.]
[2] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 472; *Misc.*, Riv. 275.]
[3] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 472, 473; *Misc.*, Riv. 275.]

as they did with few exceptions. But one day, riding that way with another man, and reflecting that I had never looked into the condition of the bridge myself, and if it should fall with us on it, I should have reason to say what a fool I was to go over when I was warned, I made him stop on this side, merely for principle's sake, and walked over while he rode before, and I got in again at the other end. I paid that degree of respect to the advice of the bridge architect and the warning of the selectmen. It was my companion's daily thoroughfare.

Greeley says of London, "The morning to sleep, the afternoon to business, and the evening to enjoyment, seems the usual routine with the favored classes." They have no morning life then. They are afternoon men. To begin the day at noon!

The days are now sensibly longer, and half past five is as light as five was.

Jan. 21. One day, when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger and black, fiercely contending with one another, and rolling over on the chips. It was evidently a struggle for life and death which had grown out of a serious feud. Having once got hold, they never let go of each other, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips, each retaining his hold with mastiff-like pertinacity. Looking further, I found to my astonishment that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum* but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red

always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black.[1] They covered all the hills and vales of my wood-yard, and, indeed, the ground was already strewn with the dead, both red and black. It was the only war I had ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the red republicans and the black despots or imperialists. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and never human soldiers fought so resolutely. I watched a couple, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, that were fast locked in each other's embraces, now at noonday prepared to fight till the sun went down. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vise to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board, while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had divested him of several of his members. None manifested a disposition to retreat from the combat equal or unequal. It was evident that their battle-cry was conquer or die. They fought like mastiffs or bulldogs, who will not let go though all their legs are cut off. In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the side-hill of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had dispatched his foe or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs. He

[1] [The story of this battle is told in *Walden*, pp. 253–256; Riv. 355–360.]

saw this unequal combat from afar, — for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red, — he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants, then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore leg, leaving the other to select among his own members, and so there were three united for life and death apparently, — united for life until death, — as if a new kind of attraction had been invented, which put all other locks and cements to shame.

I should not wonder if they had their respective musical bands stationed on some chip and playing their national airs the while to cheer the dying combatants. (Whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it.) I was myself excited somewhat, even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is no other fight recorded in Concord that will bear a moment's comparison with this. I have no doubt they had as just a cause, one or even both parties, as our forefathers, and that the results will be as important and memorable. And there was far more patriotism and heroism. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden. I saw no disposition to retreat.

I took up the chip on which the three I have particularly described were struggling, carried it into my house, and placed it under a tumbler on my window-sill, wishing [to] see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first-mentioned red ant, I saw that though he

was assiduously gnawing at the near fore leg of his enemy, having severed his remaining feeler, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose own breastplate was apparently too thick for him; and the dark carbuncles of his eyes shone with ferocity such as wars only could excite. They struggled for half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again, the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the former were hanging on either side of him still apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavoring, with feeble struggles, being without feelers and with only one or two legs, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them; which at length, after half an hour more, he had accomplished. I raised the tumbler, and he went off over the window-sill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat and had a pension settled on him, I do not know. But I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter.

Which party was victorious I never learned, nor the cause of the war. But I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings harrowed and excited by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door.

To record truths which shall have the same relation and value to the next world, *i. e.* the world of thought and of the soul, that political news has to this.

This winter they are cutting down our woods more seriously than ever, — Fair Haven Hill, Walden, Linnæa Borealis Wood, etc., etc. Thank God, they cannot cut down the clouds!

History used to be the history of successive kings or their reigns, — the Williams, Henrys, Johns, Richards, etc., etc., all of them great in somebody's estimation. But we have altered that considerably. Hereafter it is to be to a greater extent the history of peoples. You do not hear some King Louis or Edward or Leopold referred to now by sensible men with much respect.

Heard Higginson lecture to-night on Mohammed. Why did I not like it better? Can I deny that it was good? Perhaps I am bound to account to *myself* at least for any lurking dislike for what others admire and I am not *prepared* to find fault with. Well, I did not like it, then, because it did not make me like it, it did not carry me away captive. He is not simple enough. For the most part the manner overbore, choked off, and stifled, put out of sight and hearing, the matter. I was inclined to forget that he was speaking, conveying ideas; thought there had been an intermission. Never endeavor consciously to supply the tone which you think proper for certain sentences. It is as if a man whose mind was at ease should supply the tones and gestures for a man in distress who found only the words; as when one makes a speech and another behind him makes gestures. Then he reminded me of Emerson, and I could not afford to be reminded of Christ himself. Yet who can deny that it was good? But it was that intelligence, that way of viewing things (combined with much peculiar *talent*), which is the

common property of this generation. A man does best when he is most himself.

I never realized so distinctly as this moment that I am peacefully parting company with the best friend I ever had, by each pursuing his proper path. I perceive that it is possible that we may have a better *understanding* now than when we were more at one. Not expecting such essential agreement as before. Simply our paths diverge.

Jan. 22. Having occasion to get up and light a lamp in the middle of a sultry night, — perhaps it was to exterminate the mosquito race, — I observed a stream of large black ants passing up and down one of the bare corner posts, those descending having their large white larvæ in their mouths, the others making haste up for another load. I supposed that they had found the heat so great just under the roof as to compel them to remove their offspring to a cooler place by night. They had evidently taken and communicated the resolution to improve the coolness of the night to remove their young to a cooler and safer locality. One stream running up, another down, with great industry.

But why I changed? why I left the woods? I do not think that I can tell. I have often wished myself back. I do not know any better how I ever came to go there. Perhaps it is none of my business, even if it is yours. Perhaps I wanted a change. There was a little stagnation, it may be. About 2 o'clock in the afternoon the world's axle creaked as if it needed greasing, as if the oxen labored with the wain and could hardly get their

load over the ridge of the day. Perhaps if I lived there much longer, I might live there forever. One would think twice before he accepted heaven on such terms. A ticket to Heaven must include tickets to Limbo, Purgatory, and Hell. Your ticket to the boxes admits you to the pit also. And if you take a cabin passage, you can smoke, at least forward of the engine, — you have the liberty of the whole boat. But no, I do not wish for a ticket to the boxes, nor to take a cabin passage. I will rather go before the mast and on the deck of the world. I have no desire to go "abaft the engine."[1]

What is it that I see from one mile to two miles distant in the horizon on all sides from my window, but the woods, which still, almost without exception, encircle our New England towns. They still bound almost every view. They have been driven off only so far. Where still wild creatures haunt. How long will these last? Is this a universal and permanent feature? Have the oldest countries retained it? Is it not an interesting and important question whether these are decreasing or not? Look out what window I will, my eyes rest in the distance on a forest! Is this fact of no significance? Is this circumstance of no value? Why such pains in old countries to plant gardens and parks? A certain sample of wild nature, a certain primitiveness.

One man proposed a book in which visitors should write their names; said he would be at the expense of it!!! Did he consider what the expense of it would be? As if it were of any use, when a man failed to make any memorable impression on you, for him to leave his name.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 356; Riv. 498.]

But it may be that he writes a good hand, who had not left any fame. No! I kept a book to put their fames in. I was at the expense of it.[1]

The milkman is now filling his ice-house.

The towns thus bordered, with a fringed and tasselled border, each has its preserves. Methinks the town should have more supervision and control over its parks than it has. It concerns us all whether these proprietors choose to cut down all the woods this winter or not.

I must say that I do not know what made me leave the pond. I left it as unaccountably as I went to it. To speak sincerely, I went there because I had got ready to go; I left it for the same reason.

How much botany is indebted to the Arabians! A great part of our common names of plants would appear to be Arabic.

Was it not fit that I should live on rice mainly, who loved so well to read the philosophy of India?[2]

The pleasures of the intellect are permanent, the pleasures of the heart are transitory.

My friend invites me to read my papers to him. Gladly would I read, if he would hear. He must not hear coarsely but finely, suffering not the *least* to pass through the sieve of hearing. To associate with one for years with joy who never met you thought with thought! An overflowing sympathy while yet there is no intellectual communion. Could we not meet on higher ground with the same heartiness? It is dull work reading to one who does not apprehend you.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 169; Riv. 237, 238.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 67; Riv. 97.]

How can it go on? I will still abide by the truth in my converse and intercourse with my friends, whether I am so brought nearer to or removed further from them. I shall not be the less your friend for answering you truly though coldly. Even the estrangement of friends is a fact to be serenely contemplated, as in the course of nature. It is of no use to lie either by word or action. Is not the everlasting truth agreeable to you?

To set down such choice experiences that my own writings may inspire me and at last I may make wholes of parts. Certainly it is a distinct profession to rescue from oblivion and to fix the sentiments and thoughts which visit all men more or less generally, that the contemplation of the unfinished picture may suggest its harmonious completion. Associate reverently and as much as you can with your loftiest thoughts. Each thought that is welcomed and recorded is a nest egg, by the side of which more will be laid. Thoughts accidentally thrown together become a frame in which more may be developed and exhibited. Perhaps this is the main value of a habit of writing, of keeping a journal, — that so we remember our best hours and stimulate ourselves. My thoughts are my company. They have a certain individuality and separate existence, aye, personality. Having by chance recorded a few disconnected thoughts and then brought them into juxtaposition, they suggest a whole new field in which it was possible to labor and to think. Thought begat thought.

One mother-o'-pearl tint is common to the winter sky half an hour before sundown.

I love to look at Ebby Hubbard's oaks and pines on the hillside from Brister's Hill. Am thankful that there is one old miser who will not sell nor cut his woods, though it is said that they are wasting. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

It is a sharp, cutting cold day, stiffening the face. Thermometers have lately sunk to 20°.

When a man asks me a question, I look him in the face. If I do not see any inquiry there, I cannot answer it. A man asked me about the coldness of this winter compared with others last night. I looked at him. His face expressed no more curiosity or relationship to me than a custard pudding. I made him a random answer. I put him off till he was in earnest. He wanted to make conversation.

The surface of the snow in the fields is that of pretty large waves on a sea over which a summer breeze is sweeping.

That in the preaching or mission of the Jesuits in Canada which converted the Indians was their sincerity. They could not be suspected of sinister motives. The savages were not poor observers and reasoners. The priests were, therefore, sure of success, for they had paid the price of it.

We resist no true invitations; they are irresistible. When my friend asks me to stay, and I do not, unless I have another engagement it is because I do not find myself invited. It is not in his will to invite me. We should deal with the real mood of our friends. I visited my friend constantly for many years, and he postponed our friendship to trivial engagements, so that I saw him

not at all. When in after years he had leisure to meet me, I did not find myself invited to go to him.

Jan. 23. The snow is so deep and the cold so intense that the crows are compelled to be very bold in seeking their food, and come very near the houses in the village. One is now walking about and pecking the dung in the street in front of Frank Monroe's. They remind me, as they sail along over the street, of the turkey buzzards of the South, and perhaps many hard winters in succession would make them as tame.

There is a vegetable life, as well as a spiritual and animal life, in us, for the hair and nails continue to grow after the *anima* has left the body, and the spiritual and animal life is dead. There is also probably an inorganic mineral life.

The surface of the snow on the 20th was not yet disturbed, or rippled even, by the wind.

P. M. — Deep Cut, going to Fair Haven Hill.

No music from the telegraph harp on the causeway, where the wind is strong, but in the Cut this cold day I hear memorable strains. What must the birds and beasts think where it passes through woods, who heard only the squeaking of the trees before! I should think that these strains would get into their music at last. Will not the mockingbird be heard one day inserting this strain in his medley? It intoxicates me. Orpheus is still alive. All poetry and mythology revive. The spirits of all bards sweep the strings. I hear the clearest silver, lyre-like tones, Tyrtæan tones. I think of Menander and the rest. It is the most glorious music I ever heard.

All those bards revive and flourish again in that five minutes in the Deep Cut. The breeze came through an oak still wearing its dry leaves. The very fine clear tones seemed to come from the very core and pith of the telegraph-pole. I know not but it is my own chords that tremble so divinely. There are barytones and high sharp tones, etc. Some come sweeping seemingly from further along the wire. The latent music of the earth had found here a vent. Music Æolian. There were two strings, in fact, one each side. I do not know but this will make me read the Greek poets. Thus, as ever, the finest uses of things are the accidental. Mr. Morse did not invent this music.

I see where the squirrels have torn the pine cones in pieces to come at their seeds. And in some cases the mice (?) have nibbled the buds of the pitch pines, where the plumes have been bent down by the snow.

The Blue Hills of Milton are now white.

Lindley, in Loudon, dismisses the winterberries by saying, "The species are low shrubs of little beauty." Says nothing of the berry.

There are some whose ears help me so that my things have a rare significance when I read to them. It is almost too good a hearing, so that for the time I regard my own writing from too favorable a point of view.

Just before sunset there were few clouds or specks to be seen in the western sky, but the sun gets down lower, and many dark clouds are made visible, their sides toward us being darkened. In the bright light they were but floating feathers of vapor; now they swell into dark evening clouds.

It is a fair sunset, with many purplish fishes in the horizon, pinkish and golden with bright edges; like a school of purplish whales, they sail or float down from the north; or like leopards' skins they hang in the west. If the sun goes behind a cloud, it is still reflected from the least haziness or vapor in that part of the sky, the air is so clear; and the afterglow is remarkably long. And now the blaze is put out, and only a few glowing clouds, like the flickering light of the fire, skirt the west. And now only the brands and embers, mixed with smoke, make an Indian red along the horizon. And the new moon and the evening star, close together, preside over the twilight scene.

The thermometer was at 21° this morning.

Some botanical names have originated in a mere blunder. Thus the *Citharexylum melanocardium* of the West Indies, "called by the French *fidèle*, from its faithfulness or durability in building," the English have corrupted into fiddle-wood, and so the genus goes. It is unfit for musical instruments. (Lindley.)

Jan. 24. If thou art a writer, write as if thy time were short, for it is indeed short at the longest. Improve each occasion when thy soul is reached. Drain the cup of inspiration to its last dregs. Fear no intemperance in that, for the years will come when otherwise thou wilt regret opportunities unimproved. The spring will not last forever. These fertile and expanding seasons of thy life, when the rain reaches thy root, when thy vigor shoots, when thy flower is budding, shall be fewer and farther between. Again I say,

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Use and commit to life what you cannot commit to memory. I hear the tones of my sister's piano below. It reminds me of strains which once I heard more frequently, when, possessed with the inaudible rhythm, I sought my chamber in the cold and communed with my own thoughts. I feel as if I then received the gifts of the gods with too much indifference. Why did I not cultivate those fields they introduced me to? Does nothing withstand the inevitable march of time? Why did I not use my eyes when I stood on Pisgah? Now I hear those strains but seldom. My rhythmical mood does not endure. I cannot draw from it and return to it in my thought as to a well all the evening or the morning. I cannot dip my pen in it. I cannot work the vein, it is so fine and volatile. Ah, sweet, ineffable reminiscences!

In thy journal let there never be a jest! To the earnest there is nothing ludicrous.

P. M. — Down the Flint's Pond road and return across.

Where the mountains in the horizon are well wooded and the snow does not lodge, they still look blue. All but a narrow segment of the sky in the northwest and southeast being suddenly overcast by a passing kind of snow-squall, though no snow falls, I look into the clear sky with its floating clouds in the northwest as from night into day, now at 4 P. M. The sun sets about five.

Walden and White Ponds are a vitreous greenish

blue, like patches of the winter sky seen in the west before sundown.[1]

Even the dry leaves are gregarious, and they collect in little heaps in the hollows in the snow, or even on the plane surfaces, driven in flocks by the wind. How like shrinking maidens wrapping their scarfs about them they flutter along! The oaks are made thus to retain their leaves, that they may play over the snow-crust and add variety to the winter landscape. If you wished to collect leaves, you would only have to make holes in the snow for traps. I see that my tracks are often filled two feet deep with them. They are blown quite across Walden on the wavy snow. Two flitting along together by fits and starts, now one running ahead, then another, remind me of squirrels. Mostly white oak leaves, but the other oaks, *i. e.* especially red oaks, also. There is a certain refinement or cultivation, even femininess, suggested by the rounded lobes, the scalloped edge, of the white oak leaf, compared with the wild, brusque points of the red and black and scarlet and shrub oaks.

Now I see a faint bluish tinge in the ruts, but it is warmer and there is a snow-bearing cloud over all.

When the cars passed, I being on the pond (Walden), the sun was setting and suffusing the clouds far and near with rosy light. Even the steam from the engine, as its flocks or wreaths rose above the shadow of the woods, became a rosy cloud even fairer than the rest, but it was soon dissipated.

I see in the woods the woodman's embers, which

[1] [*Walden*, p. 197; Riv. 277, 278.]

have melted a circular hole in the snow, where he warms his coffee at noon. But these days the fire does not melt the snow over a space three feet across.

These woods! Why do I not feel their being cut more sorely? Does it not affect me nearly? The axe can deprive me of much. Concord is sheared of its pride. I am certainly the less attached to my native town in consequence. One, and a main, link is broken. I shall go to Walden less frequently.

When the telegraph harp trembles and wavers, I am most affected, as if it were approaching to articulation. It sports so with my heart-strings. When the harp dies away a little, then I revive for it. It cannot be too faint. I almost envy the Irish, whose shanty in the Cut is so near, that they can hear this music daily standing at their door. How strange to think that a sound so soothing, elevating, educating, telling of Greece and the Muses, might have been heard sweeping other strings when only the red man ranged these fields! might, perchance, in course of time have civilized him!

If an Indian brave will not fear torture and aids his enemies to torment him, what become of pity and a hundred other Christian virtues? The charitable are suddenly without employment.

When I come out on to the causeway, I behold a splendid picture in the west. The damask-lined clouds, like rifts from a coal mine, which sparkle beneath, seen diving into the west. When clouds rise in mid-afternoon, you cannot foresee what sunset picture they are preparing for us. A single elm by Hayden's is relieved against the amber and golden border, deepening into dusky but soon to be red, in the horizon.

And now the crescent of the moon is seen, and her attendant star is farther off than last night.

Jan. 25. Sunday. The snow has been for some time more than a foot deep on a level, and some roads drifted quite full; and the cold for some weeks has been intense, as low as twenty and twenty-one degrees in the early morning. A Canadian winter. Some say that we have not had so long a spell of cold weather since '31, when they say it was not seen to thaw for six weeks. But last night and to-day the weather has moderated. It is glorious to be abroad this afternoon. The snow melts on the surface. The warmth of the sun reminds me of summer. The dog runs before us on the railroad causeway and appears to enjoy it as much as ourselves. C. remarks truly that most people do not distinguish between a pup and a dog, and treat both alike, though the former may not yet have a tooth in his head.

When Sophia told R. Rice that Dr. B. said that Foster was an infidel and was injuring the young men, etc., "Did he?" he observed. "Well, he is a great man. He swims in pretty deep water, but it is n't very extensive." When she added, "Mr. Frost says that Garrison had to apologize for printing Foster's sermon," he said, "Did he? Well, they may set as many back fires as they please; they won't be of any use; they 'll soon go out." She said the selectmen were going to ask seven dollars instead of five for the hall. But he

said that he would build them a hall, if they would engage to give him five dollars steadily. To be sure, it would not be quite so handsome as the present, but it should have the same kind of seats.

The clay in the Deep Cut is melting and streaming down, glistening in the sun. It is I that melts, while the harp sounds on high, and the snow-drifts on the west side look like clouds.

We turned down the brook at Heywood's meadow. It was worth the while to see how the water, even in the marsh where the brook is almost stagnant, sparkled in this atmosphere, for though warm it is remarkably clear. Water which in summer would look dark and perhaps turbid now sparkles like the lakes in November. This water is the more attractive, since all around is deep snow. The brook here is full of cat-tails (*Typha latifolia*, reed-mace). I found, on pulling open or breaking in my hand, as one would break bread, the still nearly perfect spikes of this fine reed, that the flowers were red or crimson at their base, where united to the stem. When I rubbed off thus what was at first but a thimbleful of these dry flowerets, they suddenly took in air and flushed up like powder, expanding like feathers and foam, filling and overflowing my hand, to which they imparted a sensation of warmth quite remarkable. I was astonished to see how a small quantity was expanded and inflated on being released and given to the air, and I could not be tired with repeating the experiment. I think a single one would more than fill a half-peck measure if they lay as light as at first in the air. It is something magical to one

who tries it for the first time. Like a puff of powder it flashes up. You do not know at first where they all come from. It is the conjurer's trick in nature, equal to taking feathers enough to fill a bed out of a hat. When you had done, but still will scrape the almost bare stem, still they overflow your hand as before. See it again, and try the combustibility of the pollen. As the flowerets are opening and liberating themselves, showing their red extremities, it has the effect of a changeable color.

Ah, then, the brook beyond, its rippling waters and its sunny sands! They made me forget that it was winter. Where springs oozed out of the soft bank over the dead leaves and the green sphagnum, they had melted the snow, or the snow had melted as it fell perchance, and the rabbits had sprinkled the mud about on the snow. The sun reflected from the sandy, gravelly bottom sometimes a bright sunny streak no bigger than your finger, reflected from a ripple as from a prism, and the sunlight, reflected from a hundred points of the surface of the rippling brook, enabled me to realize summer. But the dog partly spoiled the transparency of the water by running in the brook. A pup that had never seen a summer brook.

I am struck and attracted by the parallelism of the twigs of the hornbeam, *fine* parallelism.

Having gone a quarter of a mile beyond the bridge, where C. calls this his Spanish Brook, I looked back from the top of the hill on the south into this deep dell. Where the white pines stood thick, rising one above another, reflecting the sunlight, so soft and warm by

contrast with the snow, as never in summer, — for the idea of warmth prevailed over the cold which the snow suggested, though I saw through and between them to a distant snow-clad hill, and also to oaks red with their dry leaves, — and maple limbs were mingled with the pines, I was on the verge of seeing something, but I did not. If I had been alone and had had more leisure, I might have seen something to report.

Now we are on Fair Haven, still but a snow plain. Far down the river the shadows on Conantum are bluish, somewhat like the holes in the snow, perchance. The sun is half an hour high, perhaps. Standing near the outlet of the pond, I look up and down the river with delight, it is so warm and the air is, notwithstanding, so clear. When I invert my head and look at the woods half a mile down the stream, they suddenly sink lower in the horizon and are removed full two miles off; yet the air is so clear that I seem to see every stem and twig with beautiful distinctness. The fine tops of the trees are so relieved against the sky that I never cease to admire the minute subdivisions. It is the same when I look up the stream. A bare hickory under Lee's Cliff, seen against the sky, becomes an interesting, even beautiful, object to behold. I think where have I been staying all these days. I will surely come here again.

When I first paddled a boat on Walden, it was completely surrounded by thick and lofty pine and oak woods, and in some of its coves grape-vines had run over the trees and formed bowers under which a boat could pass. The hills which form its shores are so steep, and the woods on them were then so high, that, as you

looked down the pond from west to east, it looked like an amphitheatre for some kind of sylvan spectacle. I have spent many an hour, when I was younger, floating over its surface as the zephyr willed, having paddled to the middle, lying on my back across the seats of my boat, in a summer forenoon, and looking into the sky above, dreaming awake, until I was aroused by my boat touching the sand, and I arose to see what shore my fates had impelled me to; when idleness was the most attractive and productive industry. Many a forenoon have I stolen away thus, preferring thus to spend the most valued part of the day. For I was rich, if not in money, in sunny hours and summer days, and spent them lavishly. Nor do I regret that I did not spend more of them behind a counter or in the workshop or the teacher's desk, in which last two places I have spent so many of them.[1]

Jan. 26. Men have ever associated the verdure of evergreen trees — hemlocks, firs, spruces, etc. — with the moisture and coolness of mountains. Our word pine is from the Celtic "*pin* or *pen*, a rock or mountain," from which is derived the name of this genus in many languages. Hence the name "Apennines" (*Alpes pennines*). "*Pinaster* is Pliny's name for the wild pine." (All this from Lindley in Loudon.) But *Pinus* does not include hemlock or larch or fir.

Foster's success is in reaching such men as Houghton, Goodwin, Rice, McKean, Pratt, E. Hubbard, S. Barrett, and others, — Wilson, and even Dillingham;

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 212, 213; Riv. 300, 301.]

some of whom are men of sterling worth and probity, the salt of the earth, and confessedly the very best of our citizens, though the Church may have called them infidels. They were only more faithful than the rest. They did not go off at half-cock. I do not know more honest or trustworthy men than Rice, Pratt, Barrett, McKean, etc. Frost and Anger [?] might preach forever; they would never reach these men. Houghton never realized before that the design of any preacher was to do good to men. In this movement of the waters, the sectarians and formalists are left floating on chips and slivers of doctrine. In preaching to the men whom I have named they make the mistake of preaching or writing on the letter and not the meaning of the letter, the creed and not the life. When a truer man comes, the assembly see the difference at last between his life and the life of his predecessors, and the doctrines of the latter properly pass for *wind*. They say of the former, "He hits the nail on the head." Every shade and degree of hypocrisy will affect the tone of the voice, and the audience will laugh. The rumseller likes Foster better than Manning, though he is strenuously opposed to his traffic, because he is frank and manly with him and not all things to all men. Those men I have named represent the healthy mind of the generation, who have ears to hear. The man may be proud who satisfies them.

A tree seen against other trees is a mere dark mass, but against the sky it has parts, has symmetry and expression.

Whatever wit has been produced on the spur of the moment will bear to be reconsidered and reformed with

phlegm. The arrow had best not be loosely shot. The most transient and passing remark must be reconsidered by the writer, made sure and warranted, as if the earth had rested on its axle to back it, and all the natural forces lay behind it. The writer must direct his sentences as carefully and leisurely as the marksman his rifle, who shoots sitting and with a rest, with patent sights and conical balls beside. He must not merely seem to speak the truth. He must really speak it. If you foresee that a part of your essay will topple down after the lapse of time, throw it down now yourself.[1]

The thousand fine points and tops of the trees delight me; they are the plumes and standards and bayonets of a host that march to victory over the earth. The trees are handsome towards the heavens as well as up their boles; they are good for other things than boards and shingles.

Obey the spur of the moment. These accumulated it is that make the impulse and the impetus of the life of genius. These are the spongioles or rootlets by which its trunk is fed. If you neglect the moments, if you cut off your fibrous roots, what but a languishing life is to be expected? Let the spurs of countless moments goad us incessantly into life. I feel the spur of the moment thrust deep into my side. The present is an inexorable rider. The moment always spurs either with a sharp or a blunt spur. Are my sides calloused? Let us trust the rider, that he knows the way, that he knows when speed and effort are required. What other impulse do we wait for? Let us preserve religiously, secure, pro-

[1] [Channing, p. 248.]

tect the coincidence of our life with the life of nature. Else what are heat and cold, day and night, sun, moon, and stars to us? Was it not from sympathy with the present life of nature that we were born at this epoch rather than at another?

The truest account of heaven is the fairest, and I will accept none which disappoints expectation. It is more glorious to expect a better, than to enjoy a worse.

My life as essentially belongs to the present as that of a willow tree in the spring. Now, now, its catkins expand, its yellow bark shines, its sap flows; now or never must you make whistles of it. Get the day to back you; let it back you and the night.

When the thermometer is down to 20°, the streams of thought tinkle underneath like the rivers under the ice. Thought like the ocean is nearly of one temperature. Ideas, — are they the fishes of thought?

Poetry *implies* the whole truth. Philosophy *expresses* a particle of it.

Would you see your mind, look at the sky. Would you know your own moods, be weather-wise. He whom the weather disappoints, disappoints himself.

Let all things give way to the impulse of expression. It is the bud unfolding, the perennial spring. As well stay the spring. Who shall resist the thaw?

What if all the ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? If there were no physical deeps. I thank God that he made this pond deep and pure for a symbol.[1]

The word is well naturalized or rooted that can be

[1] [*Walden*, p. 316; Riv. 442.]

traced back to a Celtic original. It is like getting out stumps and fat pine roots.

While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought bottomless.[1]

In winter we will think brave and hardy and most native thoughts. Then the tender summer birds are flown.

In few countries do they enjoy so fine a contrast of summer and winter. We really have four seasons, each incredible to the other. Winter cannot be mistaken for summer here. Though I see the boat turned up on the shore and half buried under snow, as I walk over the invisible river, summer is far away, with its rustling reeds. It only suggests the want of thrift, the carelessness, of its owner.

Nature never indulges in exclamations, never says Ah! or Alas! She is not of French descent. She is a plain writer, uses few gestures, does not add to her verbs, uses few adverbs, uses no expletives. I find that I use many words for the sake of emphasis which really add nothing to the force of my sentences, and they look relieved the moment I have cancelled these. Words by which I express my mood, my conviction, rather than the simple truth.

Yesterday, though warm, it was clear enough for water and windows to sparkle.

Youth supplies us with colors, age with canvas. How rare it must be that in age our life receives a new coloring! The heavens were blue when I was young, and that is their color still. Paint is costly. Nevertheless,

[1] [*Walden*, p. 316; Riv. 442.]

let thy report be colorless as it respects the hue of the reporter's mind; only let it have the colors of the thing reported. I think the heavens have had but one coat of paint since I was a boy, and their blue is paled and dingy and worn off in many places. I cannot afford to give them another coat. Where is the man so rich that he can give the earth a second coat of green in his manhood, or the heavens a second coat of blue? Our paints are all mixed when we are young. Methinks the skies need a new coat. Have our eyes any blue to spare? To see some men's heavens you would not suspect they had ever been azure or celestial, but that their painter had cheated them, had taken up a handful of the dirt at their feet and painted them that color, more in harmony with their lives. At least the color must have come out in a shower, in which they had the "blues."

I hear of one good thing Foster said in his sermon the other day, the subject being Nature: "Thank God, there is no doctrine of election with regard to Nature! We are all admitted to her."

To-day I see a few snow-fleas on the Walden road and a slight blueness in the chinks, it being cloudy and melting.

It is good to break and smell the black birch twigs now. The lichens look rather bright to-day, near the town line, in Heywood's wood by the pond. When they are bright and expanded, is it not a sign of a thaw or of rain? The beauty of lichens, with their scalloped leaves, the small attractive fields, the crinkled edge! I could study a single piece of bark for hours. How they flourish! I sympathize with their growth.

The woodpeckers work in Emerson's wood on the Cliff-top, the trees being partly killed by the top, and the grubs having hatched under the bark. The woodpeckers have stripped a whole side of some trees, and in a sound red oak they have dug out a mortise-hole with squarish shoulders, as if with a chisel. I have often seen these holes.

From these cliffs at this moment, the clouds in the west have a singular brassy color, and they are arranged in an unusual manner. A new disposition of the clouds will make the most familiar country appear foreign, like Tartary or Arabia Felix.

About 2 o'clock P. M. these days, after a fair forenoon, there is wont to blow up from the northwest a squally cloud, spanning the heavens, but before it reaches the southeast horizon it has lifted above the northwest, and so it leaves the sky clear there for sunset, while it has sunk low and dark in the southeast.

The men on the freight-train, who go over the whole length of the road, bow to me as to an old acquaintance, they pass me so often, and I think they take me for an "employé;" and am I not? [1]

The flowing clay on the east side is still richer to-day. I know of nothing so purgative of winter fumes and indigestions.[2] And then there is heard the harp high overhead, a new Orpheus modulating, moulding the earth and making the sands to follow its strains. Who is not young again? What more wonderful than that a simple string or wire stretched between two posts, on which the breezes play, can so excite the race

[1] [*Walden*, p. 128; Riv. 181.] [2] [*Walden*, p. 340; Riv. 476.]

of man with its vibrations, producing sounds kindred with the song of bards and the most admirable works of art?

Thaw with his gentle persuasion is more powerful than Thor with his hammer. The one melts, the other but breaks in pieces.[1] In these fresh designs there is more than the freedom of Grecian art, more than acanthus leaves. It flows even over the snow.

The vibrations of that string will surely remind a man of all that is most glorious in his experience, will more than realize to him the stories of the Delphic Oracle, will take him captive, make him mad. The distant is brought near to him through hearing. He abides in the body still, his soul is not quite ravished away, but news from other spheres than he lives in reaches him. It is evident that his life does not pass on that level.

Jan. 27. The peculiarity of a work of genius is the absence of the speaker from his speech. He is but the medium. You behold a perfect work, but you do not behold the worker. I read its page, but it is as free from any man that can be remembered as an impassable desert.

I think that the one word which will explain the Shakespeare miracle is "unconsciousness." If he had known his own comparative eminence, he would not have failed to publish it incessantly, though Bacon did not. There probably has been no more conscious age than the present.

[1] [*Walden*, p. 341; Riv. 477.]

Mill road south of Ministerial Swamp, 3 P. M.

As I stand under the hill beyond J. Hosmer's and look over the plains westward toward Acton and see the farmhouses nearly half a mile apart, few and solitary, in these great fields between these stretching woods, out of the world, where the children have to go far to school; the still, stagnant, heart-eating, life-everlasting, and gone-to-seed country, so far from the post-office where the weekly paper comes, wherein the new-married wife cannot live for loneliness, and the young man has to depend upon his horse for society; see young J. Hosmer's house, whither he returns with his wife in despair after living in the city, — I standing in Tarbell's road, which he alone cannot break out, — the world in winter for most walkers reduced to a sled track winding far through the drifts, all springs sealed up and no digressions; where the old man thinks he may possibly afford to rust it out, not having long to live, but the young man pines to get nearer the post-office and the Lyceum, is restless and resolves to go to California, because the depot is a mile off (he hears the rattle of the cars at a distance and thinks the world is going by and leaving him); where rabbits and partridges multiply, and muskrats are more numerous than ever, and none of the farmer's sons are willing to be farmers, and the apple trees are decayed, and the cellar-holes are more numerous than the houses, and the rails are covered with lichens, and the old maids wish to sell out and move into the village, and have waited twenty years in vain for this purpose and never finished but one room in the house, never plas-

tered nor painted, inside or out, lands which the Indian was long since dispossessed [of], and now the farms are run out, and what were forests are grain-fields, what were grain-fields, pastures; dwellings which only those Arnolds of the wilderness, those *coureurs de bois*, the baker and the butcher visit, to which at least the latter penetrates for the annual calf, — and as he returns the cow lows after; — whither the villager never penetrates, but in huckleberry time, perchance, and if he does not, who does? — where some men's breaths smell of rum, having smuggled in a jugful to alleviate their misery and solitude; where the owls give a regular serenade; — I say, standing there and seeing these things, I cannot realize that this is that hopeful young America which is famous throughout the world for its activity and enterprise, and this is the most thickly settled and Yankee part of it. What must be the condition of the *old* world! The *sphagnum* must by this time have concealed it from the eye.

In new countries men are scattered broadcast; they do not wait for roads to place their houses on, but roads seek out the houses, and each man is a prince in his principality and depends on himself. Perchance when the virgin soil is exhausted, a reaction takes place, and men concentrate in villages again, become social and commercial, and leave the steady and moderate few to work the country's mines.

The snow has been slowly melting, without rain or mist, the last two or three days. It has settled very much, though the caves have not been heard to run by me. In going across lots, I walk in the woods, where

the snow is not so deep, part having been caught in the trees and dissipated in the air, and a part melted by the warmth of the wood and the reflection.

The poison sumach, with its stems hanging down on every side, is a very agreeable object now, seen against the snow.

I do not know but thoughts written down thus in a journal might be printed in the same form with greater advantage than if the related ones were brought together into separate essays. They are now allied to life, and are seen by the reader not to be far-fetched. It is more simple, less artful. I feel that in the other case I should have no proper frame for my sketches. Mere facts and names and dates communicate more than we suspect. Whether the flower looks better in the nosegay than in the meadow where it grew and we had to wet our feet to get it! Is the scholastic air any advantage?

Jan. 28. Perhaps I can never find so good a setting for my thoughts as I shall thus have taken them out of. The crystal never sparkles more brightly than in the cavern. The world have always loved best the fable with the moral. The children could read the fable alone, the grown-up read both. The truth so told has the best advantages of the most abstract statement, for it is not the less universally applicable. Where else will you ever find the true cement for your thoughts? How will you ever rivet them together without leaving the marks of the file? Yet Plutarch did not so; Montaigne did not so. Men have written travels in this

form, but perhaps no man's daily life has been rich enough to be journalized.

Our life should be so active and progressive as to be a journey. Our meals should all be of journey-cake and hasty pudding. We should be more alert, see the sun rise, not keep fashionable hours, enter a house, our own house, as a khan, a caravansary. At noon I did not dine; I ate my journey-cake. I quenched my thirst at a spring or a brook. As I sat at the table, the hospitality was so perfect and the repast so sumptuous that I seemed to be breaking my fast upon a bank in the midst of an arduous journey, that the water seemed to be a living spring, the napkins grass, the conversation free as the winds; and the servants that waited on us were our simple desires.

Cut off from Pilpay and Æsop the moral alone at the bottom, would that content you?

There will be no more rambling through the aisles of the wood, with occasional vistas through which you see the pond.

In those days when how to get my living honestly, with freedom left for my proper pursuits, was a question which vexed me even more than it does now, I used to see a large box by the railroad, six feet long by three wide, in which the workmen locked up their tools at night; and it suggested to me that every man who was hard pushed might get him such a one for a dollar, and, having bored a few auger-holes in it, to admit the air at least, get into it when it rained and at night, and shut the lid and hook it, and so have free-

dom in his mind, and in his soul be free. This did not seem the worst alternative, nor by any means a despicable resource. You could sit up as late as you pleased; and, whenever you got up in the morning, you would not have any creditor dogging you for rent. I should not be in a bad box. Many a man is harassed to death to pay the rent of a larger and more luxurious box, who would not have frozen to death in such a box as this. I should not be in so bad a box as many a man is in now.[1]

If you mean by hard times, times, not when there is no bread, but when there is no cake, I have no sympathy with you.

Economy is a subject that admits of being treated with levity, but it is not a subject that can be so disposed of.[2]

"Why don't you put on your overalls?" "Why, these are overalls and underalls, being all I have got. These are over all I have got."

They showed me Johnny Riordan to-day, with one thickness of ragged cloth over his little shirt for all this cold weather, with shoes with large holes in the toes, into which the snow got, as he said, without an outer garment, to walk a mile to school every day over the bleakest of causeways, — the clothes with countless patches, which hailed from, claimed descent from, were originally identical with, pantaloons of mine, which set as if his mother had fitted them to a tea-kettle first. This little mass of humanity, this tender gobbet

[1] [*Walden*, pp. 31, 32; Riv. 47, 48.]
[2] [*Walden*, p. 32; Riv. 48.]

for the fates, cast into a cold world with a torn lichen leaf wrapped about him, — Oh, I should rather hear that America's first-born were all slain than that his little fingers and toes should feel cold while I am warm. Is man so cheap that he cannot be clothed but with a mat, a rag, that we should bestow on him our *cold* victuals? Are there any fellow-creatures to whom we abandon our rags, to whom we give our old clothes and shoes when they will not fend the weather from ourselves? Let the mature rich wear the rags and insufficient clothing; let the infant poor wear the purple and fine linen. I shudder when I think of the fate of innocency. Our charitable institutions are an insult to humanity. A charity which dispenses the crumbs that fall from its overloaded tables, which are left after its feasts! [1]

[1] [See *Journal*, vol. ii, pp. 117, 118; vol. iii, pp. 149, 150. Some loose sheets of manuscript inclosed between the leaves of one of the journals contain the following more complete sketch of the little Irish boy, made up, with some revision, from the original entries: —

"They showed me little Johnny Riordan the other day, as bright a boy of five years as ever trod our paths, whom you could not see for five minutes without loving and honoring him. He *lives* in what they call the *shanty* in the woods. He had on, in the middle of January of the coldest winter we have had for twenty years, one thickness only of ragged cloth sewed on to his pantaloons over his little shirt, and shoes with large holes in the toes, into which the snow got, as he was obliged to confess, he who had trodden five winters under his feet! Thus clad he walked a mile to school every day, over the bleakest of railroad causeways, where I know by experience the grown man would frequently freeze his ears or nose if they were not well protected, — for his parents have no thermometer, — all to get learning and warmth and there sit at the head of his bench. These clothes, with countless patches, which had for vehicle — O shame! shame! — pantaloons

3 P. M. — Went round by Tuttle's road, and so out on to the Walden road.

that had been mine, they whispered to me, set as if his mother had fitted them to a tea-kettle first.

"I glimpsed him the other morning taking his last step from his last snow-drift on to the schoolhouse door-step, floundering still; saw not his face nor his profile, only his mien, but saw clearly in imagination his 'old-worthy' face behind the sober visor of his cap, and he revived to my mind the grave nobility and magnanimity of ancient heroes. He never was drawn in a willow wagon, but progresses by his own brave steps. Has not the world waited for such a generation? Here he condescends to his a-b-c without one smile, who has the lore of worlds uncounted in his brain. He speaks not of the adventures of the causeway. What was the bravery of Leonidas and his three hundred boys at the pass of Thermopylæ to this infant's? They dared but to die; he dares to live, and takes his reward of merit, perchance, without relaxing his face into a smile, that does not reward a thousandth part of his merits, that overlooks his unseen and unrewardable merits, — Little Johnny Riordan, who faces cold and routs it like a Persian army, who, yet innocent, carries in his knees the strength of a thousand Indras. Not to be so tenderly nurtured as you and I forsooth? All day he plays with his coevals and equals, and then they go to their several homes.

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

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

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

These warmer days the woodchopper finds that the wood cuts easier than when it had the frost in its sapwood, though it does not split so readily. Thus every change in the weather has its influence on him, and is appreciated by him in a peculiar way. The woodcutter and his practices and experiences are more to be attended to; his accidents, perhaps more than any other's, should mark the epochs in the winter day. Now that the Indian is gone, he stands nearest to nature. Who has written the history of his day? How far still is the writer of books from the man, his old playmate it may

"Having carried off the palm in the intellectual contest with the children of luxury, how bravely he contemplates his destiny: —

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

"This tender gobbet for the fates, cast into a cold world, with a torn lichen leaf wrapped about him! I would rather hear that America's first-born were all slain than that his little fingers and toes should feel cold while I am warm. Is man so cheap that he cannot be clothed but with a mat or a rag? that we should abandon to him our *worn-out* clothes or our *cold* victuals? Infancy pleads with equal eloquence from all platforms. Rather let the mature rich wear the rags and insufficient clothing, the infant poor and rich, if any, wear the costly furs, the purple and fine linen. Our charitable institutions are an insult to humanity, — a charity which dispenses the crumbs that fall from its overloaded tables! whose waste and whose example helped to produce that poverty!

"While the charitable waddle about cased in furs and finery, this boy, lively as a cricket, passes them on his way to school. I see that, for the present, the child is happy, is not puny, and has all the wonders of nature for his toys. Have I not faith that his tenderness will in some way be cherished and protected, as the buds of spring in the remotest wintry dell no less than in the garden and summer-house?"]

be, who chops in the woods! There are ages between them. Homer refers to the progress of the woodcutter's work, to mark the time of day on the plains of Troy, and the inference from such passages commonly is that he lived in a more primitive state of society than the present. But I think that this is a mistake. Like proves like in all ages, and the fact that I myself should take pleasure in referring to just such simple and peaceful labors which are always proceeding, that the contrast itself always attracts the civilized poet to what is rudest and most primitive in his contemporaries, all this rather proves a certain interval between the poet and the chopper whose labor he refers to, than an unusual nearness to him, on the principle that familiarity breeds contempt. Homer is to be subjected to a very different kind of criticism from any he has received.

That reader who most fully appreciates the poet, and derives the greatest pleasure from his works, himself lives in circumstances most like those of the poet himself.

About Brister's Spring the ferns, which have been covered with snow, and the grass are still quite green. The skunk-cabbage in the water is already pushed up, and I find the pinkish head of flowers within its spathe bigger than a pea.

It is remarkable that no pains is taken to teach children to distinguish colors. I am myself uncertain about the names of many.

Jan. 29. We must be very active if we would be clean and live our own life, and not a languishing and

scurvy one. The trees, which are stationary, are covered with parasites, especially those which have grown slowly. The air is filled with the fine sporules of countless mosses, algæ, lichens, fungi, which settle and plant themselves on all quiet surfaces. Under the nails and between the joints of the fingers of the idle, flourish crops of mildew, algæ, and fungi, and other vegetable sloths, though they may be invisible, — the lichens where life still exists, the fungi where decomposition has begun to take place. And the sluggard is soon covered with sphagnum. Algæ take root in the corners of his eyes, and lichens cover the bulbs of his fingers and his head, etc., etc., the lowest forms of vegetable life. This is the definition of dirt. We fall a prey to others of nature's tenants, who take possession of the unoccupied house. With the utmost inward activity we have to wash and comb ourselves beside, to get rid of the adhering seeds. Cleanliness is by activity not to give any quiet shelf for the seeds of parasitic plants to take root on.

If he cuts pines, the woodchopper's hands are covered with pitch.

The names of plants are for the most part traced to Celtic and Arabian roots.

The forcible writer does not go far for his themes. His ideas are not far-fetched. He derives inspiration from his chagrins and his satisfactions. His theme being ever an instant one, his own gravity assists him, gives impetus to what he says. He minds his business. He does not speculate while others drudge for him.

I am often reminded that if I had bestowed on me

the wealth of Crœsus, my aims must still be the same and my means essentially the same.[1]

It still melts. I observed this afternoon that the ground where they are digging for some scales near the depot was frozen about nine inches where the snow has lain most and sixteen inches where the road was. I begin to see the tops of the grasses and stubble in the fields, which deceive me as if it were the ground itself.

That point where the sun goes down is the cynosure which attracts all eyes at sundown and half an hour before. What do all other parts of the horizon concern us? Our eyes follow the path of that great luminary. We watch for his rising, and we observe his setting. He is a companion and fellow-traveller we all have. We pity him who has his cheerless dwelling elsewhere, even in the northwest or southwest, off the high road of nature.

The snow is nearly gone from the railroad causeway.

Few are the days when the telegraph harp rises into a pure, clear melody. Though the wind may blow strong or soft, in this or that direction, naught will you hear but a low hum or murmur, or even a buzzing sound; but at length, when some undistinguishable zephyr blows, when the conditions not easy to be detected arrive, it suddenly and unexpectedly rises into melody, as if a god had touched it, and fortunate is the walker who chances to be within hearing. So is it with the lyres of bards, and for the most part it is only a feeble and ineffectual hum that comes from them, which leads you to expect the melody you do not hear. When the

[1] [*Walden*, p. 362; Riv. 507.]

gale is modified, when the favorable conditions occur, and the indescribable coincidence takes place, then there is music. Of a thousand buzzing strings, only one yields music. It is like the hum of the shaft, or other machinery, of a steamboat, which at length might become music in a divine hand. I feel greatly enriched by this telegraph.

I have come to see the clay and sand in the Cut. A reddish tinge in the earth, stains. An Indian hue is singularly agreeable, even exciting, to the eye. Here the whole bank is sliding. Even the color of the subsoil excites me, as if I were already getting near to life and vegetation. This clay is fæcal in its color also. It runs off at bottom into mere shoals, shallows, vasa, vague sand-bars, like the mammoth leaves, — makes strands.[1]

Perhaps those mother-o'-pearl clouds I described some time ago might be called rainbow flocks. The snow on the slope of the Cliffs is dotted with black specks, the seeds of the mullein which the wind has shaken out. When I strike the dry stalks, the seeds fall in a shower and color the snow black like charcoal dust or powder.

The green mosses on the rocks are evidently nourished and kept bright by the snows lying on them a part of the year.

Day before yesterday, I saw the hunters out with a dozen dogs, but only two pussies, one white and one little gray one, did I see, for so many men and dogs, who seem to set all the village astir as if the fox's trail led through it. And Stedman Buttrick, with whom I

[1] [See *Walden*, p. 337; Riv. 471.]

was walking, was excited as if in the heyday of his youth.

Heard C. lecture to-night. It was a bushel of nuts. Perhaps the most original lecture I ever heard. Ever so unexpected, not to be foretold, and so sententious that you could not look at him and take his thought at the same time. You had to give your undivided attention to the thoughts, for you were not assisted by set phrases or modes of speech intervening. There was no sloping up or down to or from his points. It was all genius, no talent. It required more close attention, more abstraction from surrounding circumstances, than any lecture I have heard. For, well as I know C., he more than any man disappoints my expectation. When I see him in the desk, hear him, I cannot realize that I ever saw him before. He will be strange, unexpected, to his best acquaintance. I cannot associate the lecturer with the companion of my walks. It was from so original and peculiar a point of view, yet just to himself in the main, that I doubt if three in the audience apprehended a tithe that he said. It was so hard to hear that doubtless few made the exertion. A thick succession of mountain passes and no intermediate slopes and plains. Other lectures, even the best, in which so much space is given to the elaborate development of a few ideas, seemed somewhat meagre in comparison. Yet it would be how much more glorious if talent were added to genius, if there [were] a just arrangement and development of the thoughts, and each step were not a leap, but he ran a space to take a yet higher leap!

Most of the spectators sat in front of the performer,

but here was one who, by accident, sat all the while on one side, and his report was peculiar and startling.

Jan. 30. *Friday.* I feel as if I were gradually parting company with certain friends, just as I perceive familiar objects successively disappear when I am leaving my native town in the cars.

It is an encouraging piece of news, when I read in the *Weekly Tribune*, appended to an article on "The Liquor Groceries" which had appeared in the Daily, close as the moral to the fable or its operation to the medicine, that the worst of those establishments had refused to receive the *Tribune*, being offended by its disclosures; showing that the arrow has already reached its mark before we distant readers have heard its whiz.

One must not complain that his friend is cold, for heat is generated between them.

I doubt if Emerson could trundle a wheelbarrow through the streets, because it would be out of character. One needs to have a comprehensive character.

Channing's lecture was full of wise, acute, and witty observations, yet most of the audience did not know but it was mere incoherent and reckless verbiage and nonsense. I lose my respect for people who do not know what is good and true. I know full well that readers and hearers, with the fewest exceptions, ask me for my second best.

Lindley (apparently) in London asks, when you have referred a plant to its class and order in the Linnæan system, "What more has been acquired than the bare knowledge that the plant in question pos-

sesses a certain number of stamens and styles? No possible notion can be formed of the relation it bears to other plants of the same nature, of the qualities it probably possesses, or of the structure of those parts not under examination, the fruit for example; and, finally, if it were wished to convey an idea of the plant to a stranger, no means would be in the possession of the Linnæan botanist of doing so, except by stating that the plant belonged to Pentandria Monogynia, for example, which is stating nothing. But what would be the condition of the student of the natural affinities of plants in a similar case? It is true he would be obliged to consult more characters than the two uninfluential ones of Linnæus — it would be necessary to ascertain if his subject was Vascular or Cellular; if Vascular, whether it was Monocotyledonous or Dicotyledonous; if Dicotyledonous, whether the leaves were opposite or alternate, stipulate or exstipulate, whether the flowers were monopetalous, polypetalous, or apetalous, the nature and station of the stamens, the condition of the ovarium, and so on. But when he *has* ascertained thus much, only let it be remembered, for a moment, how much he has gained indirectly as well as directly. Perhaps he has discovered that his plant belongs to Rubiaceæ; he will then have learned that all vegetables with opposite entire stipulate leaves, and a monopetalous superior corolla, are also Rubiaceous; if a fragment of the leaves and stem only of such a plant were afterwards submitted to him for examination, he would recognize its affinities, and remember that it was Rubiaceous, and being aware of that fact, he

would be able safely to infer that its calyx and corolla would be of a particular nature, that if the roots afforded any color for dyeing, it would be red; that the medicinal properties of the bark, if any, would be tonic, astringent, and febrifugal, and that its seeds would be of the same nature as those of coffee, and finally, its geographical position would be tolerably certain to him."

No good introduction to the study of the natural system, but such a work expected from Lindley in 1829.

But after all, where is the flower lore? for the first book, and not the last, should contain the poetry of flowers. The natural system may tell us the value of a plant in medicine or the arts or for food, but neither it nor the Linnæan, to any great extent, tells us its chief value and significance to man, which in any measure accounts for its beauty, its flower-like properties. There will be pages about some fair flower's qualities as food or medicine, but perhaps not a sentence about its significance to the eye, as if the cowslip were better for greens than for yellows. Not about what children and all flower-lovers gather flowers for. Are they emissaries sent forth by the arts to purvey and explore for them? Not how good they are to wear on the bosom, or to smell, how much they are to the eye and the sentiments, not how much to the palate and the sensations, — flowers as flowers. Not addressed to the cook or the physician or the dyer merely, but to the lovers of flowers, young and old. The most poetical of books. It should have the beauty

and the fragrance of flowers, some of their color. A keepsake! What a keepsake a manual of botany! In which is uttered, breathed, man's love of flowers. It is dry as a *hortus siccus*. Flowers are pressed into the botanist's service.[1]

Do nothing merely out of good resolutions. Discipline yourself only to yield to love; suffer yourself to be attracted. It is in vain to write on chosen themes. We must wait till they have kindled a flame in our minds. There must be the copulating and generating force of love behind every effort destined to be successful. The cold resolve gives birth to, begets, nothing. The theme that seeks me, not I it. The poet's relation to his theme is the relation of lovers. It is no more to be courted. Obey, report.

Though they are cutting off the woods at Walden, it is not all loss. It makes some new and unexpected prospects. We read books about logging in the Maine woods as if it were wholly strange to these parts. But I here witness almost exactly the same things, scenes that might be witnessed in Maine or New Hampshire: the logger's team, his oxen on the ice chewing the cud, the long pine tree, stripped of its branches, chained upon his sled, resting on a stout cross-bar or log and trailing behind, the smoke of his fire curling up blue amid the trees, the sound of the axe and of the teamsters' voices. A pretty forest scene, seeing oxen, so patient and stationary, good for pictures, standing on the ice, — a piece of still life. Oh, it is refreshing to see, to think of, these things after hearing of the dis-

[1] *Vide* forward about child plucking flower.

cussions and politics of the day! The smoke I saw was quite blue. As I stood on the partially cleared bank at the east end of the pond, I looked south over the side of the hill into a deep dell still wooded, and I saw, not more than thirty rods off, a chopper at his work. I was half a dozen rods distant from the standing wood, and I saw him through a vista between two trees (it was now mainly an oak wood, the pine having been cut), and he appeared to me apparently half a mile distant, yet charmingly distinct, as in a picture of which the two trees were the frame. He was seen against the snow on the hillside beyond. I could distinguish each part of his dress perfectly, and the axe with distinct outline as he raised it above his head, the black iron against the snow, and could hear every stroke distinctly. Yet I should have deemed it ridiculous to have called to him, he appeared so distant. He appeared with the same distinctness as objects seen through a pinhole in a card. This was the effect rather than by comparison of him, his size, with the nearer trees, between which I saw him and which made the canopied roof of the grove far above his head. It was, perhaps, one of those coincidences and effects which have made men painters. I could not behold him as an actual man; he was more ideal than in any picture I have seen. He refused to be seen as actual. Far in the hollow, yet somewhat enlightened, aisles of this wooded dell. Some scenes will thus present themselves as picture. Those scenes which are picture, subjects for the pencil, are distinctly marked; they do not require the aid of genius to idealize them. They must be seen as ideal.

Nature allows of no universal secrets. The more carefully a secret is kept on one side of the globe, the larger the type it is printed in on the other. Nothing is too pointed, too personal, too immodest, for her to blazon. The relations of sex, transferred to flowers, become the study of ladies in the drawing-room. While men wear fig leaves, she grows the *Phallus impudicus* and *P. caninus* and other phallus-like fungi.

The rhymes which I used to see on the walls of privies, scribbled by boys, I have lately seen, word for word the same; in spite [of] whitewash and brick walls and admonitions they survive. They are no doubt older than Orpheus, and have come down from an antiquity as remote as mythology or fable. So, too, no doubt corporations have ever struggled in vain to obtain cleanliness in those provinces. Filth and impurity are as old as cleanliness and purity. To correspond to man completely, Nature is even perhaps unchaste herself. Or perchance man's impurity begets a monster somewhere, to proclaim his sin. The poetry of the jakes, — it flows as perennially as the gutter.

I am afraid to travel much or to famous places, lest it might completely dissipate the mind. Then I am sure that what we observe at home, if we observe anything, is of more importance than what we observe abroad. The far-fetched is of the least value. What we observe in travelling are to some extent the accidents of the body, but [what] we observe when sitting at home are, in the same proportion, phenomena of the mind itself. A wakeful night will yield as much thought as a long journey. If I try thoughts by their quality, not their

quantity, I may find that a restless night will yield more than the longest journey.

I live in an age when men have agreed to say "God" instead of "Jove."

It is remarkable that there is no man so coarse and insensible but he can be profane, can pronounce the word "God" with emphasis in the woods when anything happens to disturb, as a spoiled child loves to see what liberties he can presume to take. I am only astonished that B—— should think it any daring; that he should believe in God so much. Then look round to see if the auditors appreciated his boldness.

Jan. 31. We hear the sounds of screech owls in our nostrils, and the snoring of men is perhaps not to be distinguished from that of pigs.

—— [*sic*] is too grand for me. He belongs to the nobility and wears their cloak and manners; is attracted to Plato, not to Socrates, I fear partly because the latter's life and associates were too humble. I am a commoner. To me there is something devilish in manners. The best manners is nakedness of manners. I should value E.'s praise more, which is always so discriminating, if there were not some alloy of patronage and hence of flattery about [it]. In that respect he is like —— [*sic*];[1] they flatter you, but themselves more. Praise should be spoken as simply and naturally as a flower emits its fragrance.

I am repeatedly astonished by the coolness and ob-

[1] [The first dash (made in pencil) stands for a single initial carefully scratched out; the second, for a full name, also erased.]

tuse bigotry with which some will appropriate the New Testament in conversation with you. It is as if they were to appropriate the sun and stand between you and it, because they understood that you had walked once by moonlight, though that was in the reflected light of the sun, which you could not get directly. I have seen two persons conversing at a tea-table, both lovers of the New Testament, each in his own way, the one a lover of all kindred expression of truth also; and yet the other appropriated the New Testament wholly to herself, and took it for granted, with singular or rather lamentable blindness and obtuseness, that the former neither knew nor cared anything about it. Horace Greeley found some fault with me to the world because I presumed to speak of the New Testament using my own words and thoughts, and challenged me to a controversy. The one thought I had was that it would give me real pleasure to know that he loved it as sincerely and enlightenedly as I did; but I felt that he did not care so much about it as I.

Botanies, instead of being the poetry, are the prose, of flowers. I do not mean to underrate Linnæus's admirable nomenclature, much of which is itself poetry.

Moreover, if you [are] restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences, you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses, even on a lower level, by magnanimity on a higher. Super-

fluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.[1]

Not the same things are great to all men. Many of the words which we write with capital letters are not so distinguished by those who live at a distance.

That work of man's must be vast indeed which, like the Pyramids, looks blue in the horizon, as mountains. Few works of man rise high enough, and with breadth enough, to be blued by the air between them and the spectator.

In the East, women religiously conceal that they have faces; in the West, that they have legs. In both cases they make it evident that they have but little brains.

I hear my friend say, "I have lost my faith in men; there are none true, magnanimous, holy," etc., etc., meaning, all the while, that I do not possess those unattainable virtues; but, worm as I am, this is not wise in my friend, and I feel simply discouraged so far as my relation to him is concerned. We must have infinite faith in each other. If we have not, we must never let it leak out that we have not. He erects his want of faith as a barrier between us. When I hear grown man or woman say, "Once I had faith in men; now I have not," I am inclined to ask, "Who are you whom the world has disappointed? Have not you rather disappointed the world? There is the same ground for faith now that ever there was. It needs only a little love in you who complain so to ground it on." For my own part, I am thankful that there are those who come

[1] [*Walden*, p. 362; Riv. 507.]

so near being my friends that they can be estranged from me. I had faith before they would destroy the little I have. The mason asks but a narrow shelf to spring his brick from; man requires only an infinitely narrower one to spring the arch of faith from.

What can I do? There is one whom I would fain call my friend. I feel disposed to practice any virtue. I am at liberty to do so. But it chances that at present I feel no sympathy with, no warmth toward, him. I am capable of sympathy and of warmth. What can I do? The universal laws will work; I must condemn what is wrong in him as well as in another. I cannot act a part. I submit myself. Do what you will with us, O ye gods!

See what a swift penalty you have to pay. If you say to your friend that he is less than an angel, he is your friend no longer.

The only ledge I can spring the arch of friendship from is the ground of infinite faith. If you have lost any of your faith in me, you might as well have lost it all. How can you renounce and retain at the same time?

One woman whom I visit sometimes thinks I am conceited, and yet wonders that I do not visit her oftener. If I were sure she was right perhaps I should. Now this is a sad obstacle in the way of hearty communications. As, naturally enough, we are not agreed on that point, our sympathy is lessened. Another with whom I converse a good deal allows that sometimes my actions are better than my principles as expressed in conversation.

I am not sure that I have any right to address to you the words I am about to write. The reason I have not visited you oftener and more earnestly is that I am offended by your pride, your sometime assumption of dignity, your manners, which come over me like waves of Lethe. I know that if I stood in that relation to you which you seem to ask, I should not be met. Perhaps I am wiser than you think. Do you never for an instant treat me as a thing, flatter me? You treat me with politeness, and I make myself scarce. We have not sympathy enough. We do not always apprehend each other. You talk to me often as if I were Mr. Tompkins of the firm of —— ——, retired merchant. If I had never thought of you as a friend, I could make much use of you as an acquaintance.

I observed this afternoon, on the Turnpike, that where it drifts over the edge of a brook or a ditch, the snow being damp as it falls, what does not adhere to the sharp edge of the drift falls on the dead weeds and shrubs and forms a drapery like a napkin or a white table-cloth hanging down with folds and tassels or fringed border. Or perhaps the fresh snow merely rounds and whitens thus the old cores. It was like looking from one side of a rich white counterpane or table-cloth where it hangs over the side of the bed or table.

The value of the pitch pine in winter is that it holds the snow so finely. I see it now afar on the hillsides decking itself with it, its whited towers forming coverts where the rabbit and the gray squirrel lurk. It makes the most cheerful winter scenery beheld from the window, you know so well the nature of the coverts and

the sombre light it makes. The young oaks, with their red leaves, covering so many acres, are also an indispensable feature of the winter landscape, and the limbs of oak woods where some of the trees have been cut off.