

IX

JANUARY, 1853

(ÆT. 35)

Jan. 1. Saturday. This morning we have something between ice and frost on the trees, etc. The whole earth, as last night, but much more, is encased in ice, which on the plowed fields makes a singular icy coat a quarter of an inch or more in thickness. About 9 o'clock A. M., I go to Lee's *via* Hubbard's Wood and Holden's Swamp and the riverside, for the middle is open. The stones and cow-dung, and the walls too, are all cased in ice on the north side. The latter look like alum rocks. This, not frozen mist or frost, but frozen drizzle, collected around the slightest cores, gives prominence to the least withered herbs and grasses. Where yesterday was a plain, smooth field, appears now a teeming crop of fat, *icy* herbage. The stems of the herbs on their north sides are enlarged from ten to a hundred times. The addition is so universally on the north side that a traveller could not lose the points of compass to-day, though it should [be] never so dark, for every blade of grass would serve to guide him, telling from which side the storm came yesterday. These straight stems of grasses stand up like white batons or sceptres, and make conspicuous foreground to the landscape, from six inches to three feet high. C. thought that these fat, *icy* branches on the withered grass and

herbs had no nucleus, but looking closer I showed him the fine black wiry threads on which they impinged, which made him laugh with surprise. The very cow-dung is incrustated, and the clover and sorrel send up a dull-green gleam through their icy coat, like strange plants. The pebbles in the plowed land are seen as through a transparent coating of gum. Some weeds bear the ice in masses, some, like the trumpet-weed and tansy, in balls for each dried flower. What a crash of jewels as you walk! The most careless walker, who never deigned to look at these humble weeds before, cannot help observing them now. This is why the herbage is left to stand dry in the fields all winter. Upon a solid foundation of ice stand out, pointing in all directions between northwest and northeast, or within the limits of ninety degrees, little spicula or crystallized points, half an inch or more in length.

Upon the dark, glazed plowed ground, where a mere wiry stem rises, its north side is thickly clad with these snow-white spears, like some Indian's head-dress, as if it had attracted all the frost. I saw a prinos bush full of large berries, by the wall in Hubbard's field. Standing on the west side, the contrast of the red berries with their white incrustation or prolongation on the north was admirable. I thought I had never seen the berries so dazzlingly bright. The whole north side of the bush, berries and stock, was beautifully incrustated. And when I went round to the north side, the redness of the berries came softened through and tingeing the allied snow-white bush, like an evening sky beyond. These adjoined snow or ice berries being beset, within

the limits of ninety degrees on the north, with those icy prickles or spicula, between which the red glow and sometimes the clear red itself appeared, gave it the appearance of a raspberry bush full of over-ripe fruit.

Standing on the north side of a bush or tree, looking against the sky, you see only a white ghost of a tree, without a mote of earthiness, but as you go round it, the dark core comes into view. It makes all the odds imaginable whether you are travelling north or south. The drooping birches along the edges of woods are the most feathery, fairy-like ostrich plumes of the trees, and the color of their trunks increases the delusion. The weight of the ice gives to the pines the forms which northern trees, like the firs, constantly wear, bending and twisting the branches; for the twigs and plumes of the pines, being frozen, remain as the wind held them, and new portions of the trunk are exposed. Seen from the north, there is no greenness in the pines, and the character of the tree is changed. The willows along the edge of the river look like sedge in meadows. The sky is overcast, and a fine snowy hail and rain is falling, and these ghost-like trees make a scenery which reminds you of Spitzbergen. I see now the beauty of the causeway, by the bridge alders below swelling into the road, overtopped by willows and maples. The fine grasses and shrubs in the meadow rise to meet and mingle with the drooping willows, and the whole make an indistinct impression like a mist, and between this the road runs toward those white ice-clad ghostly or fairy trees in the distance, — toward spirit-land. The pines are as white as a counterpane, with raised em-

broidery and white tassels and fringes. Each fascicle of leaves or needles is held apart by an icy club surmounted by a little snowy or icy ball. Finer than the Saxon arch is this path running under the pines, roofed, not with crossing boughs, but drooping ice-covered twigs in irregular confusion. See in the midst of this stately pine, towering like the solemn ghost of a tree, the white ice-clad boughs of other trees appearing, of a different character; sometimes oaks with leaves incrustated, or fine-sprayed maples or walnuts. But finer than all, this red oak, its leaves incrustated like shields a quarter of an inch thick, and a thousand fine spicula, like long serrations at right angles with their planes, upon their edges. It has an indescribably rich effect, with color of the leaf coming softened through the ice, a delicate fawn-color of many shades. Where the plumes of the pitch pine are short and spreading close upon the trunk, sometimes perfect cups or rays are formed. Pitch pines present rough, massy grenadier plumes, with each a darker spot or cavity in the end, where you look in to the buds.

I listen to the booming of the pond as if it were a reasonable creature. I return at last in a rain, and am coated with a glaze, like the fields.

Being at Cambridge day before yesterday, Sibley told me that Agassiz told him that Harris was the greatest entomologist in the world, and gave him permission to repeat his remark. As I stood on the top of a ladder, he came along with his hand full of papers and inquired, "Do you value autographs?" "No, I do not," I answered slowly and gravely. "Oh, I did n't know

but you did. I had some of Governor Dunlap," said he, retreating.

After talking with Uncle Charles the other night about the worthies of this country, Webster and the rest, as usual, considering who were geniuses and who not, I showed him up to bed, and when I had got into bed myself, I heard his chamber door opened, after eleven o'clock, and he called out, in an earnest, stentorian voice, loud enough to wake the whole house, "Henry! was John Quincy Adams a genius?" "No, I think not," was my reply. "Well, I did n't think he was," answered he.

Jan. 2. 9 A. M. — Down railroad to Cliffs.

A clear day; a pure sky with cirri. In this clear air and bright sunlight, the ice-covered trees have a new beauty, especially the birches along under the edge of Warren's wood on each side of the railroad, bent quite to the ground  in every kind of curve. At a distance, as you are approaching them endwise, they look like white tents of Indians under the edge of the wood. The birch is thus remarkable, perhaps, because from the feathery form of the tree, whose numerous small branches sustain so great a weight, bending it to the ground, and moreover because, from the color of the bark, the core is less observable. The oaks not only are less pliant in the trunk, but have fewer and stiffer twigs and branches. The birches droop over in all directions, like ostrich-feathers. Most wood-paths are impassable now to a carriage, almost to a foot traveller, from the number of saplings and boughs

bent over even to the ground in them. Both sides of the Deep Cut now shine in the sun, as if silver-plated, and the fine spray of a myriad bushes on the edge of the bank sparkle like silver. The telegraph-wire is coated to ten times its size, and looks like a slight fence scalloping along at a distance. Is merged in nature. When we climb the bank at Stow's wood-lot and come upon the piles of freshly split white pine wood (for he is ruthlessly laying it waste), the transparent ice, like a thick varnish, beautifully exhibits the color of the clear, tender, yellowish wood (pumpkin pine?), and its grain, and we pick our way over a bed of pine boughs and twigs a foot or two deep, covering the ground, each twig and needle thickly incrusting with ice into one vast gelid mass, which our feet crunch as if we were walking through the cellar of some confectioner to the gods. The invigorating scent of the recently cut pines refreshes us, if that is any atonement for this devastation. The beauty of the oak-tops all silvered o'er. Especially now do I notice the hips, barberries, and winterberries, for their red. The red or purplish catkins of the alders are interesting as a winter fruit, and also of the birch. But few birds about. Apparently their granaries are locked up in ice, with which the grasses and buds are coated. Even far in the horizon the pine-tops are turned to firs or spruce by the weight of the ice bending them down, so that they look like a spruce swamp. No two trees wear the ice alike. The short plumes and needles of the spruce make a very pretty and peculiar figure. I see some oaks in the distance which, by their branches being curved or arched down-

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ward and massed, are turned into perfect elms, which suggests that that is the peculiarity of the elm. Few if any other trees are thus wisp-like, the branches gracefully drooping. I mean some slender red and white oaks which have recently been left in a clearing. Just apply a weight to the ends of the boughs, which will cause them to droop on all sides, and to each particular twig, which will mass them together, and you have perfect elms. Seen at the right angle, each ice-incrusted stubble shines like a prism with some color of the rainbow, — intense blue, or violet, and red. The smooth field, clad the other day with a low, wiry grass, is now converted into rough stubble-land, where you walk with crouching feet. It is remarkable that the trees ever recover from this burden which bends them to the ground. I should like to weigh a limb of this pitch pine. The character of the tree is changed.

I have now passed the bars and am approaching the Cliffs. The forms and variety of the ice are particularly rich here, there are so many low bushes and weeds before me as I ascend toward the sun, especially very small white pines almost merged in the ice-incrusted ground. All objects, even the apple trees and rails, are to the eye polished silver. It is a perfect land of faery. As if the world were a great frosted cake with its ornaments. The boughs gleam like silver candlesticks. Le Jeune describes the same in Canada, in 1636, as "*nos grands bois ne paroissent qu'une forest de cristal.*" The silvery ice stands out an inch by three fourths [of] an inch in width on the north side of every twig of these apple trees, with rich irregularities of its own in

its edge. When I stoop and examine some fat icy stubble in my path, I find for all core a ridiculous wiry russet thread, scarce visible, not a hundredth part its size, which breaks with the ice under my feet; yet where this has a minute stub of a branch only a fortieth of an inch in length, there is a corresponding clumsy icy protuberance on the surface an eighth of an inch off. Nature works with such luxuriance and fury that she follows the least hint. And on the twigs of bushes, for each bud there is a corresponding icy swelling.

The bells are particularly sweet this morning. I hear more, methinks, than ever before. How much more religion in their sound, than they ever call men together to! Men obey their call and go to the stove-warmed church, though God exhibits himself to the walker in a frosted bush to-day, as much as in a burning one to Moses of old.

We build a fire on the Cliffs. When kicking to pieces a pine stump for the fat knots which alone would burn in this icy day, at the risk of spoiling my boots, having looked in vain for a stone, I thought how convenient would be an Indian stone axe to batter it with. The bark of white birch, though covered with ice, burned well. We soon had a roaring fire of fat pine on a shelf of rock, from which we overlooked the icy landscape. The sun, too, was melting the ice on the rocks, and the water was bubbling and pulsing downward in dark bubbles, exactly like pollywogs. What a good word is "flame," expressing the form and soul of fire, lambent with forked tongue! We lit a fire to see it rather than to feel it, it is so rare a sight these days. To have our

eyes ache once more with smoke! What a peculiar, perhaps indescribable color has this flame! — a reddish or lurid yellow, not so splendid or full of light as of life and heat. These fat roots made much flame, and a very black smoke, commencing where the flame left off, which cast fine flickering shadows on the rocks. There was some bluish-white smoke from the rotten part of the wood. Then there was the fine white ashes, which farmers' wives sometimes use for pearlash. Fire is the most tolerable third party. I hear the wiry *phæbe* note of the chickadee, as if the spring were coming in. Brown thinks my ruby wren may be the lesser redpoll linnet.

Walden begins to freeze in the coves or shallower water on the north¹ side, where it was slightly skimmed over several weeks ago.

Jan. 3. Down railroad to Lincoln Bridge.

The evergreens appear to relieve themselves soonest of the ice, perhaps because of the reflection from their leaves. Those trees, like the maples and hickories, which have most spray and branches make the finest show of ice. This afternoon it snows, the snow lodging on the ice, which still adheres to the trees. The more completely the trees are changed to ice trees, to spirits of trees, the finer. Instead of the minute frost-work on a window, you have whole forests of silver boughs. I refer to the last two days. The "brattling" of the ice. Is not that the word? Along some causeway or fence in the meadow, the trees are changed into

¹ [Queried in pencil.]

silvery wisps. Nothing dark met the eye, but a silvery sheen, precisely as if the whole tree — trunk, boughs, and twigs — were converted into burnished silver. You exclaimed at every hedgerow. Sometimes a clump of birches fell over every way in graceful ostrich-plumes, all raying from one centre. You clambered over them like an ant in the grass. Then the beautifully checkered ice in the ruts, where the water had been soaked up, surpassing the richest tracery of watch-crystals! Suddenly all is converted to crystal. The world is a crystal palace. The trees, stiff and drooping and encased in ice, looked as if they were sculptured in marble, especially the evergreens.

I love Nature partly *because* she is not man, but a retreat from him. None of his institutions control or pervade her. There a different kind of right prevails. In her midst I can be glad with an entire gladness. If this world were all man, I could not stretch myself, I should lose all hope. He is constraint, she is freedom to me. He makes me wish for another world. She makes me content with this. None of the joys she supplies is subject to his rules and definitions. What he touches he taints. In thought he moralizes. One would think that no free, joyful labor was possible to him. How infinite and pure the least pleasure of which Nature is basis, compared with the congratulation of mankind! The joy which Nature yields is like [that] afforded by the frank words of one we love.

Man, man is the devil,
The source of all evil.

Methinks that these prozers, with their saws and their

laws, do not know how glad a man can be. What wisdom, what warning, can prevail against gladness? There is no law so strong which a little gladness may not transgress. I have a room all to myself; it is nature. It is a place beyond the jurisdiction of human governments. Pile up your books, the records of sadness, your saws and your laws. Nature is glad outside, and her merry worms within will ere long topple them down. There is a prairie beyond your laws. Nature is a prairie for outlaws. There are two worlds, the post-office and nature. I know them both. I continually forget mankind and their institutions, as I do a bank.

Well, now this afternoon the snow is lodging on all this ice. Is this the winter gnat I find on the snow, with six legs, a long, narrow, cylindrical body about one sixth of an inch, and the two narrow wings one third longer? Two feelers. Walden not yet frozen.

The red-crowns here still. They appear to frequent one clump of birches a long time, for here the snow beneath is covered with the seeds they have loosened, while elsewhere there are none. They hang by the twigs while they peek the catkins, and others are busy on the snow beneath, picking up what drops. They are continually in motion, with a jingling twitter and occasional mew, and suddenly, when disturbed, go off with a loud jingle like the motion of a whole bag of nuts.

The air is thick and darkened with falling snow, and the woods are being draped with it in white wreaths. This is winter. They are putting on their white great-coats. The woodland road is spotless white.

The color of the pond depends on the light. It is now dark, in the storm. True to its nature, between earth and air, it is both green and blue. Let clear, serene weather come and illustrate its depth, and it is green; let the air descend on it and toss up its surface in waves, and it is blue like the sky.¹

Jan. 4. To what I will call Yellow Birch Swamp, E. Hubbard's, in north part of town.

Still ice is left on the trees, but to-day is a windy and blustering day. The quantity of ice on the birches being reduced, they are still more wand- or faery-like. Tall ones, with no limbs for half their height, are gracefully bent over, and are now swaying from side to side in the wind, exactly like waving ostrich-plumes, as delicate as the spray on frosted windows. The color of these ice-clad trees at a distance is not white, but rather slightly grayish or hoary, which the better merges them in the landscape. This is the fourth day of the ice. The landscape is white, not only from the ice on the ground and trees, but from the snow which fell yesterday, though it is not an inch deep. In respect to snow, the winter appears to be just beginning.

I must call that swamp of E. Hubbard's west of the Hunt Pasture, Yellow Birch Swamp. There are more of those trees than anywhere else in town that I know. How pleasing to stand beside a new or rare tree! And few are so handsome as this. Singularly allied to the black birch in its sweet checkerberry scent and its form, and to the canoe birch in its peeling or fringed and

¹ [*Walden*, p. 196; Riv. 276.]

tasselled bark. The top is brush-like as the black birch; the bark an exquisite fine or delicate gold-color, curled off partly from the trunk, with vertical clear or smooth spaces, as if a plane had been passed up the tree. The sight of these trees affects me more than California gold. I measured one five feet and two inches in circumference at six feet from the ground. We have the silver and the golden birch. This is like a fair, flax-haired sister of the dark-complexioned black birch, with golden ringlets. How lustily it takes hold of the swampy soil, and braces itself! And here flows a dark cherry-wood or wine-colored brook over the iron-red sands in the sombre swamp, — swampy wine. In an undress, this tree. Ah, time will come when these will be all gone. Among the primitive trees. What sort of dryads haunt these? Blond nymphs.

Near by, the great pasture oaks with horizontal boughs. At Pratt's, the stupendous, boughy, branching elm, like vast thunderbolts stereotyped upon the sky; heaven-defying, sending back dark vegetable bolts, as if flowing back in the channel of the lightning. The white oaks have a few leaves about the crown of the trunk in the lowest part of the tree, like a tree within a tree. The tree is thus less racked by the wind and ice.



In the twilight I went through the swamp, and yellow birches sent forth a dull-yellow gleam which each time made my heart beat faster. Occasionally you come to a dead and leaning white birch, beset with large fungi like ears or little shelves, with a rounded edge above.

I walked with the yellow birch. The prinus is green within. If there were Druids whose temples were the oak groves, my temple is the swamp. Sometimes I was in doubt about a birch whose vest was buttoned smooth and dark, till I came nearer and saw the yellow gleaming through, or where a button was off.

The animals do not use fire; man does. At first there was a pile of cold fat pine roots on the icy rock. A match was rubbed, fire elicited, and now this fire is the most emphatic and significant fact hereabouts. Fire slumbers never far off, and the friction of a match can awaken it.

Jan. 5. To Kibbe Place Swamp.

I see where probably a red squirrel had scratched along over the snow, and in one place a very perfect and delicate print of his feet. His five toes in separate sharp triangles distinctly raying off, or often only four visible. In one place I find a beaten track from a hole in the ground to [a] walnut a rod distant up which they have gone for nuts, which still hang on it. The whole print of the foot, etc., is about an inch and three quarters long, a part of the leg being impressed. Two of the tracks, when they are running, apparently, the two foremost, are wider apart; and perhaps with one pair they often make five marks, with the other four. Where there is a deep furrow in a chestnut tree between two swelling muscles, in two instances the squirrels, knowing it to be hollow, have gnawed a hole, enlarging the crack between two



cheeks, and so made themselves a retreat. In one instance they have commenced to gnaw between the cheeks, though no cavity appears, but I have no doubt the tree is hollow.



A large yellow birch — or black — has the main stem very short and branches very long, nearly from one centre.

There was a fine rosy sky in the west after sunset; and later an amber-colored horizon, in which a single tree-top showed finely.

Jan. 6. Walden apparently *froze over* last night. It is but little more than an inch thick, and two or three square rods by Hubbard's shore are still open. A dark, transparent ice. It would not have frozen entirely over, as it were in one night, or maybe a little more, and yet have been so thin next the shore as well as in the middle, if it had not been so late in the winter, and so ready to freeze. It is a dark, transparent ice, but will not bear me without much cracking. As I walked along the edge, I started out three little pickerel no longer than my finger from *close* to the shore, which went wiggling into deeper water like bloodsuckers or pollywogs. When I lie down on it and examine it closely, I find that the greater part of the bubbles which I had thought were within its own substance are against its under surface, and that they are continually rising up from the bottom, — perfect spheres, apparently, and very beautiful and clear, in which I see my face through this thin ice (perhaps an

inch and an eighth), from one eightieth of an inch in diameter, or a mere point, up to one eighth of an inch. There are thirty or forty of these, at least, to every square inch. These, probably, when heated by the sun, make it crack and whoop. There are, also, within the substance of the ice, oblong perpendicular bubbles half an inch long, more or less, by about one thirtieth of an inch, and these are commonly widest at the bottom (?), or, oftener, separate minute spherical bubbles of equal or smaller diameter, one directly above another, like a string of beads, perhaps the first stage of the former. But these internal bubbles are not nearly so numerous as those in the water beneath. It may be twenty-four hours since the ice began to form decidedly.

I see, on the sandy bottom a few inches beneath, the white cases of caddis-worms made of the white quartz sand or pebbles. And the bottom is very much creased or furrowed where some creature has travelled about and doubled on its tracks, — perhaps the caddis-worm, for I find one or two of the same in the furrows, though the latter are deep and broad for them to make.¹

This morning the weeds and twigs and fences were covered with what I may call a leaf frost, the leaves a third of an inch long, shaped somewhat like this, with triangular points, but very thin. Another morning there will be no frost.

I forgot to say yesterday that I picked up four pig-nuts by the squirrel's hole, from which he had picked

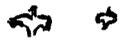
¹ [Walden, pp. 382, 383.]

the meat, having gnawed a hole about half the diameter of the nut in width on each side. After I got home I observed that in each case the holes were on the sides of the nut and not on the edges, and I cut into a couple with my knife in order to see certainly which was the best way to get at the meat. Cutting into the edge, I came upon the thick partition which runs the whole length of the nut, and then came upon the edges of the meats, and finally was obliged to cut away a good part of the nut on both edges before I could extract the meat, because it was held by the *neck* in the middle. But when I cut holes on the sides, not only the partitions I met with were thin and partial, but I struck the meats broadside and extracted them with less trouble. It may be that it is most convenient for the squirrel to hold the nut thus, but I think there is a deeper reason than that. I observe that, out of six whole pignuts which I picked from a tree, three are so cracked transversely to the division of the meat that I can easily pry them open with my knife. They hang on as food for animals.

Jan. 7. To Nawshawtuct.

This is one of those pleasant winter mornings when you find the river firmly frozen in the night, but still the air is serene and the sun feels gratefully warm an hour after sunrise, — though so fair, a healthy whitish vapor fills the lower stratum of the air, concealing the mountains, — the smokes go up from the village, you hear the cocks with immortal vigor, and the children shout on their way to school, and the sound made by the

railroad men hammering a rail is uncommonly musical. This promises a perfect winter day. In the heavens, except the altitude of the sun, you have, as it were, the conditions of summer. Perfect serenity and clarity and sonorousness in the earth. All nature is but braced by the cold. It gives tension to both body and mind.

Still the snow is strewn with the seeds of the birch, the small winged seeds or samaræ and the larger scales or bracts shaped like a bird in flight, — a hawk or dove. The least touch or jar  shakes them off, and it is difficult to bring the female catkins home in your pocket. They cover the snow like coarse bran. On breaking the male catkins, I am surprised to see the yellow anthers so distinct, promising spring. I did not suspect that there was so sure a promise or prophecy of spring. These are frozen in December or earlier, — the anthers of spring, filled with their fertilizing dust.

About ten minutes before 10 A. M., I heard a very loud sound, and felt a violent jar, which made the house rock and the loose articles on my table rattle, which I knew must be either a powder-mill blown up or an earthquake. Not knowing but another and more violent might take place, I immediately ran down-stairs, but I saw from the door a vast expanding column of whitish smoke rising in the west directly over the powder-mills four miles distant. It was unfolding its volumes above, which made it widest there. In three or four minutes it had all risen and spread itself into a lengthening, somewhat copper-colored cloud parallel with the horizon from north to south,

and about ten minutes after the explosion it passed over my head, being several miles long from north to south and distinctly dark and smoky toward the north, not nearly so high as the few cirrhi in the sky. I jumped into a man's wagon and rode toward the mills. In a few minutes more, I saw behind me, far in the east, a faint salmon-colored cloud carrying the news of the explosion to the sea, and perchance over [the] head of the absent proprietor.

Arrived probably before half past ten. There were perhaps thirty or forty wagons there. The kernel-mill had blown up first, and killed three men who were in it, said to be turning a roller with a chisel. In three seconds after, one of the mixing-houses exploded. The kernel-house was swept away, and fragments, mostly but a foot or two in length, were strewn over the hills and meadows, as if sown, for thirty rods, and the slight snow then on the ground was for the most part melted around. The mixing-house, about ten rods west, was not so completely dispersed, for most of the machinery remained, a total wreck. The press-house, about twelve rods east, had two thirds [of] its boards off, and a mixing-house next westward from that which blew up had lost some boards on the east side. The boards fell out (*i. e.* of those buildings which did not blow up), the air within apparently rushing out to fill up the vacuum occasioned by the explosions, and so, the powder being bared to the fiery particles in the air, another building explodes. The powder on the floor of the bared press-house was six inches deep in some places, and the crowd were thoughtlessly going into it. A few windows

were broken thirty or forty rods off. Timber six inches square and eighteen feet long was thrown over a hill eighty feet high at least,—a dozen rods; thirty rods was about the limit of fragments. The drying-house, in which was a fire, was perhaps twenty-five rods distant and escaped. Every timber and piece of wood which was blown up was as black as if it had been dyed, except where it had broken on falling; other breakages were completely concealed by the color. I mistook what had been iron hoops in the woods for leather straps. Some of the clothes of the men were in the tops of the trees, where undoubtedly their bodies had been and left them. The bodies were naked and black, some limbs and bowels here and there, and a head at a distance from its trunk. The feet were bare; the hair singed to a crisp. I smelt the powder half a mile before I got there. Put the different buildings thirty rods apart, and then but one will blow up at a time.

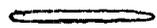
Brown thinks my red-headed bird of the winter the lesser redpoll. He has that fall snowbird, he thinks the young of the purple finch. What is my pine knot of the sea? Knot, or ash-colored sandpiper? or phalarope? Brown's pine knot looks too large and clumsy. He shows me the spirit duck of the Indians, of which Peabody says the Indians call it by a word meaning spirit, "because of the wonderful quickness with which it disappears at the twang of a bow."

I perceive (?) the increased length of the day on returning from my afternoon walk. Can it be? The sun sets only about five minutes later, and the day is about ten minutes longer.

Le Jeune thus describes the trees covered with ice in Canada in the winter of '35 and '36 (he *appears* to be at Quebec): "There was a great wind from the north-east, accompanied by a rain which lasted a very long time, and by a cold great enough to freeze these waters as soon as they touched anything, so that, as this rain fell on the trees from the summit (*cime*) to the foot, there was formed (*il s'y fit*) a crystal of ice, which enchased both trunk (*tige*) and branches, so that for a very long time all our great woods appeared only a forest of crystal; for in truth the ice which clothed them universally everywhere (*partout*) was thicker than a testoon (*épaisse de plus d'un teston*); in a word all the bushes and all that was above the snow was environed on all sides and enchased in (*avec*) ice; the savages have told me that it does not happen often so (*de même*)."

Jan. 8. I see what are probably the anther cells distinctly in the large buds of the poplar, which for a long time have shown their wool one sixth of an inch long. Also similar cells in the alder catkins, but greener and less springlike. The birch ones are the yellowest.

At Walden. — The bubbles which I made under the ice by casting on stones here night before last, or forty-eight hours ago, nearly half a foot in diameter, still remain. The last two days have been very warm, like an Indian summer or very early spring, yet about an inch more of ice has formed, making about two inches in all, and you can see the line of juncture distinctly. The ice is not now transparent, revealing the bottom

distinctly, and the dark-green color of the water, but whitish or gray, and, though twice as thick, is hardly stronger than before. The air-bubbles within it have greatly expanded in the heat, and run together and lost their regularity. I do not see that they are regularly superimposed, *i. e.* perpendicularly, but they have expanded off and run together at different angles, like silver coins poured from a bag and overlapping each other, and even form thin but wide flakes occasionally. It is too late to study the bottom. The beauty of the ice is gone. With a stone I broke the ice above one of my bubbles and let the air out, and water took its place. I then took out a cake of ice including two old bubbles, each about four inches in diameter, and was surprised to find that they were included between the two ices. I actually took the bubbles out between the ices and turned them bottom-upwards. These bubbles were a quarter of an inch thick and shaped like this:  rounded on the edge. They appeared to be wholly within the new or lower ice, though the under surface of the upper was made rough; and I was surprised to find beneath them, on the under surface of the lower ice, which, like the upper, was, as I have said, about one inch thick, regular circular, saucer-like depressions, in this case five eighths of an inch deep, leaving the lower ice little more than an eighth of an inch thick directly above their middle. Thus:  And this thin part of the  lower ice was almost perforated by large bubbles almost a quarter of an inch in diameter, which had burst out below. Probably

there was no ice directly under my largest bubbles. I inferred, therefore, that all those infinite minute bubbles I had seen first on the under side of the ice were now frozen in with it, and that each, in its proportion or degree, like the large ones, had operated like a burning-glass on the ice beneath it to rot it. And probably it is the expanding and shrinking of the air in them, as well as in the water, which cracks the ice and makes the whooping sound.¹ Perhaps those minute bubbles that are seen one above another in the freshest ice have been frozen in like the largest, as they successively rose from the bottom while the ice was freezing. It has been supposed that Walden ice does not keep so well because it has more air in it, there being no outlet or stream to carry it off. There may be something in this. Let me look at the fresh ice of a pond that has a stream, and see if there are fewer bubbles under it. Of course, large bubbles would be very obvious under transparent or black ice.

Jan. 9. 3 P. M. — To Walden and Cliffs.

The telegraph harp again. Always the same unrememberable revelation it is to me. It is something as enduring as the worm that never dies. Before the [*sic*] it was, and will be after. I never hear it without thinking of Greece. How the Greeks *harped* upon the words immortal, ambrosial! They are what it says. It stings my ear with everlasting truth. It allies Concord to Athens, and both to Elysium. It always intoxicates me, makes me sane, reverses my views of things.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 273, 274; *Riv.* 383-385.]

I am pledged to it. I get down the railroad till I hear that which makes all the world a lie. When the zephyr, or west wind, sweeps this wire, I rise to the height of my being. A period — a semicolon, at least — is put to my previous and habitual ways of viewing things. This wire is my redeemer. It always brings a special and a general message to me from the Highest. Day before yesterday I looked at the mangled and blackened bodies of men which had been blown up by powder, and felt that the lives of men were not innocent, and that there was an avenging power in nature. To-day I hear this immortal melody, while the west wind is blowing balmily on my cheek, and methinks a roseate sunset is preparing. Are there not two powers?

Where the brickmakers got their sand I measured the tap-root of a pitch pine, five inches in diameter at the surface, which extended straight downward into pure sand — excepting the usual thickness of soil — nine feet visibly, and undoubtedly three feet further than I could see.

This is the third warm day, the warmest of all. The Andromeda Ponds methinks look redder. I walked through one. The lowest growth is sphagnum, fresh, large, and handsome, some green, some red, into which occasionally I slumped nearly a foot. Some lambkill is mixed with the andromeda. A few islands of gray high blueberry bushes, with round red buds, rise here and there mixed with the paniced andromeda, large cotton-grass, now prostrate, etc. The pitcher-plant leaves are still for the most part green and uninjured here, though full of ice. Many have holes in their sides,

through which insects appear to have eaten out. However, the external ear or handle is also eaten through, so the agent may have been without.

I see a dogbane sickle-shaped seed-vessel which has not discounted. I open it and let the seeds fly. As I walked the railroad this springlike day, I heard from time to time the sound of stones and earth falling and rolling down the bank in the cuts. The earth is almost entirely bare. We have not yet had snow more than one inch deep!!!

As I climbed the Cliff, I paused in the sun and sat on a dry rock, dreaming. I thought of those summery hours when time is tinged with eternity, — runs into it and becomes of one stuff with it. How much — how, perhaps, all — that is best in our experience in middle life may be resolved into the memory of our youth! I remember how I expanded. If the genius visits me now I am not quite taken off my feet, but I remember how this experience is like, but less than, that I had long since.

Pulling up the johnswort on the face of the Cliff, I am surprised to see the signs of unceasing growth about the roots, — fresh shoots two inches long, white with red leaflets, and all the radical part quite green. The leaves of the crowfoot, also, are quite green, and carry me forward to spring. I dig one up with a stick, and, pulling it to pieces, I find deep in the centre of the plant, just beneath the ground, surrounded by all the tender leaves that are to precede it, the blossom-bud, about half as big as the head of a pin, perfectly white.¹ There it patiently sits, or slumbers, how full of

¹ I open one next day, and it is yellow.

faith, informed of a spring which the world has never seen, the promise and prophecy of it shaped somewhat like some Eastern temples, in which a bud-shaped dome o'ertops the whole. It affected me, this tender dome-like bud, within the bosom of the earth, like a temple upon the earth, resounding with the worship of votaries. Methought I saw the flamens in yellow robes within it. The crowfoot buds — and how many beside! — lie unexpanded just beneath the surface. May I lead my life the following year as innocently as they! May it be as fair and smell as sweet! I anticipate nature. Destined to become a fair yellow flower above the surface to delight the eyes of children and its Maker. It offered to my mind a little temple into which to enter and worship. It will go forth in April, this vestal now cherishing her fire, to be married to the sun. How innocent are Nature's purposes! How unambitious! Her elections are not Presidential. The springing and blossoming of this flower do not depend on the votes of men.

That first day of ice, when my coat and cap were glazed with a thick coat, the fine rain freezing as it fell, was not a cold day. I am pretty sure I have known it rain without freezing when colder. Had the fineness of the rain anything to do with it?

I saw to-day the reflected sunset sky in the river, but the colors in the reflection were different from those in the sky. The sky was dark clouds with coppery or dun-colored under sides. In the water were dun-colored clouds with bluish-green patches or bars.

Jan. 10. Went a-chestnutting this afternoon to Smith's wood-lot near the Turnpike. Carried four ladies. I raked. We got six and a half quarts,¹ the ground being bare and the leaves not frozen. The fourth remarkably mild day. I found thirty-five chestnuts in a little pile under the end of a stick under the leaves, near — within a foot of — what I should call a gallery of a meadow mouse. These galleries were quite common as I raked. There was no nest nor apparent cavity about this store. Aunt M. found another with sixteen in it. Many chestnuts are still in the burs on the ground. Aunt found a twig which had apparently fallen prematurely, with eight small burs, all within the compass of its five or six inches, and all but one full of nuts. The galleries above named were evidently permanent and not made by one trip.

Jan. 11 and 12. Surveying for John L.—.

He says that he saw blackbirds about a week ago. He says that the most snow we have had this winter (it has not been more than one inch deep) has been only a "robin snow," as it is called, *i. e.* a snow which does not drive off the robins. By a bound of his wood-lot in Carlisle, observed a peculiar oak, very smooth and light-colored bark, which his brother, who knows them in Wayland, calls a chestnut oak. I am not quite sure. I did not see a chestnut oak leaf at any rate. *Vide* again. Says they will split like chestnut and are easy to cut. J. says they have both red and white huckleberries near his house. Described an "old

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 197; Riv. 241.]

fort," about the size and shape of a cellar, which he saw in 1816 perhaps across the river near Heywood's sawmill. This man is continually drinking cider; thinks it corrects some mistake in him; wishes he had a barrel of it in the woods; if he had known he was to be out so long would have brought a jugful; will dun Captain Hutchinson for a drink on his way home. This, or rum, runs in his head, if not in his throat, all the time. Is interested in juniper berries, gooseberries, currants, etc., whether they will make wine; has recipes for this. Eats the juniper berries raw as he walks. Tobacco is another staff of life with him. Thinks, with others, that he has metals on his farm which the divining-rod might find, but is convertible on this point.

Jan. 13. A drifting snow-storm last night and today, the first of consequence; and the first sleighing this winter.

Jan. 14. Snows all day.

P. M. — To Walden and Andromeda Ponds.

The place of the sun appears through the storm about three o'clock, a sign that it is near its end, though it still snows as hard as ever. An intenser, whiter light is reflected from the west side of drifts and hills, like another day, in comparison with which the level snow is dark. There is this recognition of fair weather. The west side of abrupt drifts toward the lit clouds reflects quite a glow of light, many shades brighter than the levels. It is a very light snow, lying like down

or feathery scales. Examined closely, the flakes are beautifully regular six-rayed stars or wheels with a centre disk, perfect geometrical figures in thin scales like this:  far more perfect than I can draw. These thin crystals are piled about a foot deep all over the country, but as light as bran. And now the snow has quite ceased, blue sky appears, and the sun goes down in clouds. The surface of fields, as I look toward the western light, appears waved or watered on a large scale, as if different kinds of flakes drifted together, some glistening scales, others darker; or perhaps the same reflected the light differently from different sides of slight drifts or undulations on the surface. Thus beautiful the snow. These starry crystals, descending profusely, have woven a pure garment, as of white watered satin, over all the fields. Snow freshly fallen is one thing, to-morrow it will be another. It is now pure and trackless. Walking three or four miles in the woods, I saw but one track of any kind, that of a rabbit, which was very large and indistinct, necessarily, and scared one partridge from a scrub oak. Most animals — almost all quadrupeds, at least — are now buried deep and still beneath it. Methinks it would not upbear a meadow mouse, but it would sink out of sight in it. There is not a trace of one of these, nor of a muskrat, on the Andromeda Ponds, yet by to-morrow morning there will be countless tracks of all sizes all over the country; which makes me think these creatures, even in the deepest woods and in winter, are far the most active by night. In the midst of the storm I saw the little chestnut or red frontletted bird on the birches. It

is warm, and the snow-fleas are about. White walls of snow rest on the boughs of trees, in height two or three times their thickness. These white irregular arms give the forest a wintry and picturesque look at a distance. The evergreens, especially the pitch pine, often bear large irregular white burdens, agreeably diversified and loop-holed by the interstices of the plumes. But it is only when fresh that this snow on the trees is beautiful. Already, before the storm is over, the surface of the snow in the high woods is full of indentations and hollows where some of this burden has fallen.

I am often reminded that the farmer living far inland has not thought of plows and carts alone. Here, when getting his fuel, he cuts the roots or limbs of some sturdier [tree] with reference to the uses it may serve in the construction of a ship. The farmer not only gets out wood to burn, but ship-timber. It was he who decided the destiny [of] some mighty oak, that it should become the keel of a famous ship. It is he who says, "Ye shall become ships to plow the sea," when he says, "Ye shall become money to me." It is in the woods and in the farmer's yard that the vessel is first put upon the stocks. He burns the hewings in his ample fireplace; he teams the rest to Medford with the same yokes that plow his fields. With bars and chains he clutches and binds to wheels, and with numerous yokes drags it over the hills to the nearest port. He learns as well as the engineer what hills are steep, what ground ascends. By repeated strains and restings on the terraces, he at length surmounts every difficulty.

Think of the difficulties which the farmer silently overcomes, who conveys the keel or mast of a man-of-war from his woods to the nearest port, which would have defied the skill of a tribe of savages to overcome!

Men's ignorance is made as useful as their knowledge. If one knew more, he would admire less. In the winter how many farmers help build ships where men grow up who never saw the ocean.

I suppose that the meadow mouse can still pick up chestnuts under the snow. The nuts commonly lie as they fell from the bur, two or three together.

The bones of children soon turn to dust again.

Jan. 15. 9 A. M. — To woods.

The starry flakes or crystals, like everything that falls from heaven to earth, have partially melted, coalesced, and lost their regularity and beauty. A good part of the snow has fallen from the trees. See one or two short trails of meadow mice. Apparently they work now under the snow, but when the sun has melted and settled and the cold somewhat consolidated the snow, they come out on the surface? As you walk in the woods you hear the rustling sound of limbs and leaves that are relieved of their burden, and of the falling snow. Young evergreens look like statues partially covered with white veils.

Saw near L——'s, the 12th, a shrike. He told me about seeing Uncle Charles once, come to Barrett's mill with logs, leap over the yoke that drew them and back again. It amused the boys.

True words are those, as Trench says, — transport,

rapture, ravishment, ecstasy. These are the words I want. This is the effect of music. I am rapt away by it, out of myself. These are truly poetical words. I am inspired, elevated, expanded. I am on the mount.

Mrs. Ripley told me this afternoon that Russell had decided that that green (and sometimes yellow) dust on the under side of stones in walls was a decaying state of *Lepraria chlorina*, a lichen, — the yellow another species of *Lepraria*. Science suggests the value of mutual intelligence. I have long known this dust, but, as I did not know the name of it, *i. e.* what others called [it], and therefore could not conveniently speak of it, it has suggested less to me and I have made less use of it. I now first feel as if I had got hold of it.

In Carlisle and Boxboro they go to church as of old; they are still pagans (*pagani*), or villagers.

Jan. 16. *Sunday*. Cold, with blustering winds drifting the snow. Yesterday the hounds were heard. It was a hunter's day. All tracks were fresh, the snow deep and light. I met Melvin with his bag full.

Trench says that “ ‘rivals,’ in the primary sense of the word, are those who dwell on the banks of the same stream ” or “ on opposite banks,” but as he says, in many words, since the use of water-rights is a fruitful source of contention between such neighbors, the word has acquired this secondary sense. My friends are my *rivals* on the Concord, in the primitive sense of the word. There is no strife between us respecting the use of the stream. The Concord offers many privileges, but none to quarrel about. It is a peaceful, not a

brawling, stream. It has not made *rivals* out of neighbors *that lived on its banks*, but friends. My friends are my *rivals*; we dwell on opposite banks of the stream, but that stream is the Concord, which flows without a ripple or a murmur, without a rapid or a brawl, and offers no petty privileges to quarrel about.¹

Jan. 20. P. M. — To Walden.

I see where snowbirds in troops have visited each withered chenopodium that rises above the snow in the yard — and some are large and bushlike — for its seeds, their well-filled granary now. There are a few tracks reaching from weed to weed, where some have run, but under the larger plants the snow is entirely trodden and blackened, proving that a large flock has been there and flown.

Ah, our indescribable winter sky, pure and continent and clear, between emerald (?) and amber (?), such as summer never sees! What more beautiful or soothing to the eye than those finely divided or minced clouds, like down or loose-spread cotton-batting, now reaching up from the west above my head! Beneath this a different stratum, all whose ends are curved like spray or wisps. All kinds of figures are drawn on the blue ground with this fibrous white paint.

No sooner has Walden frozen thick enough to bear than the fishermen have got out their reels and minnows, for he who fishes a pond first in the season expects to succeed best.

¹ Bailey, I find, has it: "Rival (*Rivalis* L. q. d. qui juxta eundem rivum pascit)." My friends my rivals are.

Jan. 21. A fine, still, warm moonlight evening. We have had one or two already. Moon not yet full.

To the woods by the Deep Cut at 9 o'clock.

The blueness of the sky at night — the color it wears by day — is an everlasting surprise to me, suggesting the constant presence and prevalence of light in the firmament, that we see through the veil of night to the constant blue, as by day. The night is not black when the air is clear, but blue still. The great ocean of light and ether is unaffected by our partial night. Night is not universal. At midnight I see into the universal day. Walking at that hour, unless it is cloudy, still the blue sky o'cratches me.

I am somewhat oppressed and saddened by the sameness and apparent poverty of the heavens, — that these irregular and few geometrical figures which the constellations make are no other than those seen by the Chaldean shepherds. The same simplicity and unchangeableness which commonly impresses me by wealth sometimes affects me as barrenness. I pine for a new world in the heavens as well as on the earth, and though it is some consolation to hear of the wilderness of stars and systems invisible to the naked eye, yet the sky does not make that impression of variety and wildness that even the forest does, as it ought. It makes an impression, rather, of simplicity and unchangeableness, as of eternal laws; this being the same constellation which the shepherds saw, and obedient still to the same law. It does not affect me as that unhand-selled wilderness which the forest is. I seem to see it pierced with visual rays from a thousand observatories.

It is more the domain of science than of poetry. But it is the stars as not known to science that I would know, the stars which the lonely traveller knows.

The Chaldean shepherds saw not the same stars which I see, and if I am elevated in the least toward the heavens, I do not accept their classification of them. I am not to be distracted by the names which they have imposed. The sun which I know is not Apollo, nor is the evening star Venus. The heavens should be as new, at least, as the world is new. This classification of the stars is old and musty; it is as if a mildew had taken place in the heavens, as if the stars so closely packed had heated and moulded there. If they appear fixed, it is because that hitherto men have been thus necessitated to see them. I see not merely old but new testaments in the skies. Do not I stand as near the stars as the Chaldean shepherds? The heavens commonly look as dry and meagre as our astronomies are,—mere troops, as the latter are catalogues, of stars. The Milky Way yields no milk.

A few good anecdotes is our science, with a few imposing statements respecting distance and size, and little or nothing about the stars as they concern man; teaching how he may survey a country or sail a ship, and not how he may steer his life. Astrology contained the germ of a higher truth than this. It may happen that the stars are more significant and truly celestial to the teamster than to the astronomer. Nobody sees the stars now. They study astronomy at the district school, and learn that the sun is ninety-five millions [of miles] distant, and the like,—a statement which

never made any impression on me, because I never walked it, and which I cannot be said to believe. But the sun shines nevertheless. Though observatories are multiplied, the heavens receive very little attention. The naked eye may easily see farther than the armed. It depends on who looks through it. No superior telescope to this has been invented. In those big ones the recoil is equal to the force of the discharge. The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling ranges from earth to heaven, but this the astronomer's does not often do. It does not see far beyond the dome of the observatory.

Compared with the visible phenomena of the heavens, the anecdotes of science affect me as trivial and petty. Man's eye is the true star-finder, the comet-seeker. As I sat looking out the window the other evening just after dark, I saw the lamp of a freight-train, and, near by, just over the train, a bright star, which looked exactly like the former, as if it belonged to a different part of the same train. It was difficult to realize that the one was a feeble oil lamp, the other a world.

As I walk the railroad causeway I am, as the last two months, disturbed by the sound of my steps on the frozen ground. I wish to hear the silence of the night, for the silence is something positive and to be heard. I cannot walk with my ears covered. I must stand still and listen with open ears, far from the noises of the village, that the night may make its impression on me. A fertile and eloquent silence. Sometimes the silence is merely negative, an arid and barren waste in which I shudder, where no ambrosia grows. I must hear the whispering of a myriad voices.

Silence alone is worthy to be heard. Silence is of various depth and fertility, like soil. Now it is a mere Sahara, where men perish of hunger and thirst, now a fertile bottom, or prairie, of the West. As I leave the village, drawing nearer to the woods, I listen from time to time to hear the hounds of Silence baying the Moon, — to know if they are on the track of any game. If there 's no Diana in the night, what is it worth? I hark the goddess Diana. The silence rings; it is musical and thrills me. A night in which the silence was audible. I hear the unspeakable.

I easily read the moral of my dreams. Yesterday I was influenced with the rottenness of human relations. They appeared full of death and decay, and offended the nostrils. In the night I dreamed of delving amid the graves of the dead, and soiled my fingers with their rank mould. It was *sanitarily, morally, and physically* true.

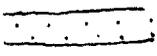
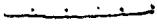
If night is the mere negation of day, I hear nothing but my own steps in it. Death is with me, and life far away. If the elements are not human, if the winds do not sing or sigh, as the stars twinkle, my life runs shallow. I measure the depth of my own being. I walk with vast alliances. I am the allied powers, the holy alliance, absorbing the European potentates. I do not get much from the blue sky, these twinkling stars, and bright snow-fields reflecting an almost rosaceous light. But when I enter the woods I am fed by the variety, — the forms of the trees above against the blue, with the stars seen through the pines like the lamps hung on them in an illumination, the somewhat indistinct and misty fineness of the pine-tops, and the

finely divided spray of the oaks, etc., and the shadows of all these on the snow. The first shadow I came to I thought was a black place where the woodchoppers had had a fire. These myriad shadows checker the white ground and enhance the brightness of the enlightened portions. See the shadows of these young oaks which have lost half their leaves, more beautiful than themselves, like the shadow of a chandelier, and motionless as if they were fallen leaves on the snow, — but shake the tree, and all is in motion.

In this stillness and at this distance, I hear the nine-o'clock bell in Bedford five miles off, which I might never hear in the village, but here its music surmounts the village din and has something very sweet and noble and inspiring in it, associated, in fact, with the hooting of owls.

Returning, I thought I heard the creaking of a wagon just starting from Hubbard's door, and rarely musical it sounded. It was the telegraph harp. It began to sound but at one spot only. It is very fitful, and only sounds when it is in the mood. You may go by twenty times, both when the wind is high and when it is low and let it blow which way it will, and yet hear no strain from it, but another time, at a particular spot, you may hear a strain rising and swelling on the string, which may at last ripen to something glorious. The wire will perhaps labor long with it before it attains to melody.

Even the creaking of a wagon in a frosty night has music in it which allies it to the highest and purest strain of the muse.

I think it was January 20th that I saw that which I think an otter track¹ in path under the Cliffs, — a deep trail in the snow, six or seven inches wide and two or three deep in the middle, as if a log had been drawn along, similar to a muskrat's only much larger, and the legs evidently short and the steps short, sinking three or four inches deeper still,  as if it had waddled along. It finally  turned into my old tracks and went toward the river and Fair Haven Pond. One was killed there last spring. Minott says his mother told him she had seen a deer come down the hill behind her house, where I. Moore's now is, and cross the road and the meadow in front; thinks it may have been eighty years ago. Otter are very rare here now. I have not heard of any killed hereabouts for twenty or thirty years till, within two years, two or three of them. In Sudbury and at Fair Haven Pond.

Jan. 23. Sunday. Rain, carrying off the snow and making slosh of the lower half of it. It is perhaps the wettest walking we ever have.

Jan. 25. P. M. — To Flint's Pond, down railroad.

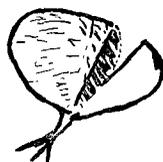
There is something springlike in this afternoon. In winter, after middle, we are interested in what is springlike. The earth and sun appear to have approached some degrees. The banks seem to lie in the embrace

¹ No doubt it was. Israel Rice tells of one shot within the year in a ditch near White Pond; probably the same. He says I saw an otter track.

of the sun. The ground is partly bare. The cress is fresh and green at the bottoms of the brooks. What is that long-leaved green plant in the brook in Hosmer's meadow on the Turnpike? The buttercup leaves appear everywhere when the ground is bare. There are temporary ponds in the fields made by the rain and melted snow, which hardly have time [to] freeze, they soak up so fast. As I go up Bare Hill, there being only snow enough there to whiten the ground, the last year's stems of the blueberry (*vacillans*) give a pink tinge to the hillside, reminding me of red snow, though they do not seemle it. I am surprised to see Flint's Pond a quarter part open, — the middle. Walden, which froze much later, is nowhere open. But Flint's feels the wind and is shallow.

I noticed on a small pitch pine, in the axils close to the main stem, little spherical bunches of buds, an inch and more in diameter, with short, apparently abortive leaves from some. The leaves were nearly all single, as in the plants of one or two years' growth, and were finely serrate or toothed,  pectinate (?). On the lot I surveyed for Weston I found the chestnut oak (though the teeth are sharper than E.'s plate), a handsome leaf, still on the young trees. I had taken it for a chestnut before. It is hard to distinguish them by the trunk alone. I found some barberry sprouts where the bushes had been cut down not long since, and they were covered with small withered leaves beset with stiff prickles on their edges, and you could see the thorns, as it were gradually passing into leaves, being, as one stage, the nerves of the leaf alone, —

starlike and branched thorns, gradually, as you descended the stem, getting some pulp between them. I suppose it was owing to the shortening them in. I still pick chestnuts. Some larger ones proved to contain double meats, it were arbitrarily, as with a knife, each part having the common division without the brown skin transverse to this.



The pickerel of Walden! when I see them lying on the ice, or in the well which the fisherman cuts in the ice, I am always surprised by their rare beauty, as if they were a fabulous fish, they are so foreign to the streets, or even the woods; handsome as flowers and gems, golden and emerald, — a transcendent and dazzling beauty which separates [them] by a wide interval from the cadaverous cod and haddock, at least a day old, which we see. They are as foreign as Arabia to our Concord life, as if the two ends of the earth had come together. These are not green like the pines, or gray like the stones, or blue like the sky; but they have, if possible, to my eye, yet rarer colors, like precious stones. It is surprising that these fishes are caught here. They are something tropical. That in this deep and capacious spring, far beneath the rattling teams and chaises and tinkling sleighs that travel the Walden road, this great gold and emerald fish swims! They are true topazes, inasmuch as you can only conjecture what place they came from. The pearls of Walden, some animalized Walden water. I never chanced to see this kind of fish in any market. With

a few convulsive quirks they give up their diluted ghosts.¹

I have noticed that leaves are green and violets bloom later where a bank has been burnt over in the fall, as if the fire warmed it. I saw to-day, where a creeping juniper had been burnt, radical leaves of johnswort, thistle, clover, dandelion, etc., as well as sorrel and veronica.

Young white oaks retain their leaves, and large ones on their lower parts.

Swamp white oak (?)

Very young rock chestnut oaks

The little chinquapin (?)

The bear oak

The scarlet oak (?)

The red

The black (?), young trees

The witch-hazel, more or less

Carpinus Americana

Ostrya Virginica, somewhat

Sweet-fern, more or less

Andromeda

Andromeda, panicked (?)

Kalmia latifolia

Kalmia angustifolia

Cranberry

The above are such as I think of which wear their leaves conspicuously now.

Jan. 26. Up river on ice 9 A. M., above Pantry.

A sharp, cutting air. This is a pretty good winter

¹ [Walden, pp. 314, 315; Riv. 439, 440.]

morning, however. Not one of the rarer. There are from time to time mornings, both in summer and winter, when especially the world seems to begin anew, beyond which memory need not go, for not behind them is yesterday and our past life; when, as in the morning of a hoar frost, there are visible the effects of a certain creative energy, the world has visibly been recreated in the night. Mornings of creation, I call them. In the midst of these marks of a creative energy recently active, while the sun is rising with more than usual splendor, I look back,—I look back for the era of this creation, not into the night, but to a dawn for which no man ever rose early enough. A morning which carries us back beyond the Mosaic creation, where crystallizations are fresh and unmelted. It is the poet's hour. Mornings when men are new-born, men who have the seeds of life in them. It should be a part of my religion to [be] abroad then. This is not one of those mornings, but a clear, cold, airy winter day.

It is surprising how much room there is in nature,—if a man will follow his proper path. In these broad fields, in these extensive woods, on this stretching river, I never meet a walker. Passing behind the farmhouses, I see no man out. Perhaps I do not meet so many men as I should have met three centuries ago, when the Indian hunter roamed these woods. I enjoy the retirement and solitude of an early settler. Men have cleared some of the earth, which no doubt is an advantage to the walker. I see a man sometimes chopping in the woods, or planting or hoeing in a field, at a distance; and yet there may be a lyceum in the evening, and there

is a book-shop and library in the village, and five times a day I can be whirled to Boston within an hour.

There is a little thin ice on the meadows. I see the bubbles underneath, looking like coin. A slight, fine snow has fallen in the night and drifted before the wind. I observe that it is so distributed over the ice as [to] show equal spaces of bare ice and of snow at pretty regular distances. I have seen the same phenomenon on the surface of snow in fields, as if the surface of the snow disposed itself according to the same law that makes waves of water. There is now a fine steam-like snow blowing over the ice, which continually lodges here and there, and forthwith a little drift accumulates. But why does it lodge at such regular intervals? I see this fine drifting snow in the air ten or twelve feet high at a distance. Perhaps it may have to do with the manner in, or the angle at, which the wind strikes the earth.

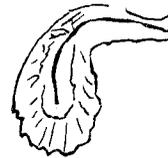
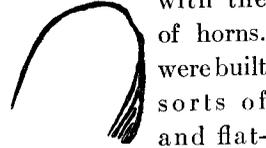
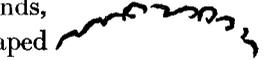
Made a roaring fire on the edge of the meadow at Ware (?) Hill in Sudbury. A piece of paper, birch bark, and dry leaves started it, and then we depended on the dead maple twigs and limbs to kindle the large dead wood. Green wood will burn better than the damp and rotten wood that lies on the ground. We chose a place which afforded a prospect, but it turned out that we looked only at the fire. It made all places indifferent. The color of the coals, in a glowing heap or seen through the white ashes on the brands, like rubies. The shadows, coming and going, of the flame passing over the white ashes of the brands. I burnt off my eyelashes when the fire suddenly blazed up with the wind, without knowing that I had come very near it. Though

our fuel was dead and rotten wood found in the snow, it made very little smoke, which may have been owing to the state of the atmosphere, clear and cold. The sound of the air or steam escaping from a brand, its sighing or dying shriek, fine and sharp as a cambric needle, is the music we hear. One half the pleasure is in making the fire. But then we should have something to cook by it. Collecting fresh fuel from time to time is very pleasant. The smoke ever and anon compelled us to move round to the opposite side. The sap which flowed from some maple boughs which I cut froze in large drops at the end. How came sap there now?

It is remarkable that many men will go with eagerness to Walden Pond in the winter to fish for pickerel and yet not seem to care for the landscape. Of course it cannot be *merely* for the pickerel they may catch; there is some adventure in it; but any love of nature which they may feel is certainly very slight and indefinite. They call it going a-fishing, and so indeed it is, though, perchance, their natures know better. Now I go a-fishing and a-hunting every day, but omit the fish and the game, which are the least important part. I have learned to do without them. They were indispensable only as long as I was a boy. I am encouraged when I see a dozen villagers drawn to Walden Pond to spend a day in fishing through the ice, and suspect that I have more fellows than I knew, but I am disappointed and surprised to find that they lay all the stress on the fish which they catch or fail to catch, and on nothing else, as if there were nothing else to be caught.

When we got off at some distance from our fire, returning, we saw a light bluish smoke rising as high as the woods above it, though we had not perceived it before, and thought that no one could have detected us.

At the fall on Clematis Brook the forms of the ice were admirable. The coarse spray had frozen as it fell on the rocks, and formed shell-like crusts over them, with irregular but beautifully clear and sparkling surfaces like egg-shaped diamonds, each being the top of a club-shaped and branched fungus icicle. This spray had improved the least core — as the dead and slender rushes drooping over the water — and formed larger icicles about them, shaped exactly like horns, skulls often attached, or roots of horns. On similar slight limbs there were built sorts of fantastic forms, with broader and flatter bases, from which hung stalactites of ice; and on logs in the water were perfect ice fungi of all sizes, under which the water gurgled, flat underneath and hemispherical. A form like this would project over the water: six inches deep by four or five in width and a foot long, held by the rocks, but with a slight weed for core. You could take off the incrustations on the rocks, turn them up, and they were perfect shells.



These are the horns:
high. In the rock
there were upright
icicles, as I have
close together, three
long, thus:



right and left, with a homogeneous or undivided base. They appeared like crystallizations, as quartz crystals with rounded instead of flattened summits, built from below and, as they grew, widening or thickening to fill the space.

The only birds I have seen to-day were some jays, — one whistled clearly, — some of my mewling red frontlets, and some familiar chickadees. They are inquisitive, and fly along after the traveller to inspect him.

In civilized nations there are those answering to the rain-makers and sorcerers of savages. Also this office is universal among savage tribes. Bitter, cutting, cold northwest wind on causeway, stiffening the face, freezing the ears.

Jan. 27. Trench says a wild man is a *willed* man. Well, then, a man of will who does what he wills or wishes, a man of hope and of the future tense, for not only the obstinate is willed, but far more the constant and persevering. The obstinate man, properly speaking, is one who will not. The perseverance of the saints is positive willedness, not a mere passive willingness. The fates are wild, for they *will*; and the Almighty is wild above all, as fate is.

What are our fields but *felds* or *felled* woods. They

a foot or two
incrustations
club-shaped
said, packed
or four inches
and so on,

bear a more recent name than the woods, suggesting that previously the earth was covered with woods. Always in the new country a field is a clearing.

Jan. 28. Saw three ducks sailing in the river behind Prichard's this afternoon, black with white on wings, though these two or three have been the coldest days of the winter, and the river is generally closed. Observed a new wall, of stones recently dug out of the earth, all yellow and easily detected at a distance, not yet gray with lichens. Though somewhat cool, it has been remarkably pleasant to-day, and the sun-sparkles where the river is open are very cheerful to behold.

As I approached Bateman's Pond, the ice looked blue. Is it indeed blue like Walden ice?

I saw an improvement, I suppose by William Brown, on the shore of the pond this afternoon, which really is something to tell of. The exploits of the farmer are not often reported even in the agricultural paper, nor are they handed down by tradition from father to son, praiseworthy and memorable as so many of them are; though if he ran away from hard work once in his youth and enlisted, and chanced to be present at one short battle, he will even in his old age love to dwell on this, "shoulder his crutch and *show how fields are won*," with cruel satire, as if he had not far better shown this with his axe and spade and plow. Here was an extensive swamp, level of course as a floor, which first had been cut, then ditched broadly, then burnt over; then the surface paved off, stumps and all, in great slices; then these piled up every six feet, three

or four feet high, like countless larger muskrat-cabins, to dry; then fire put to them; and so the soil was tamed. We witnessed the different stages in different parts of the swamp.

You can walk in the woods in no direction but you hear the sound of the axe.

I tasted some black shrivelled pyrus berries in a spruce swamp; rather sweet.

Jan. 29. To Walden.

Melvin calls the ducks which I saw yesterday shel-drakes; being small, then wood shel-drakes.¹ He never shot any at this season. Saw a woodcock last month; never before. Killed a goshawk (which was eating a rabbit) and a cat owl lately. Says I hear the cat owl. Has got only three or four minks this year. Never saw an otter track.

I saw a little grayish mouse frozen into Walden, three or four rods from the shore, its tail sticking out a hole. It had apparently run into this hole when full of water, as if on land, and been drowned and frozen. Headed downward, it was. The ice is eight inches thick. It is full of short, faint, flake-like perpendicular cleavages, an inch or two broad, or varying somewhat from the perpendicular. Melvin thinks that the "thundering" of the pond scares the pickerel.

Pickerel of at least three different forms and colors were lying on the ice of Walden this afternoon: first, a long and shallow kind most like those caught in the

¹ I judge from the plate they were velvet ducks, or white-winged coots.

river, steel-colored with greenish or brownish lines, darker on the back and white beneath; second, a bright-golden fish with greenish reflections, remarkably deep, with a shorter head; both of these are mottled on the sides with an irregular network of dark-brown lines, often extending over the back, the meshes three fourths of an inch long, more or less, producing longitudinal stripes more or less distinct and continuous, very pure white beneath; third, shaped like the last, but peppered on the sides with small dark-brown or black spots, intermixed with a few faint blood-red ones, very much like a trout. The specific name of *reticulatus* would not describe this. These are all very firm fish, and weigh more than their size promises.

The perch also, and indeed all the fishes which inhabit this pond, are as much handsomer than ordinary, as the water is purer than that of other ponds. Probably many ichthyologists would make new varieties, at least, of most of them.¹

Jan. 30. The most common and conspicuous green leaf on the ground when the snow is off at this season, as at present, is that of the buttercup. Sorrel is also very common, and johnswort, and the purplish gnaphaliums. There is also the early crowfoot in some places, strawberry, mullein, and thistle leaves, and hawkweeds, etc., etc.

On Cliffs.

The westering sun is yet high above the horizon, but, concealed by clouds, shoots down to earth on every side

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 204, 205; Riv. 288. 289.]

vast misty rays like the frame of a tent, to which clouds perchance are the canvas, under which a whole country rests. The northern and southern rays appear very much slanted and long; those between us and the west, steeper and shorter.

What I have called the Shrub Oak Plain contains comparatively few shrub oaks, — rather, young red and white and, it may be, some scarlet (?). The shrub oak leaf is the firmest and best preserved. The white oak is the most sere and curled and brittle, frequently with discolored, mould-like spots.

Jan. 31. Found an Indian adze in the bridle-road at the brook just beyond Daniel Clark, Jr.'s house.

A man is wise with the wisdom of his time only, and ignorant with its ignorance. Observe how the greatest minds yield in some degree to the superstitions of their age.

De Quincey (whose pains to prove that [it] was not Christ's mission to teach men science, though he, *of course* (!), knew it all, suggested the above) says: —

“This downward direction of the eyes, however, must have been worse in former ages; because, else, it never *could* have happened that, until Queen Anne's days, nobody ever hinted in a book that there *was* such a thing, or *could* be such a thing, as the Aurora Borealis; and in fact, Halley had the credit of discovering it.”