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I

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Dec. 1. 4 P. M. — To Cliffs.

We may infer that every withered culm of grass or sedge, or weed that still stands in the fields, answers some purpose by standing.

Those trees and shrubs which retain their withered leaves through the winter — shrub oaks and young white, red, and black oaks, the lower branches of larger trees of the last-mentioned species, hornbeam, etc., and young hickories — seem to form an intermediate class between deciduous and evergreen trees. They may almost be called the ever-reds. Their leaves, which are falling all winter long, serve as a shelter to rabbits and partridges and other winter quadrupeds and birds. Even the little chickadees love to skulk amid them and peep out from behind them. I hear their faint, silvery, lisping notes, like tinkling glass, and occasionally a sprightly *day-day-day*, as they inquisitively hop nearer and nearer to me. They are our most honest and innocent little bird, drawing yet nearer to us as the

winter advances, and deserve best of any of the walker.

Dec. 2. As the stars, though spheres, present an outline of many little points of light to our eyes, like a flower of light, so I notice to-night the horns of the new moon appear split.

The skeleton which at first sight excites only a shudder in all mortals becomes at last not only a pure but suggestive and pleasing object to science. The more we know of it, the less we associate it with any goblin of our imaginations. The longer we keep it, the less likely it is that any such will come to claim it. We discover that the only spirit which haunts it is a universal intelligence which has created it in harmony with all nature. Science never saw a ghost, nor does it look for any, but it sees everywhere the traces, and it is itself the agent, of a Universal Intelligence.

A communication to a newspaper, dated Bangor, 28th (November), says of the Penobscot: "The navigation is closed here, the anchor ice with the surface ice making an obstruction of several feet thickness. There are enclosed in the ice from 60 to 80 vessels with full cargoes, besides the steamers. . . . The ice obstruction extends about five miles," etc. There is still no ice in the Concord River, or the skimming which forms along the shore in the night almost entirely disappears in the day. On the 30th I paddled on it in the afternoon, and there was not a particle of ice, and even in the morning my constantly wet hands were not cold.

The latitude of Lynn church is $42^{\circ} 27' 51''$. Calling

Concord, at a venture, $42^{\circ} 27'$, Bangor being $44^{\circ} 47' 50''$, the difference equals about $2^{\circ} 21'$. The length of a degree of latitude in Italy ($43^{\circ} 1'$) being, according to Boscovich and Lemaire's measurement, 68,998 English miles, call it in this case 69 miles, and the difference of latitude in miles between B. and C. is about 162 miles.

Dec. 3. P. M. — Up river by boat to Clamshell Hill.

Saw two tree sparrows on Monroe's larch by the waterside. Larger than chip-birds, with more bay above and a distinct white bar on wings, not to mention bright-chestnut crown and obscure spot on breast; all beneath pale-ash. They were busily and very adroitly picking the seeds out of the larch cones. It would take man's clumsy fingers a good while to get at one, and then only by breaking off the scales, but they picked them out as rapidly as if they were insects on the outside of the cone, uttering from time to time a faint, tinkling chip.

I see that muskrats have not only erected cabins, but, since the river rose, have in some places dug galleries a rod into the bank, pushing the sand behind them into the water. So they dig these now as places of retreat merely, or for the same purpose as the cabins, apparently. One I explored this afternoon was formed in a low shore (Hubbard's Bathing-Place), at a spot where there were no weeds to make a cabin of, and was apparently never completed, perhaps because the shore was too low.

The ranunculus is still a fresh bright green at the

bottom of the river. It is the evergreen of the river, and indeed resembles the common running evergreen (*Lycopodium*, I think it is called).

I see along the sides of the river, two to four inches above the surface but all at one level, clear, drop-shaped crystals of ice, either held up by some twig or hanging by a dead vine of climbing mikania. They are the remains of a thin sheet of ice, which melted as the river went down, and in drops formed around and ran down these cores and again froze, and, being thicker than the surrounding ice, have outlasted it.

At J. Hosmer's tub spring, I dug out a small bull-frog (?) in the sandy mud at the bottom of the tub — it was lively enough to hop — and brought it home. Probably they lie universally buried in the mud now, below the reach of frost. In a ditch near by, under ice half an inch thick, I saw a painted tortoise moving about. The frogs then are especially to be looked for in the mud about springs.

It is remarkable how much power I can exert through the undulations which I produce by rocking my boat in the middle of the river. Some time after I have ceased I am surprised to hear the sound of the undulations which have just reached the shores acting on the thin ice there and making a complete wreck of it for a long distance up and down the stream, cracking off pieces four feet wide and more. I have stirred up the river to do this work, a power which I cannot put to rest. The secret of this power appears to lie in the extreme mobility, or, as I may say, irritability, of this element. It is the principle of the roller, or of an immense

weight moved by a child on balls, and the momentum is tremendous.

Some of the clamshells, freshly opened by the muskrats and left lying on their half-sunken cabins, where they are kept wet by the waves, show very handsome rainbow tints. I examined one such this afternoon. The hinge of the shell was not broken, and I could discover no injury to the shell, except a little broken off the edges at the broadest end, as if by the teeth of the rat in order to get hold, insert its incisors. The fish is confined to the shell by strong muscles at each end of each valve, and the rat must dissolve the union between both of these and one side of the shell before he can get it open, unless the fish itself opens it, which perhaps it cannot wide enough. I could not open one just dead without separating the muscle from the shell. The growth of the mussel's shell appears to be in somewhat concentric layers or additions to a small shell or eye.

The clam which I brought home the 30th *ult.*, and left outdoors by mistake, I now find frozen to death. J. Hosmer told me the other day that he had seen a man eat many of these clams raw and relish them. It is a somewhat saddening reflection that the beautiful colors of this shell for want of light cannot be said to exist, until its inhabitant has fallen a prey to the spoiler, and it is thus left a wreck upon the strand. Its beauty then beams forth, and it remains a splendid cenotaph to its departed tenant, symbolical of those radiant realms of light to which the latter has risen, — what glory he has gone to. And, by the way, as long as they remain in "the dark unfathomed caves of ocean,"

they are not "gems of purest ray serene," though fitted to be, but only when they are tossed up to light.

Probably the muskrat inserts his incisors between the edges of the shells (and so crumbles them) in order to pry them open. Some of these shells at Clamshell Hill, whose contents were cooked by the Indians, are still entire, but separated. Wood has spread a great many loads over his land. People would be surprised to learn what quantities of these shellfish are annually consumed by the muskrat. Their shells help convert the meadow mud or river sediment into food for plants. The Indians generally — I have particularly observed it in the case of the Penobscots — make a very extensive use of the muskrat for food, and from these heaps it would seem that they used the fresh-water clam extensively also, — these two peculiarly indigenous animals. What if it were calculated how often a muskrat rises to his stool on the surface of the ice with a mussel in his mouth and ejects the tenant, taking the roof?

It is as if the occupant had not begun to live until the light, with whatever violence, is let into its shell with these magical results. It is rather a resurrection than a death. These beaming shells, with the tints of the sky and the rainbow commingled, suggest what pure serenity has occupied it.

Look at the trees, bare or rustling with sere brown leaves, except the evergreens, their buds dormant at the foot of the leaf-stalks. Look at the fields, russet and withered, and the various sedges and weeds with dry bleached culms. Such is our relation to nature at

present; such plants are we. We have no more sap nor verdure nor color now.

I remember how cheerful it has been formerly to sit around a fire outdoors amid the snow, and, while I felt some cold, to feel some warmth also, and see the fire gradually increasing and prevailing over damp, steaming and dripping logs and making a warm hearth for me.

When I see even these humble clamshells lying open along the riverside, displaying some blue, or violet, or rainbow tints, I am reminded that some pure serenity has occupied them. (I sent two and a half bushels of my cranberries to Boston and got four dollars for them.) There the clam dwells within a little pearly heaven of its own.

But even in winter we maintain a temperate cheer and a serene inward life, not destitute of warmth and melody. Only the cold evergreens wear the aspect of summer now and shelter the winter birds.

Layard discovers sculptured on a slab at Kouyunjik (Nineveh) machines for raising water which I perceive correspond exactly to our New England well-sweeps, except that in the former case the pole is "balanced on a shaft of masonry." He observes that it is "still generally used for irrigation in the East, as well as in southern Europe, and called in Egypt a *shadoof*."¹

Dec. 4. Sunday. The coldest day yet, clear with considerable wind, after the first cloudless morning for a week or two. Goose Pond apparently froze over last

¹ Wilkinson exhibits it from the Egyptian sculptures.

night, all but a few rods, but not thick enough to bear. I see a lizard [*sic*] on the bottom under the ice. No doubt I have sometimes mistaken them for tadpoles. (Flint's Pond only skimmed a little at the shore, like the river.) The ice of Goose Pond already has a dusty look. It shows the crystals distinctly.

Dec. 5. P. M. — Got my boat in. The river frozen over thinly in most places and whitened with snow, which was sprinkled on it this noon.

4 P. M. — To Cliffs.

Many living leaves are very dark red now, the only effect of the frost on them, — the checkerberry, andromeda, low cedar, and more or less lambkill, etc. Saw and heard a downy woodpecker on an apple tree. Have not many winter birds, like this and the chickadee, a sharp note like tinkling glass or icicles? The *chip* of the tree sparrow, also, and the whistle of the shrike, are they not wintry in the same way? And the sonorous hooting owl? But not so the jay and *Fringilla linaria*, and still less the crow. Now for the short days and early twilight, in which I hear the sound of woodchopping. The sun goes down behind a low cloud, and the world is darkened. The partridge is budding on the apple tree and bursts away from the path-side. Fair Haven Pond is skimmed completely over. The ground has been frozen more or less about a week, not very hard. Probably stiffened the 3d so as to hinder spading, but softened afterward. I rode home from the woods in a hay-rigging, with a boy who had been collecting a load of dry leaves for the hog-pen; this the

third or fourth load. Two other boys asked leave to ride, with four large empty box-traps which they were bringing home from the woods. It was too cold and late to follow box-trapping longer. They had caught five rabbits this fall, baiting with an apple.¹ Before I got home the whole atmosphere was suddenly filled with a mellow yellowish light equally diffused, so that it seemed much lighter around me than immediately after the sun sank behind the horizon cloud, fifteen minutes before. Apparently not till the sun had sunk thus far did I stand in the angle of reflection.

It is a startling thought that the Assyrian king who with so much pains recorded his exploits in stone at Nineveh, that the story might come down to a distant generation, has indeed succeeded by those means which he used. All was not vanity, quite.

Layard, at the lake of Wan, says: "Early next morning I sought the inscriptions which I had been assured were graven on the rocks near an old castle, standing on a bold projecting promontory above the lake. After climbing up a dangerous precipice by the help of two or three poles, in which large nails had been inserted to afford a footing, I reached a small natural cave in the rock. A few crosses and ancient Armenian letters were rudely cut near its entrance. There was nothing else, and I had to return as I best could, disappointed, as many a traveller has been under similar circumstances before me." They were not old enough; that was all. Wait a thousand years and you will not be disappointed.

¹ [Channing, p. 108.]

Dec. 7. *Wednesday*. P. M. — To Trillium Woods and Hubbard's Close.

In the latter part of November¹ and now, before the snow, I am attracted by the numerous small evergreens on the forest floor, now most conspicuous, especially the very beautiful *Lycopodium dendroideum*, somewhat cylindrical, and also, *in this grove*, the variety *obscurum* of various forms, surmounted by the effete spikes, some with a spiral or screw-like arrangement of the fan-like leaves, some spreading and drooping. It is like looking down on evergreen trees. And the *L. lucidulum* of the swamps, forming broad, thick patches of a clear liquid green, with its curving fingers; also the pretty little fingers of the cylindrical *L. clavatum*, or club-moss, zig-zagging amid the dry leaves; not to mention the spreading openwork umbrellas of the *L. complanatum*, or flat club-moss, all with spikes still. Also the liquid wet glossy leaves of the *Chimaphila* (winter or snow-loving) *umbellata*, with its dry fruit. Not to mention the still green *Mitchella repens* and checkerberry in shelter, both with fruit; gold-thread; *Pyrola secunda*, with drooping curled-back leaves, and other pyrolas; and, by the brooks, brooklime (?) (I mean such as at Cliff Brook and at brook in E. Hubbard's Swamp).² There is the mountain laurel, too. The terminal shield fern is quite fresh and green, and a common thin fern, though fallen. I observe the beds of greenish cladonia

¹ [The words "the latter part of" are crossed out in ink, but the word "retain," followed by an interrogation-point, is written over them.]

² Golden saxifrage. ["Brooklime" is crossed out in pencil.]

lichens. Saw a wood tortoise stirring in the now open brook in Hubbard's Swamp.

Dec. 8. 7 A. M. — How can we spare to be abroad in the morning red, to see the forms of the leafless eastern trees against the dun sky and hear the cocks crow, when a thin low mist hangs over the ice and frost in meadows? I have come along the riverside in Merrick's pasture to collect for kindling the fat pine roots and knots which the spearkers dropped last spring, and which the floods have washed up. Get a heaping bushel-basketful. The thin, trembling sheets of imperfectly cemented ice or ice-crystals, loosened by the warmth of the day, now go floating down the stream, looking like dark ripples in the twilight and grating against the edges of the firm ice. They completely fill the river where it is bridged with firmer ice below.

I observed a place on the shore where a small circle of the withered grass was feathered white with frost, and, putting down my hand, felt the muskrat's hole in the bank which was concealed to my eye. I often see this, and at woodchuck-holes. Yet you may see the same over the edge of many a hole, however shallow.

At midday (3 P. M.) saw an owl fly from toward the river and alight on Mrs. Richardson's front-yard fence. Got quite near it, and followed it to a rock on the heap of dirt at Collier's cellar. A rather dark brown owl above (with a decided owl head (and eyes), though not very broad), with longitudinal tawny streaks (or the reverse), none transverse, growing lighter down the breast, and at length clear rusty yellowish or cream-

color beneath and about feathered feet. Wings large and long, with a distinct large black spot beneath; bill and claws, I think, black. Saw no ears. Kept turning its head and great black eyes this way and that when it heard me, but appeared not to see me. Saw my shadow better, for I ap[roached] on the sunny side. I am inclined to think it the short-eared owl, though I could see no ears, though it reminded [me] of what I had read of the hawk owl. It was a foot or more long and spread about three feet. Flew somewhat flappingly, yet hawk-like. Went within two or three rods of it.

Walden at sunset.

The twilights, morn and eve, are very clear and light, very glorious and pure, or stained with red, and prolonged, these days. But, now the sun is set, Walden (I am on the east side) is more light than the sky, — a whiteness as of silver plating, while the sky is yellowish in the horizon and a dusky blue above.¹ Though the water is smooth enough, the trees are lengthened dimly one third in the reflection. Is this phenomenon peculiar to this season? Goose Pond now firmly frozen. It had melted since it froze before.

I see there a narrow open channel in the ice, two and a half rods long and six inches wide, leading straight to a muskrat-house by the shore, apparently kept open by them. Snow will soon come, in a measure

¹ The next night but one just like this, a little later. I saw from the peak the entire reflection of large white pines very distinctly against a clear white sky, though the actual tree was completely lost in night against the dark distant hillside.

to restore the equilibrium between night and day by prolonging the twilight.

I was amused by R. W. E.'s telling me that he drove his own calf out of the yard, as it was coming in with the cow, not knowing it to be his own, a drove going by at the time.

Dec. 9. The third (at least) glorious day, clear and not too cold (this morning a leaf frost on the rails a third of an inch long), with peculiarly long and clear cloudless silvery twilights morn and eve, with a stately, withdrawn after-redness.

Above all, deliver me from a city built on the site of a more ancient city, the materials of the one being the ruins of the other. There the dwellings of the living are in the cemeteries of the dead, and the soil is blanched and accursed.

Dec. 10. Another still more glorious day, if possible; Indian-summery even. These are among the finest days in the year, on account of the wholesome bracing coolness and clearness.

Paddled Cheney's boat up Assabet.

Passed in some places between shooting ice-crystals, extending from both sides of the stream. Upon the thinnest black ice-crystals, just cemented, was the appearance of broad fern leaves, or ostrich-plumes, or flat fir trees with branches bent down. The surface was far from even, rather in sharp-edged plaits or folds. The form of the crystals was oftenest that of low, flat-tish, three-sided pyramids; when the base was very

broad the apex was imperfect, with many irregular rosettes of small and perfect pyramids, the largest with bases equal to two or three inches. All this appeared to advantage only while the ice (one twelfth of an inch thick, perhaps) rested on the black water.

What I write about at home I understand so well, comparatively! and I write with such repose and freedom from exaggeration.

Dec. 11. Sunday. P. M. — To Heywood's Pond and up brook.

Almost a complete Indian-summer day, clear and warm. I am without greatcoat. Channing says he saw larks yesterday, a painted tortoise day before yesterday under ice at White Pond, and a ground-robin (?) last week. We find Heywood's Pond frozen five inches thick. There have been some warm suns on it, and it is handsomely marbled. I find, on looking closely, that there is an indistinct and irregular crack or cleavage in the middle of each dark mark, and I have no doubt the marbling is produced thus, *viz.*, the pond, at first all dark, cracks under a change of temperature, it is expanded and cracked in a thousand directions, and at the same time it gradually grows white as the air-bubbles expand, but wherever there is a crack in it, it interferes with the rays of heat, and the ice for a short distance on each side of it retains its original color. The forms into which the ice first cracks under a higher temperature determine the character of the marbling. This pond is bordered on the northeast with much russet sedge (?) grass beneath the bushes,

and the sun, now falling on the ice, seems to slide or glance off into this grass and light it up wonderfully, filling it with yellowish light. This ice being whitened and made partially opaque by heat, while the surface is quite smooth, perhaps from new freezings then, it reflects the surrounding trees, their forms and colors, distinctly like water. The white air-bubbles are the quicksilver on the back of the mirror.

R. W. E. told me that W. H. Channing conjectured that the landscape looked fairer when we turned our heads, because we beheld it with nerves of the eye unused before. Perhaps this reason is worth more for suggestion than explanation. It occurs to me that the reflection of objects in still water is in a similar manner fairer than the substance, and yet we do not employ unused nerves to behold it. Is it not that we let much more light into our eyes, — which in the usual position are shaded by the brows, — in the first case by turning them more to the sky, and in the case of the reflections by having the sky placed under our feet? *i. e.* in both cases we see terrestrial objects with the sky or heavens for a background or field. Accordingly they are not dark and terrene, but lit and elysian.

Saw a mink at Clamshell Hill on ice. They show the back in swimming.

Dec. 15. Thursday. Fishing through ice began on Flint's and Fair Haven yesterday. The first fishers succeed best.

9.30 A. M. — Surveying near Strawberry Hill for Smith and Brooks.

In Brooks's barn I saw twenty-two gray squirrel skins freshly tacked up. He said that as many as one hundred and fifty had been killed this fall within a mile of his barn. They had been very numerous. His brother killed sixteen in one day a month ago. There was one alive and loose in the barn, which had made a nest of husks in one corner. It could not get out, but had gnawed in many places. He had had four alive there at once, and they would not go off when they got out. You can get many more gray than red squirrels. The former often run into the ground; a dog trees the latter. October and November are the squirrel months, when the trees are bare of leaves. The red will drive the gray before it. The gray's nest always leaves; the red's grass, fibres of bark, etc. A few years ago he took one bushel and three pecks of shelled walnuts out of a hollow walnut tree, laid up by red squirrels, a dozen of them.

Nagog appears to have been frozen earlier than our ponds.

He had ten live pigeons in a cage under his barn. He used them to attract others in the spring. The reflections from their necks were very beautiful. They made me think of shells cast up on a beach. He placed them in a cage on the bed and could hear them prate at the house.

Are we not all wreckers, contriving that some treasure may be washed up on our beach and we may secure it, and do we not contract the habits of wreckers from the common modes of getting a living?

The turtle doves plagued him, for they were restless

and frightened the pigeons. He saw many white weasels. Said he had seen a blue mink, and from what he said I did not know but he had heard a whooping crane at night.

Looking from my window these bright moonlight nights, the ground being still bare, the whole landscape — fields, road, and roof — has a wintry aspect, as if covered with snow. It is the frost.¹

Dec. 16. Friday. The elms covered with hoar frost, seen in the east against the morning light, are very beautiful. These days, when the earth is still bare and the weather is so warm as to create much vapor by day, are the best for these frost works.

Would you be well, see that you are attuned to each mood of nature.

J. E. Cabot says the *lunxus* is a wolverene.

Some creature has killed ten, at least, of H. Wheeler's doves and left them together in the dove-house. I think it was my short-eared owl, which flew thither.

Dec. 17. While surveying for Daniel Weston in Lincoln to-day, saw a great many — maybe a hundred — silvery-brown cocoons, wrinkled and flattish, on young alders in a meadow, three or four inches long, fastened to the main stem and branches at same time, with dry alder and fragments of fern leaves attached to and partially concealing them; of some great moth.

¹ On the 18th, after rain in morning, there is no frost and no such appearance.

Dec. 18. Sunday. P. M. — Clears off cold after rain. Cross Fair Haven Pond at sunset. The western hills, these bordering it, seen through the clear, cold air, have a hard, distinct edge against the sunset sky. The distant hills are impurpled. I have seen but one or two small birds, — chickadees and probably tree sparrows.

Young Weston said that they found, in redeeming a meadow, heaps of chestnuts under the grass, fifteen rods from the trees, without marks of teeth. Probably it was the work of the meadow mice.

Dec. 22. A slight whitening of snow last evening, the second whitening of the winter; just enough to spoil the skating, now ten days old, on the ponds. Walden skimmed over in the widest part, but some acres still open; will probably freeze entirely to-night if this weather holds.

Surveying the last three days. They have not yielded much that I am aware of. All I find is old bound-marks, and the slowness and dullness of farmers reconfirmed. They even complain that I walk too fast for them. Their legs have become stiff from toil. This coarse and hurried outdoor work compels me to live grossly or be inattentive to my diet; that is the worst of it. Like work, like diet; that, I find, is the rule. Left to my chosen pursuits, I should never drink tea nor coffee, nor eat meat. The diet of any class or generation is the natural result of its employment and locality. It is remarkable how unprofitable it is for the most part to talk with farmers. They commonly stand

on their good behavior and attempt to moralize or philosophize in a serious conversation. Sportsmen and loafers are better company. For society a man must not be too *good* or well-disposed, to spoil his natural disposition. The bad are frequently good enough to let you see how bad they are, but the good as frequently endeavor [to] get between you and themselves.

I have dined out five times and tea'd once within a week. Four times there was tea on the dinner-table, always meat, but once baked beans, always pie, but no puddings. I suspect tea has taken the place of cider with farmers. I am reminded of Haydon the painter's experience when he went about painting the nobility. I go about to the houses of the farmers and squires in like manner. This is my portrait-painting, — when I would fain be employed on higher subjects. I have offered myself much more earnestly as a lecturer than a surveyor. Yet I do not get any employment as a lecturer; was not invited to lecture once last winter, and only once (without pay) this winter. But I can get surveying enough, which a hundred others in this county can do as well as I, though it is not boasting much to say that a hundred others in New England cannot lecture as well as I on my themes. But they who do not make the highest demand on you shall rue it. It is because they make a low demand on themselves. All the while that they use only your humbler faculties, your higher unemployed faculties, like an invisible cimetar, are cutting them in twain. Woe be to the generation that lets any higher faculty in its midst go unemployed! That is to deny God and

know him not, and he, accordingly, will know not of them.

P. M.— Got a white spruce¹ for a Christmas-tree for the town out of the spruce swamp opposite J. Farmer's. It is remarkable how few inhabitants of Concord can tell a spruce from a fir, and probably not two a white from a black spruce, unless they are together. The woodchopper, even hereabouts, cuts down several kinds of trees without knowing what they are. Neither do the spruce trees know the villager. The villager doesn't know a black spruce tree when he sees it. How slender his relation to the spruce tree! The white has taken refuge in swamps from him. It is nothing but so much evergreen to him. Last night's sprinkling of snow does not now whiten the ground, except that here in the swamp it whitens the ice and already I see the tracks of rabbits on it.

Dec. 24. The rain of yesterday concluded with a whitening of snow last evening, the third thus far. Today is cold and quite windy.

P. M. — To the field in Lincoln which I surveyed for Weston the 17th.

Walden almost entirely open again. Skated across Flint's Pond; for the most part smooth but with rough spots where the rain had not melted the snow. From the hill beyond I get an arctic view northwest. The

¹ ["White" is crossed out and "black" written over it, evidently at a later date. In view of Thoreau's confusion of the two spruces for so many years, the next sentence may be thought amusing.]

mountains are of a cold slate-color. It is as if they bounded the continent toward Behring's Straits.

In Weston's field, in springy land on the edge of a swamp, I counted thirty-three or four of those large silvery-brown cocoons within a rod or two, and probably there are many more about a foot from the ground, commonly on the main stem — though sometimes on a branch close to the stem — of the alder, sweet-fern, brake, etc., etc. The largest are four inches long by two and a half, bag-shaped and wrinkled and partly concealed by dry leaves, — alder, ferns, etc., — attached as if sprinkled over them. This evidence of cunning in so humble a creature is affecting, for I am not ready to refer it to an intelligence which the creature does not share, as much as we do the prerogatives of reason. This radiation of the brain. The bare silvery cocoons would otherwise be too obvious. The worm has evidently said to itself: "Man or some other creature may come by and see my casket. I will disguise it, will hang a screen before it." Brake and sweet-fern and alder leaves are not only loosely sprinkled over it and dangling from it, but often, as it were, pasted close upon and almost incorporated into it.

Saw Therien yesterday afternoon chopping for Jacob Baker in the rain. I heard his axe half a mile off, and also saw the smoke of his fire, which I mistook for a part of the mist which was drifting about. I asked him where he boarded. At Shannon's. He asked the price of board and said I was a *grass* boarder, *i. e.* not a regular one. Asked him what time he started in the morning. The sun was up when he got out of the house that

morning. He heard Flint's Pond whooping like cannon the moment he opened the door, but sometimes he could see stars after he got to his chopping-ground. He was working with his coat off in the rain. He said he often saw gray squirrels running about and jumping from tree to tree. There was a large nest of leaves close by. That morning he saw a large bird of some kind. He took a French paper to keep himself in practice,—not for news; he said he did n't want news. He had got twenty-three or twenty-four of them, had got them bound and paid a dollar for it, and would like to have me see it. He had n't read it half; there was a great deal of reading in it, by gorry. He wanted me to tell him the meaning of some of the hard words. How much had he cut? He was n't a-going to kill himself. He had got money enough. He cut enough to earn his board.¹ A man could not do much more in the winter. He used the dry twigs on the trees to start his fire with, and some shavings which he brought in his pocket. He frequently found some fire still in the morning. He laid his axe by a log and placed another log the other side of it. I said he might have to dig it out of a snow-drift, but he thought it would not snow. Described a large hawk killed at Smith's (which had eaten some hens); its legs "as yellow as a sovereign;" apparently a goshawk. He has also his beetle and wedges and whetstone.

In the town hall this evening, my white spruce tree,² one of the small ones in the swamp, hardly a quarter the size of the largest, looked double its size, and

¹ [*Walden*, p. 161; Riv. 226.]

² [See p. 22.]

its top had been cut off for want of room. It was lit with candles, but the starlit sky is far more splendid to-night than any saloon.

Dec. 25. P. M. — Skated to Fair Haven and above.

At seven this morning the water had already oozed out at the sides of the river and flowed over the ice. It appears to be the result of this bridging of the river in the night and so obstructing the channel or usual outlet.

About 4 P. M. the sun sunk behind a cloud, and the pond began to boom or whoop. I noticed the same yesterday at the same hour at Flint's. It was perfectly silent before. The weather in both cases clear, cold, and windy. It is a sort of belching, and, as C. said, is somewhat frog-like. I suspect it did not continue to whoop long either night. It is a very pleasing phenomenon, so dependent on the altitude of the sun.

When I go to Boston, I go naturally straight through the city down to the end of Long Wharf and look off, for I have no cousins in the back alleys. The water and the vessels are novel and interesting. What are our maritime cities but the shops and dwellings of merchants, about a wharf projecting into the sea, where there is a convenient harbor, on which to land the produce of other climes and at which to load the exports of our own? Next in interest to me is the market where the produce of our own country is collected. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, New Orleans, and many others are the names of wharves projecting into the sea. They are good places to take in and to

discharge a cargo. Everybody in Boston lives at No. so-and-so, Long Wharf. I see a great many barrels and fig-drums and piles of wood for umbrella-sticks and blocks of granite and ice, etc., and that is Boston. Great piles of goods and the means of packing and conveying them, much wrapping-paper and twine, many crates and hogsheads and trucks, that is Boston. The more barrels, the more Boston. The museums and scientific societies and libraries are accidentals. They gather around the barrels, to save carting.¹

Apparently the ice is held down on the sides of the river by being frozen to the shore and the weeds, and so is overflowed there, but in the middle it is lifted up and makes room for the tide. I saw, just above Fair Haven Pond, two or three places where, just before the last freezing, when the ice was softened and partly covered with sleet, there had been a narrow canal, about eight inches wide, quite across the river from meadow to meadow. I am constrained to believe, from the peculiar character of it on the meadow end, where in one case it divided and crossed itself, that it was made either by muskrats or otters or minks repeatedly crossing there. One end was for some distance like an otter trail in the soft upper part of the ice, not worn through.

Dec. 26. Monday. This forenoon it snowed pretty hard for some hours, the first snow of any consequence thus far. It is about three inches deep. I go out at 2.30, just as it ceases. Now is the time, before the

¹ [*Cape Cod*, p. 268; *Riv.* 324, 325.]

wind rises or the sun has shone, to go forth and see the snow on the trees. The clouds have lifted somewhat, but are still spitting snow a little. The vapor of the steam-engine does not rise high in the misty air. I go around Walden *via* the almshouse. The branches of deciduous trees, — oaks and maples, etc., — especially the gray oaks of Hubbard's Close on the side-hill, support long lightning-like arms of snow, many times their own thickness. It has fallen so gently that it forms an upright wall on the slenderest twig. The agreeable maze which the branches make is more obvious than ever. And every twig thus laden is as still as the hillside itself. The pitch pines are covered with rich globular masses. The effect, of the snow is to press down the forest, confound it with the grasses, and create a new surface to the earth above, shutting us in with it, and we go along somewhat like moles through our galleries. The sight of the pure and trackless road up Brister's Hill, with branches and trees supporting snowy burdens bending over it on each side, would tempt us to begin life again. The ice is covered up, and skating gone. The bare hills are so white that I cannot see their outlines against the misty sky. The snow lies handsomely on the shrub oaks, like a coarse braiding in the air. They have so many small and zigzag twigs that it comes near to filling up with a light snow to that depth. The hunters are already out with dogs to follow the first beast that makes a track.

Saw a small flock of tree sparrows in the sproutlands under Bartlett's Cliff. Their metallic chip is much like the lisp of the chickadee. All weeds, with

their seeds, rising dark above the snow, are now remarkably conspicuous, which before were not observed against the dark earth.

I passed by the pitch pine that was struck by lightning. I was impressed with awe on looking up and seeing that broad, distinct spiral mark, more distinct even than when made eight years ago, as one might groove a walking-stick, — mark of an invisible and intangible power, a thunderbolt, mark where a terrific and resistless bolt came down from heaven, out of the harmless sky, eight years ago. It seemed a sacred spot. I felt that we had not learned much since the days of Tullus Hostilius. It at length shows the effect of the shock, and the woodpeckers have begun to bore it on one side.

Walden still open. Saw in it a small diver, probably a grebe or dobchick, dipper, or what-not, with the markings, as far as I saw, of the crested grebe, but smaller. It had a black head, a white ring about its neck, a white breast, black back, and apparently no tail. It dove and swam a few rods under water, and, when on the surface, kept turning round and round warily and nodding its head the while. This being the only pond hereabouts that is open.

Was overtaken by an Irishman seeking work. I asked him if he could chop wood. He said he was not long in this country; that he could cut one side of a tree well enough, but he had not learned to change hands and cut the other without going around it, — what we call crossing the carf. They get very small wages at this season of the year; almost give up the

ghost in the effort to keep soul and body together. He left me on the run to find a new master.

Dec. 27. High wind with more snow in the night. The snow is damp and covers the panes, darkening the room. At first I did not know that more snow had fallen, it was so drifted. Snowy ridges cross the village street and make it look as wild and bleak as a pass of the Rocky Mountains or the Sierra Nevada.

P. M. — To Fair Haven Pond up meadows and river.

The snow blows like spray, fifteen feet high, across the fields, while the wind roars in the trees as in the rigging of a vessel. It is altogether like the ocean in a storm. The snow blowing over the ice is like a vapor rising or curling from a roof. Most plowed fields are quite bare, but I am surprised to find behind the walls on the south side, like a skulking company of rangers in ambuscade or regular troops that have retreated to another parallel, a solid column of snow six or eight feet deep. The wind, eddying through and over the wall, is scooping it out in fantastic forms, — shells and troughs and glyphs of all kinds. Sometimes the drift is pierced with many holes as big as one's fist, where the fine snow-drift is passing through like steam. As it flows over, it builds out eaves to the bank of razor sharpness.

It is surprising what things the snow betrays. I had not seen a meadow mouse all summer, but no sooner does the snow come and spread its mantle over the earth than it is printed with the tracks of countless mice and larger animals. I see where the mouse has dived into

a little hole in the snow, not larger than my thumb, by the side of a weed, and a yard further reappeared again, and so on alternately above and beneath. A snug life it lives. The crows come nearer to the houses, alight on trees by the roadside, apparently being put to it for food. I saw them yesterday also.

The wind has now shaken the snow from the trees, and it lies in irregular little heaps on the snow beneath, except that there is a white ridge up and down their trunks on the northwest side, showing which side the storm came from, which, better than the moss, would enable one to find his way in the night. I went to hear the pond whoop, but did not hear much. I look far, but see no rainbow flocks in the sky. It is a true winter sunset, almost cloudless, clear, cold indigo-y along the horizon. The evening (?) star is seen shining brightly, before the twilight has begun. A rosy tint suffuses the eastern horizon. The outline of the mountains is wonderfully distinct and hard, and they are a dark blue and very near. Wachusett looks like a right whale over our bow, plowing the continent, with his flukes well down. He has a vicious look, as if he had a harpoon in him.¹

I wish that I could buy at the shops some kind of india-rubber that would rub out at once all that in my writing which it now costs me so many perusals, so many months if not years, and so much reluctance, to erase.²

Dec. 28. Perhaps the coldest night. The pump is slightly frozen.

¹ [Channing, p. 107.]

² [Channing, p. 121.]

I hear and see tree sparrows about the weeds in the garden. They seem to visit the gardens with the earliest snow; or is it that they are more obvious against the white ground? By their sharp silvery chip, perchance, they inform each other of their whereabouts and keep together.

Joe Brown owned those pigs I saw to root up the old pasture behind Paul Adams's. N. Stow tells me this morning that he has sold and brought to the butcher's three loads of pork containing twenty-five hundred pounds each, the least; at eight cents per pound amounting to more than \$600.

E. W——, who got the premium on farms this year, keeps twenty-eight cows, which are milked before breakfast, or 6 o'clock, his hired men rising at 4.30 A. M.; but he gives them none of the milk in their coffee.

I noticed the other day that the ice on the river and pond was cracked very coarsely, and lay in different planes a rod or two in diameter. It being very smooth and the light differently reflected from the different surfaces, this arrangement was very obvious. In one place where the river was open yesterday, the water, tossed into waves, looked exceedingly dark and angry.

Dec. 29. We survive, in one sense, in our posterity and in the continuance of our race, but when a race of men, of Indians for instance, becomes extinct, is not that the end of the world for them? Is not the world forever beginning and coming to an end, both to men and races? Suppose we were to foresee that the Saxon race to which we belong would become extinct the

present winter, — disappear from the face of the earth, — would it not look to us like the end, the dissolution of the world? Such is the prospect of the Indians.

All day a driving snow-storm, imprisoning most, stopping the cars, blocking up the roads. No school to-day. I cannot see a house fifty rods off from my window through [it];¹ yet in midst of all I see a bird, probably a tree sparrow, partly blown, partly flying, over the house to alight in a field. The snow penetrates through the smallest crevices under doors and side of windows.

P. M. — Tried my snow-shoes. They sink deeper than I expected, and I throw the snow upon my back. When I returned, twenty minutes after, my great tracks were not to be seen. It is the worst snow-storm to bear that I remember. The strong wind from the north blows the snow almost horizontally, and, beside freezing you, almost takes your breath away. The driving snow blinds you, and where you are protected, you can see but little way, it is so thick. Yet in spite, or on account, of all, I see the first flock of arctic snowbirds (*Emberiza nivalis*) near the depot, white and black, with a sharp, whistle-like note. An hour after I discovered half a pint of snow in each pocket of my greatcoat.

What a contrast between the village street now and last summer! The leafy elms then resounding with the warbling vireo, robins, bluebirds, and the fiery hang-bird, etc., to which the villagers, kept indoors by the heat, listen through open lattices. Now it is like a street in Nova Zembla, — if they were to have any there. I

¹ In an ordinary snow-storm, when snowing fast, Jan. 1st, '54, I can see E. Wood's house, or about a mile.

wade to the post-office as solitary a traveller as ordinarily in a wood-path in winter. The snow is mid-leg deep, while drifts as high as one's head are heaped against the houses and fences, and here and there range across the street like snowy mountains. You descend from this, relieved, into capacious valleys with a harder bottom, or more fordable. The track of one large sleigh alone is visible, nearly snowed up. There is not a track leading from any door to indicate that the inhabitants have been forth to-day, any more than there is track of any quadruped by the wood-paths. It is all pure untrodden snow, banked up against the houses now at 4 P. M., and no evidence that a villager has been abroad to-day. In one place the drift covers the front-yard fence and stretches thence upward to the top of the front door, shutting all in, and frequently the snow lies banked up three or four feet high against the front doors, and the windows are all snowed up, and there is a drift over each window, and the clapboards are all hoary with it. It is as if the inhabitants were all frozen to death, and now you threaded the desolate streets weeks after that calamity. There is not a sleigh or vehicle of any kind on the Mill-Dam, but one saddled horse on which a farmer has come into town. The cars are nowhere. Yet they are warmer, merrier than ever there within. At the post-office they ask each traveller news of the cars, — "Is there any train up or down?" — or how deep the snow is on a level.

Of the snow bunting, Wilson says that they appear in the northern parts of the United States "early in December, or with the first heavy snow, particularly if

drifted by high winds." This day answers to that description exactly. The wind is northerly. He adds that "they are . . . universally considered as the harbingers of severe cold weather." They come down from the extreme north and are common to the two continents; quotes Pennant as saying that they "inhabit not only Greenland but even the dreadful climate of Spitzbergen, where vegetation is nearly extinct, and scarcely any but *cryptogamous* plants are found. It therefore excites wonder, how birds, which are graminivorous in every other than those frost-bound regions, subsist: yet are there found in great flocks both on the land and ice of Spitzbergen." P. also says that they inhabit in summer "the most naked Lapland Alps," and "descend in rigorous seasons into Sweden, and fill the roads and fields: on which account" the Uplanders call them "*hardwarsfogel*," hard-weather birds. Also P. says "they overflow [in winter] the more southern countries in amazing multitudes." W. says their colors are very variable, "and the whiteness of their plumage is observed to be greatest towards the depth of winter." Also W. says truly that they seldom sit long, "being a roving restless bird." Peabody says that in summer they are "pure white and black," but are not seen of that color here. Those I saw to-day were of that color, behind A. Wheeler's. He says they are white and rusty-brown here.

These are the true winter birds for you, these winged snowballs. I could hardly see them, the air was so full of driving snow. What hardy creatures! Where do they spend the night?

The woodchopper goes not to the wood to-day. His axe and beetle and wedges and whetstone he will find buried deep under a drift, perchance, and his fire all extinguished.

As you go down the street, you see on either hand, where erst were front yards with their parterres, rolling pastures of snow, unspotted blankness swelling into drifts. All along the path lies a huge barrow of snow raised by the arctic mound-builder. It is like a pass through the Wind River Mountains or the Sierra Nevada, — a spotless expanse of drifted snow, sloping upward over fences to the houses, deep banks all along their fronts closing the doors. It lies in and before Holbrook's piazza, dwarfing its columns, like the sand about Egyptian temples.

The windows are all sealed up, so that the traveller sees no face of inhabitant looking out upon him. The housekeeper thinks with pleasure or pain of what he has in his larder. No shovel is put to the snow this day. To-morrow we shall see them digging out. The farmer considers how much pork he has in his barrel, how much meal in his bin, how much wood in his shed. Each family, perchance, sends forth one representative before night, who makes his way with difficulty to the grocery or post-office to learn the news; *i. e.*, to hear what others say to it, who can give the best account of it, best can name it, has waded farthest in it, has been farthest out and can tell the biggest and most adequate story; and hastens back with the news.

I asked Therien yesterday if he was satisfied with himself. I was trying to get a *point d'appui* within

him, a shelf to spring an arch from, to suggest some employment and aim for life. "Satisfied!" said he; "some men are satisfied with one thing, and some with another, by George. One man, perhaps, if he has got enough, will be satisfied to sit all day with his back to the fire and his belly to the table; that will satisfy him, by gorry." When I met him the other day, he asked me if I had made any improvement. Yet I could never by any manœuvring get him to take what is called a spiritual view of things, of life. He allowed that study and education was a good thing, but for him it was too late. He only thought of its expediency; nothing answering to what many call their aspirations. He was humble, if he can be called humble who never aspires.¹

He cut his trees very low, close to the ground, because the sprouts that came from such stumps were better.² Perhaps he distinguished between the red and scarlet oak; one had a pale inner bark, the other a darker or more reddish one. Without the least effort he could defend prevailing institutions which affected him, better than any philosopher, because he implicitly accepted them and knew their whole value. He gave the true reason for their prevalence, because speculation had never suggested to him any other. Looking round among the trees, he said he could enjoy himself in the woods chopping alone in a winter day; he wanted no better sport.³ The trees were frozen,—had been sometimes,—but would frequently thaw again during the day. Split easier for it, but did not chop better.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 163, 165, 166; *Riv.* 229, 233.]

² [*Walden*, p. 161; *Riv.* 227.] ³ [*Walden*, p. 162; *Riv.* 228.]

The woodchopper to-day is the same man that Homer refers to, and his work the same. He, no doubt, had his beetle and wedge and whetstone then, carried his dinner in a pail or basket, and his liquor in a bottle, and caught his woodchucks, and cut and corded, the same.

The thoughts and associations of summer and autumn are now as completely departed from our minds as the leaves are blown from the trees. Some withered deciduous ones are left to rustle, and our cold immortal evergreens. Some lichenous thoughts still adhere to us.

Dec. 30. P. M. — Around Walden.

The pond not yet frozen entirely over; about six acres open, the wind blew so hard last night. I carried a two-foot rule and measured the snow of yesterday in Abiel Wheeler's wood by the railroad, near the pond. In going a quarter of a mile it varied from fourteen to twenty-four inches. Then went to Potter's wood, by Lincoln road, near Lincoln line, and paced straight through a level wood where there was no drift perceptible, measuring at every ten paces for two hundred paces, and the average was twenty and one half inches.

I see the tracks of mice, and squirrels, probably gray ones, leading straight to or from the feet of the largest pines and oaks, which they had plainly ascended. Their tracks commonly show rapidity of motion. I saw in some places a continuous trail, sometimes disappearing in the snow, between a muskrat's track and a mole's gallery, three or more inches wide. Was it a red squirrel? I think it too large.¹

¹ A gray squirrel's. *Vide* [p. 41].

The storm being from the north, the snow is deepest just over the ridge on the south side of rising grounds, as well as houses and fences. When it has passed the ridge of the hill there is a lull and it falls, just as it is deposited behind walls because the wind does not blow there, — carries it no further.

In winter even man is to a slight extent dormant, just as some animals are but partially awake, though not commonly classed with those that hibernate. The summer circulations are to some extent stopped; the range of his afternoon walk is somewhat narrower; he is more or less confined to the highway and wood-path; the weather oftener shuts him up in his burrow; he begins to feel the access of dormancy and to assume the spherical form of the marmot; the nights are longest; he is often satisfied if he only gets out to the post-office in the course of the day. The arctic voyagers are obliged to invent and willfully engage in active amusements to keep themselves awake and alive. Most men do not now extend their walks beyond the village street. Even our experience is something like wintering in the pack.

Dec. 31. Four more inches of snow fell last night, making in all now two feet on a level.

P. M. — Down railroad to Walden and circle round to right, through Wheeler's woods out to railroad again.

It is a remarkable sight, this snow-clad landscape, with the fences and bushes half buried and the warm sun on it. The snow lies not quite level in the fields,

but in low waves with an abrupt edge on the north or wind side, as it lodges on ice.

The town and country are now so still, there being no rattle of wagons nor even jingle of sleigh-bells, every tread being as with woolen feet, I hear very distinctly from the railroad causeway the whistle of the locomotive on the Lowell road. For the same reason, in such a day as this the crowing of a cock is heard very far and distinctly. I frequently mistake at first a very distant whistle for the higher tones of the telegraph harp by my side. The telegraph and railroad are closely allied, and it is fit and to be expected that at a little distance their music should be the same. There are a few sounds still which never fail to affect me. The notes of the wood thrush and the sound of a vibrating chord, these affect me as many sounds once did often, and as almost all should. The strains of the æolian harp and of the wood thrush are the truest and loftiest preachers that I know now left on this earth. I know of no missionaries to us heathen comparable to them. They, as it were, lift us up in spite of ourselves. They intoxicate, they charm us. Where was that strain mixed into which this world was dropped but as a lump of sugar to sweeten the draught? I would be drunk, drunk, drunk, dead drunk to this world with it forever. He that hath ears, let him hear. The contact of sound with a human ear whose hearing is pure and unimpaired is coincident with an ecstasy. Sugar is not so sweet to the palate, as sound to the healthy ear;¹ the hearing of it makes men brave.

¹ [Channing, p. 78.]

(How can a poet afford to keep an account with a bookseller?) These things alone remind me of my immortality, which is else a fable. I hear it, and I realize and see clearly what at other times I only dimly remember. I get the value of the earth's extent and the sky's depth. It, as it were, takes me out of my body and gives me the freedom of all bodies and all nature. I leave my body in a trance and accompany the zephyr and the fragrance.

Walden froze completely over last night. It is, however, all snow ice, as it froze while it was snowing hard, and it looks like frozen yeast somewhat. I waded about in the woods through the snow, which certainly averaged considerably more than two feet deep where I went. It stuck to my clothes and melted, and so was more inconvenient than yesterday. Saw probably an otter's track, very broad and deep, as if a log had been drawn along. It was nearly as obvious as a man's track. It was made before last night's snow fell. The creature from time to time went beneath the snow for a few feet, to the leaves. This animal probably I should never see the least trace of, were it not for the snow, the great revealer.

I saw some squirrels' nests of oak leaves high in the trees, and, directly after, a gray squirrel tripping along the branches of an oak and shaking down the snow. It ran down the oak on the opposite side to me, over the snow and up another tall and slender oak, also on the side opposite to me, which was bare, and leapt down about four feet into a white pine, and then ran up still higher into its thick green top,

and clung behind the main stem, perfectly still, and thought itself concealed. This it did to conceal itself, though obliged to  come nearer to me to accomplish it. Its fore¹ feet make but one track in the snow,  about three inches broad, and its hind feet (?) another similar one,² a foot or more distant, and there are two sharp furrows forward and two slighter backward from each track where it has scratched along. This track it makes when running, but I am not absolutely certain that the whole four feet do not come together. There were many holes in the snow where it had gone down to the leaves and brought up acorns, which it had eaten on the nearest twig, dropping fine bits of the shell about on the snow, and also bits of lichen and of bark. I noticed the bits of acorn-shells, etc., by the holes in many places. Sometimes it made a continuous narrow trail in the snow, somewhat like a small musk-rat, where it had walked, or gone, several times, and it would go under a few feet and come out again.

The birds I saw were a partridge, perched on an evergreen, apparently on account of the deep snow, heard a jay, and heard and saw together white-bellied nuthatches and chickadees, the former uttering a faint *quank quank* and making a loud tapping, and the latter its usual lisping note.

¹ Four?

² [An interrogation-point in parenthesis is marked here in pencil.]