

II

JANUARY, 1854

(ÆT. 36)

Jan. 1. Le Jeune, describing the death of a young Frenchwoman who had devoted her life to the savages of Canada, uses the expression: "Finally this beautiful soul detached itself from its body the 15th of March," etc.

The drifts mark the standstill or equilibrium between the currents of air or particular winds. In our greatest snow-storms, the wind being northerly, the greatest drifts are on the south sides of the houses and fences and accordingly on the left-hand side of the street going down it. The north track of the railroad was not open till a day or more later than the south. I notice that in the angle made by our house and shed, a southwest exposure, the snow-drift does not lie close about the pump, but is a foot off, forming a circular bowl, showing that there was an eddy about it. It shows where the wind has been, the form of the wind. The snow is like a mould, showing the form of the eddying currents of air which have been impressed on it, while the drift and all the rest is that which fell between the currents or where they counterbalanced each other. These boundary lines are mountain barriers.

The white-in-tails, or grass finches, linger pretty late, fitting in flocks before, but they come so near winter

only as the white in their tails indicates. They let it come near enough to whiten their tails, perchance, and they are off. The snow buntings and the tree sparrows are the true spirits of the snow-storm; they are the animated beings that ride upon it and have their life in it.

The snow is the great betrayer. It not only shows the tracks of mice, otters, etc., etc., which else we should rarely if ever see, but the tree sparrows are more plainly seen against its white ground, and they in turn are attracted by the dark weeds which it reveals. It also drives the crows and other birds out of the woods to the villages for food. We might expect to find in the snow the footprint of a life superior to our own, of which no zoölogy takes cognizance. Is there no trace of a nobler life than that of an otter or an escaped convict to be looked for in the snow? Shall we suppose that that is the only life that has been abroad in the night? It is only the savage that can see the track of no higher life than an otter. Why do the vast snow plains give us pleasure, the twilight of the bent and half-buried woods? Is not all there consonant with virtue, justice, purity, courage, magnanimity? Are we not cheered by the sight? And does not all this amount to the track of a higher life than the otter's, a life which has not gone by and left a footprint merely,¹ but is there with its beauty, its music, its perfume, its sweetness, to exhilarate and recreate us? Where there is a perfect government of the world according to the highest laws, is there no trace of intelligence there, whether in the snow or the earth, or in ourselves? No other trail but such

¹ But all that we see is the impress of its spirit.

as a dog can smell? Is there none which an angel can detect and follow? None to guide a man on his pilgrimage, which water will not conceal? Is there no odor of sanctity to be perceived? Is its trail too old? Have mortals lost the scent? The great game for mighty hunters as soon as the first snow falls is Purity, for, earlier than any rabbit or fox, it is abroad, and its trail may be detected by curs of lowest degree. Did this great snow come to reveal the track merely of some timorous hare, or of the Great Hare, whose track no hunter has seen? Is there no trace nor suggestion of Purity to be detected? If one could detect the meaning of the snow, would he not be on the trail of some higher life that has been abroad in the night? Are there not hunters who seek for something higher than foxes, with judgment more discriminating than the senses of foxhounds, who rally to a nobler music than that of the hunting-horn? As there is contention among the fishermen who shall be the first to reach the pond as soon as the ice will bear, in spite of the cold, as the hunters are forward to take the field as soon as the first snow has fallen, so the observer, or he who would make the most of his life for discipline, must be abroad early and late, in spite of cold and wet, in pursuit of nobler game, whose traces are then most distinct. A life which, pursued, does not earth itself, does not burrow downward but upward, which takes not to the trees but to the heavens as its home, which the hunter pursues with winged thoughts and aspirations, — these the dogs that tree it, — rallying his pack with the bugle notes of undying faith, and returns with some worthier trophy than

a fox's tail, a life which we seek, not to destroy it, but to save our own. Is the great snow of use to the hunter only, and not to the saint, or him who is earnestly building up a life? Do the Indian and hunter only need snow-shoes, while the saint sits indoors in embroidered slippers?

The Indians might have imagined a large snow bunting to be the genius of the storm.

This morning it is snowing again fast, and about six inches has already fallen by 10 A. M., of a moist and heavy snow. It is about six inches in all this day. This would [be] two feet and a half in all, if it has not settled, — but it has.

I would fain be a fisherman, hunter, farmer, preacher, etc., but fish, hunt, farm, preach other things than usual.

When, in 1641, the five hundred Iroquois in force brought to Three Rivers two French prisoners (whom they had taken), seeking peace with the French, — I believe this preceded any war with them, — at the assembling for this purpose, they went through the form of tying their prisoners, that they might pass for such; then, after a speech, they broke their bonds and cast them into the river that it might carry them so far that they might never be remembered. The speaker “then made many presents, according to the custom of the country where the word for presents is speech (*où le mot de présents se nomme parole*), to signify that the present speaks more strongly than the mouth.” (Le Jeune.)

Our orators might learn much from the Indians.

They are remarkable for their precision; nothing is left at loose ends. They address more senses than one, so as to preclude misunderstanding. A present accompanies each proposition. In delivering one present, the speaker said, "This is the house which we shall have at Three Rivers when we come here to treat with you," etc. This is in Paul Le Jeune's Relation for '40 and '41, page 156.

Jan. 2. The trees are white with a hoar frost this morning, small leafets, a tenth of an inch long, on every side of the twigs. They look like ghosts of trees. Took a walk on snow-shoes at 9 A. M. to Hubbard's Grove. A flock of snow buntings flew over the fields with a rippling whistle, accompanied sometimes by a tender peep and a ricochet motion.

P. M. — Up Union Turnpike.

The tints of the sunset sky are never purer and more ethereal than in the coldest winter days. This evening, though the colors are not brilliant, the sky is crystalline and the pale fawn-tinged clouds are very beautiful. I wish to get on to a hill to look down on the winter landscape. We go about these days as if we had fetters on our feet. We walk in the stocks, stepping into the holes made by our predecessors.

I noticed yesterday that the damp snow, falling gently without wind on the top of front-yard posts, had quite changed the style of their architecture, — to the dome style of the East, a four-sided base becoming a dome at top. I observe other revelations made by the snow. The team and driver have long since gone by, but I

see the marks of his whip-lash on the snow, — its recoil, — but alas! these are not a complete tally of the strokes which fell upon the oxen's back. The unmerciful driver thought perchance that no one saw him, but unwittingly he recorded each blow on the unspotted snow behind his back as in the book of life. To more searching eyes the marks of his lash are in the air.

I paced partly through the pitch pine wood and partly the open field from the Turnpike by the Lec place to the railroad, from north to south, more than a quarter of a mile, measuring at every tenth pace. The average of sixty-five measurements, up hill and down, was nineteen inches; this after increasing those in the woods by one inch each (little enough) on account of the snow on the pines. So that, apparently, it has settled about as much as the two last snows amount to. I think there has been but little over two feet at any one time. I think that one would have to pace a mile on a north and south line, up and down hill, through woods and fields, to get a quite reliable result. The snow will drift sometimes the whole width of a field, and fill a road or valley beyond. So that it would be well that your measuring included several such driftings. There is very little reliance to [be] put on the usual estimates of the depth of snow. I have heard different men set this snow at six, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-four, thirty-six, and forty-eight inches. My snow-shoes sank about four inches into the snow this morning, but more than twice as much the 29th.

On north side the railroad, above the red house crossing, the cars have cut through a drift about a quarter

of a mile long and seven to nine feet high, straight up and down. It reminds me of the Highlands, the Pictured Rocks, the side of an iceberg, etc. Now that the sun has just sunk below the horizon, it is wonderful what an amount of soft light [it] appears to be absorbing. There appears to be more day just here by its side than anywhere. I can almost see into [it] six inches. It is made translucent, it is so saturated with light.

I have heard of one precious stone found in Concord, the cinnamon stone. A geologist has spoken of it as found in this town, and a farmer has described to me one which he once found, perhaps the same referred to by the other. He said it was as large as a brick, and as thick, and yet you could distinguish a pin through it, it was so transparent. If not a mountain of light, it was a brickbatful, at any rate.

Jan. 3. Tuesday. It is now fairly winter. We have passed the line, have put the autumn behind us, have forgotten what these withered herbs that rise above the snow here and there are, what flowers they ever bore. They are fishing on Walden this P. M. The fisherman gets fifteen or twenty pounds thus, when he has pretty good luck. Two to three pounds is a common size there. From the Peak, I looked over the wintry landscape. First there is the white ground, then the dark, dulled green of evergreens, then the reddish (?) brown or leather-color of the oaks, which generally retain their leaves, then the gray of maples and other trees, which are bare. They are modest Quaker colors that are seen above the snow. The twilight appears to

linger in the snow. This it makes the days seem suddenly longer. The sun has set, shorn of its disk [*sic*] in dun, red clouds. The young moon and the evening star are seen. The partridge has come forth to bud on some wayside apple tree. The woodchopper's task is done; he puts his axe under a log and sets out for home. For an hour the fisherman's lines have been freezing in, and now he, too, has commenced his retreat. That large round track forming nearly a straight line Goodwin thinks a fox.

A thaw appears to be commencing. We hear the caves run in the evening.

Jan. 4. It thaws all day; the caves drip as in a rain; the road begins to be soft and a little sloshy.

Jan. 5. Still thaws. This afternoon (as probably yesterday), it being warm and thawing, though fair, the snow is covered with snow-fleas. Especially they are sprinkled like pepper for half a mile in the tracks of a woodchopper in deep snow. These are the first since the snow came. With the first thawing weather they are [*sic*]. There is also some blueness now in the snow, the heavens being now (toward night) overcast. The blueness is more distinct after sunset.

Jan. 6. Walked Tappan¹ in P. M. down railroad to Heywood Brook, Fair Haven, and Cliffs.

At every post along the brook-side, and under almost every white pine, the snow strewn with the scales and

¹ [Doubtless William Tappan, of New York. See *Familiar Letters*.]

seeds of white pine cones left by the squirrels. They have sat on every *post* and dropped them for a great distance, also acorn-shells. The surface of the snow was sometimes strewn with the small alder scales, *i. e.* of catkins; also, here and there, the large glaucous lichens (*cetrarias*?). Showed Tappan a small shad-bush, which interested him and reminded him of a greyhound, rising so slender and graceful with its narrow buds above the snow. To return to the squirrels, I saw where they had laid up a pitch pine cone in the fork of a rider in several places. Many marks of partridges, and disturbed them on evergreens. A winter (?) gnat out on the bark of a pine. On Fair Haven we slumped nearly a foot to the old ice. The partridges were budding on the Fair Haven orchard, and flew for refuge to the wood, twenty minutes or more after sundown. There was a low, narrow, clear segment of sky in the west at sunset, or just after (all the rest overcast), of the coppery yellow, perhaps, of some of Gilpin's pictures, all spotted coarsely with clouds like a leopard's skin. I took up snow in the tracks at dark, but could find no fleas in it then, though they were exceedingly abundant before. Do they go into the snow at night? Frequently see a spider apparently stiff and dead on snow.

In Vimont's Jesuit Relation for 1642, he describes the customs of the Iroquois. As in the case of the Hurons, everything is done by presents. The murderer and robber are restrained by the very defect of justice, and because the community (his relations or tribe) whips itself for his fault. They must appease the in-

jured with costly presents. They make that he shall involve his friends in ruin along with himself, and if he would injure any one, shall injure them too. By making it impossible for him to do an injury without doing a greater injury than he wishes, they restrain him.

Jan. 7. Saturday. Thaw ended. Cold last night; rough walking; snow crusted.

P. M. — To Ministerial Swamp.

The bare larch trees there, so slender and tall, where they grow close together, all beaded or studded with buds, or rather stubs, which look like the dry sterile blossoms. How much fuller, or denser and more flourishing, in winter is the white spruce than the white pine! It has two hues, I believe, the glaucous or bluish and the green, melting into each other. It has not shed all its seeds yet. Now that the snow has lain more than a week, it begins to be spotted and darkened in the woods, with various dry leaves and scales from the trees. The wind and thaw have brought down a fresh crop of dry pine and spruce needles. The little roundish and stemmed scales of the alder catkins spot it thickly. The bird-shaped scales of the white birch are blown more than twenty rods from the trees. I see also the wings of pine seeds, — the seed being gone, — which look exactly like the wings of ants. Also, in the pastures, the fine star-shaped fuzz of the gray golden-rod, somewhat like a spider with many legs.

The snow is still very deep in the more open parts of the swamp, where it is light, being held up by the

bushes; but in thick woods there is much less of it, beside that it has settled far more. There is also much more in sprout-lands than in woods. Is it that the ground not being frozen in the woods melts it so much faster, while in the swamp, even if the ground is equally warm, the snow, lying light, does not come in contact with it enough to melt it?

The ice has all been snow ice of late, not interesting to study. However, there are now some little pools over the snow in hollows frozen, where the thin ice is yellow and full of white bubbles and like small coins. Is this the melted snow made into tea by running amid the dead leaves and grass? I see the muddy, dripping tracks of [a] muskrat or mink that has come out of a ditch on to the snow here in the swamp. Saw a fat pitch pine stump, whose sap, four inches thick, has long been gone, but the scales of the thick bark still form a circle level with the ground four inches from the (solid or fat) wood on every side. I see at Martial Miles's house where many hundred bees lie dead on the snow close to their hives, plainly having come out during the late warmer days.

I went to these woods partly to hear an owl, but did not; but, now that I have left them nearly a mile behind, I hear one distinctly, *hoorer hoo*. Strange that we should hear this sound so often, loud and far, — a voice which we call the owl, — and yet so rarely see the bird. Oftenest at twilight. It has a singular prominence as a sound; is louder than the voice of a dear friend. Yet we see the friend perhaps daily and the owl but few times in our lives. It is a sound which

the wood or the horizon makes. I see the cars almost as often as I hear the whistle.

Jan. 8. Sunday. Gilpin, in his essay on the "Art of Sketching Landscape," says: "When you have finished your sketch therefore with Indian ink, as far as you propose, tinge the whole over with some light horizon hue. It may be the rosy tint of morning; or the more ruddy one of evening; or it may incline more to a yellowish, or a greyish cast. . . . By washing this tint over your *whole drawing*, you lay a foundation for harmony."

I have often been attracted by this harmonious tint in his and other drawings, and sometimes, especially, have observed it in nature when at sunset I inverted my head. We love not so well the landscape represented as in broad noon, but in a morning or evening twilight, those seasons when the imagination is most active, the more hopeful or pensive seasons of the day. Our mood may then possess the whole landscape, or be in harmony with it, as the hue of twilight prevails over the whole scene. Are we more than crepuscular in our intellectual and spiritual life? Have we awakened to broad noon? The morning hope is soon lost in what becomes the routine of the day, and we do not recover ourselves again until we land on the pensive shores of evening, shores which skirt the great western continent of the night. At sunset we look into the west. For centuries our thoughts fish those grand banks that lie before the newfoundland, before our spirits take up their abode in that Hesperian Continent to which these lie in the way.

P. M. — To the Spruce Swamp in front of J. Farmer's.

Can go across both rivers now. New routes are more practicable. Stood within a rod of a downy woodpecker on an apple tree. How curious and exciting the blood-red spot on its hindhead! I ask why it is there, but no answer is rendered by these snow-clad fields. It is so close to the bark I do not see its feet. It looks behind as if it had on a black cassock open behind and showing a white undergarment between the shoulders and down the back. It is briskly and incessantly tapping all round the dead limbs, but rarely twice in a place, as if to sound the tree and so see if it has any worm in it, or perchance to start them. How much he deals with the bark of trees, all his life long tapping and inspecting it! He it is that scatters those fragments of bark and lichens about on the snow at the base of trees. What a lichenist he must be! Or rather, perhaps it is fungi makes his favorite study, for he deals most with dead limbs. How briskly he glides up or drops himself down a limb, creeping round and round, and hopping from limb to limb, and now flitting with a rippling sound of his wings to another tree!

The lower two-thirds of the white spruce has its branches retraced or turned downward, and then curving upward at the extremities, as much as the white pine commonly slants upwards. Above it is so thick that you cannot see through it. All the black spruce that I know hereabouts stand on higher land than this. Saw two squirrel-nests in the thick top of a spruce.



It was a foot in diameter, of coarse grass and bark fibres, with very thick bottom and sides and a scarcely distinguishable entrance, lined with fine fibres of bark, probably inner bark of maple, very warm. Probably a red squirrel's, for I heard one winding up his clock. Many white pine cones had been eaten in the neighborhood.

Gilpin's "Essay on Picturesque Beauty" is the key to all his writings. He says in the outset that he does not mean to inquire "into the general sources of beauty," but the questions which he proposes to himself depend on the result of such an inquiry. He asks, first, "What is that quality in objects, which particularly marks them as picturesque?" and answers "*roughness*," assigning to that kind of beauty which he makes the opposite to the picturesque the quality of "*smoothness*." This last he styles, too generally or exclusively, "the beautiful." The beautiful, he says, cannot be painted; *e. g.*, "A piece of Palladian architecture may be elegant in the last degree. The proportion of its parts — the propriety of its ornaments — and the symmetry of the whole, may be highly pleasing. But if we introduce it in a picture, it immediately becomes a formal object, and ceases to please. Should we wish to give it picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet, instead of the chisel: we must beat down one half of it, deface the other, and throw its mutilated members around in heaps. In short from a *smooth* building we must turn it into a *rough* ruin."¹ I do not believe that the "beautiful" is not equally beautiful

¹ [William Gilpin, *Five Essays on Picturesque Subjects*.]

in picture, that the beautiful statue for instance, however smooth, may not appear beautiful when daguerreotyped or painted. In the case instanced he must use the mallet either because the building is not beautiful, or because he cannot catch and render the spirit of its beauty. If there is the same genius in the painter that there was in the architect, the painting will be beautiful too. The smooth may be more difficult, but is not impossible, to be represented by picture. It is not the mere roughness of the surface which makes the patriarchal head more interesting than that of a youth ever, nor is this the reason why we "admire the Laocoön more than the Antinoüs," for we do not admire it more than the Apollo Belvidere.

True, there are many reasons why the painter should select the rough. It is easier to execute; he can do it more justice. In the case of the patriarchal head, those lines and wrinkles which man's life has produced his hand can better represent than the fullness and promise of infancy; and then, on the whole, perhaps, we have more sympathy with performance than promise. The humble or sincere and true is more commonly rough and weather-beaten, so that from association we prefer it. But will Mr. Gilpin assert that the Venus and Apollo are not fit objects for painting?

So we prefer the poor man's irregular garden for its sincerity and truth to the rich man's formal and pretending parterres, and the "worn-out cart-horse" to the pampered steed for similar reasons. Indeed "he does not recommend his art," if he fails to fix the fleeting forms of the beautiful. The worn-out cart-horse is

thought to be more picturesque and admits "of being rendered with spirit," because we can far more easily enter into his spirit, whether as beholders or painters, — have more sympathy with it than with that of the free horse of the prairie. Beside, what has the pampered coach-horse done to deserve our respect and sympathy?

He defends the painter, first, by saying that "a free, bold touch is in itself pleasing," and assuming to too great an extent that the objects which he calls beautiful do not admit of being painted in this touch, — but God used a free and bold touch when he created them, and so may the creative painter do when he paints them, — secondly, by saying that "the very essence of his art requires" that he select the Picturesque for the sake of composition, variety, light and shade, and coloring.

But he is superficial. He goes not below the surface to account for the effect of form and color, etc. For instance, he thus attempts to account for the fact that the pampered steed may be a picturesque object. "Though the horse, in a *rough* state, as we have just observed, or worn down with labor, is more adapted to the pencil than when his sides shine with brushing, and high feeding; yet in this latter state also he is certainly a picturesque object. But it is not his smooth, and shining coat, that makes him so. It is the apparent interruption of that smoothness by a variety of shades, and colors, which produces the effect. Such a play of muscles appears, everywhere, through the fineness of his skin, gently swelling, and sinking into each other — he

is all over so *lubricus aspici*, the reflections of light are so continually shifting upon him, and playing into each other, that the eye never considers the smoothness of the surface; but is amused with gliding up, and down, among those endless transitions, which in some degree, supply the room of *roughness*." And this is the reason why a pampered steed can be painted! Mark that there is not the slightest reference to the fact that this surface, with its lights and shades, belongs to a horse and not to a bag of wind. The same reasoning would apply equally well to one of his hind quarters hung bottom upwards in a butcher's stall. This comes of not inquiring "into the general sources of beauty."

So I should answer that "the beauty of an old head" is *not* "greatly improved by the *smoothness* of the bald pate" (if bald pates were rough they would do just as well), but it may be improved by the associations which a bald pate suggests.

He fails to show why roughness is essential to the picturesque, because he does not go beneath the surface.

To return to the horse, I should say that no arrangement of light and shade without reference to the object, actual or suggested, so lit and shaded can interest us powerfully, any more than the paint itself can charm us.

In the "Essay on Picturesque Travel," after speaking of the *objects* of such travel, he treats of the way in which "the mind is gratified by these objects." He says: "We might begin in moral style, and consider the objects of nature in a higher light than merely as amusement. We might observe, that a search after beauty should naturally lead the mind to the great origin of

all beauty," etc. "But though in theory this seems a natural climax, we insist the less upon it, as in fact we have scarce ground to hope that every admirer of *picturesque beauty* is an admirer also of the *beauty of virtue*." And he a clergyman, "vicar of Boldre!" This is to give us the play of Hamlet with Hamlet's part left out. But there is no half way in this case that is not at the same time half true.

Again, as if that were true, which G. asserts in another essay, that "the *eye*, which has nothing to do with *moral sentiments*, and is conversant only with *visible forms*, is disgusted," etc., any more than a telescope is disgusted! As if taste resided in the eye! As if the eye, which itself cannot see at all, were conversant with surfaces! Yet he adds directly that "there is a still *higher character* in landscapes than what arises from the *uniformity of objects* — and that is the power of furnishing images *analogous to the various feelings*, and *sensations of the mind*." Can good landscape have any lower aim? But he says, "To convey however ideas of this kind is the perfection of the art: it requires the splendor, and variety of colors; and is not to be attempted in such trivial sketches as these." And this is not modesty merely, but a low estimate of his own art.

I might have said some pages back that he allows that grandeur which is produced "by uniformity of color, and a long continuation of line," falls under the head of picturesque beauty, though he says that the idea of it is not easily caught.

The elegant Gilpin. I like his style and manners better than anything he says.

Jan. 9. P. M. — To Heywood's Pond with Tappan.

We were looking for rainbow-tinted clouds, small whiffs of vapor which form and disperse, this clear, cold afternoon, when we saw to our surprise a star, about half past three or earlier, a mere round white dot. Is the winter then such a twilight? I wonder if the savages ever detected one by day. This was about an hour and a half before sunset. T. said he had lost fowls by the owls. They selected the roosters and took off their heads and ate their insides. Found many snow-fleas, apparently frozen, on the snow.¹

T. has a singularly elastic step. He will run through the snow, lifting his knees like a child who enjoys the motion. When he slumped once through to water and called my attention to it, with an indescribable flash of his eye, he reminded me forcibly of Hawthorne's little son Julian. He uses the greatest economy in speech of any man I know. Speaks low, beside, and without emphasis; in monosyllables. I cannot guess what the word was for a long time. His language is different from the Algonquin.

Jan. 10. I cannot thaw out to life the snow-fleas which yesterday covered the snow like pepper, in a frozen state. How much food they must afford to small birds, — chickadees, etc. The snow went off remarkably fast in the thaw before the 7th, but it is still deep, lying light in swamps and sprout-lands, somewhat hollow beneath. The thaw produced those yellowish pools in hollows in

¹ *Vide* below [next date].

the fields, where water never stands else, and now perhaps there is a bottom of snow; and now for the last three days they have afforded good sliding. You got a start by running over the snow-crust. In one place, where the depression was inconsiderable but more extensive than usual, I found that it was mere glazed snow on which I slid, it having rapidly frozen dry.

The sportsmen chose the late thaw to go after quails. They come out at such times to pick the horse-dung in the roads, and can be traced thence to their haunts.

When we were walking last evening, Tappan admired the soft rippling of the Assabet under Tarbell's bank. One could have lain all night under the oaks there listening to it. Westward forty rods, the surface of the stream reflected a silvery whiteness, but gradually darkened thence eastward, till beneath us it was almost quite black.

What you can recall of a walk on the second day will differ from what you remember on the first day, as the mountain chain differs in appearance, looking back the next day, from the aspect it wore when you were at its base, or generally, as any view changes to one who is journeying amid mountains when he has increased the distance.

With Tappan, his speech is frequently so frugal and reserved, in monosyllables not fairly uttered clear of his thought, that I doubt if he did not cough merely, or let it pass for such, instead of asking what he said or meant, for fear it might turn out that he coughed merely.

Channing showed me last night on a map where, as

he said, he "used to walk" in Rome. He was there sixteen days.

I mistook the creaking of a tree in the woods the other day for the scream of a hawk. How numerous the resemblances of the animate to the inanimate!

Jan. 11. Thick fog in the night. The trees, accordingly, now white with hoary frost, just as the frost forms on a man's beard or about a horse's mouth.

P. M. — To Cliffs and Walden.

The north side of all stubble, weeds, and trees, and the whole forest is covered with a hoar frost a quarter to a half inch deep. It is easily shaken off. The air is still full of mist. No snow has fallen, but, as it were, the vapor has been caught by the trees like a cobweb. The trees are bright hoary forms, the ghosts of trees. In fact, the warm breath of the earth is frozen on its beard. Closely examined or at a distance, it is just like the sheaf-like forms of vegetation and the diverging crystals on the window-panes. The stiff stubble has a soft, drooping look; now feels the wind and waves like plumes. It is a *chevaux-de-frise* or armor of frost-needles, exclusively on the north side, with a myriad diverging feathery points, sheaves of darts. It covers the width of the twigs, but only a narrow and irregular strip on the larger limbs and trunk; also on the edges and protuberances of the leaves still turned toward the northern foe. Even birds' nests have a white beard.

Birches, especially, are the trees for these hoar frosts and also for glazes. They are so thickly twigged and

of such graceful forms and attitudes. I can distinguish a birch now further off than ever. As I stand by its north side (Hubbard's Grove), almost the whole forest is concealed by the hoar frost. It is as if the mist had been caught on an invisible net spread in the air. Yet the white is tinged with the ground color of reddish oak leaves and even green pine-needles. You look up and behold the hugest pine, as tall as a steeple, all frosted over. Nature is now gone into her winter palace. The trunks of the pines, greened with lichens, are now more distinct by contrast. Even the pale yellowish green of lichens speaks to us at this season, reminding us of summer.

The humblest weed is indescribably beautiful, of purest white and richest form. The hogweed becomes a fairy's wand. The blue-curls, rising from bare gray sand, is perhaps particularly beautiful. Every part of the plant is concealed. Its expression is changed or greatly enriched by this exaggeration or thickening of the mere linear original. It is an exquisitely delicate frost plant, trembling like swan's-down. As if Nature had sprinkled her breast with down this cold season. The character of each tree and weed is rendered with spirit, — the pine plumes and the cedar spires. All this you see going from north to south; but, going the other way (*perchance* ?), you might not be struck with the aspect of the woods.

Now (or a little earlier, just after the thaw, when it began to freeze) is the time to go out and see the ice organ-pipes. I walked the whole length of the Cliffs, just at the base of the rocks, for this purpose; but [it]

is rather late; no water is flowing now. These great organ-pipes are formed where the water flows over triangular projections of the rocks. The perpendicularity of the icicles contrasts strangely with the various angles of the rocks. It is now quite cold, and in many places only a sharp spear of purest crystal, which does not reach the rock below, is left to tell of the water that has flowed here. These solid, pipe-like icicles commonly unite by their sides and form rows of pillars or irregular colonnades, run together, between which here and there you can insert your hand, revealing a peculiar internal structure, as of successive great drops. Thus when the water has fallen perpendicularly. And behind these perpendicular pipes, or congregated pillars, or colonnades run together, are formed the prettiest little aisles or triangular alcoves with lichen-clad sides. Then the ice spreads out in a thin crust over the rock, with an uneven surface as of bubbling water, and you can see the rock indistinctly through ice three or four inches thick, and so on, by successive steps or shelves down the rock.

Saw where a squirrel, probably a red one, had apparently brought up to the mouth of his hole quite a quantity of walnuts and eaten them there.

I observe that the surface of the snow under the hemlocks is now very thickly strewn with cones and scales. Was it done by the thaw? Or did the partridges help do it? The ends of the lower limbs are still under the snow.



At night a fine freezing rain begins, which turns the frost to a glaze.

Jan. 12. A. M. — It still rains very finely. The ground, etc., is covered with a black glaze, wet and shiny like water, like an invisible armor, a quarter of an inch or more thick.

Every winter the surface of the pond to the depth of a foot becomes solid so as to support the heaviest teams, and anon the snow covers it to an equal depth, so that it is not to be distinguished from a level field. Thus, like the marmots in the surrounding hills, it too closes its eyelids and becomes partially dormant.¹

Coarse, hard rain from time to time to-day, with much mist, — thaw and rain. The cocks crow, for the ground begins to be bare in spots. Walking, or wading, very bad.

Jan. 13. Still warm and thawing, springlike; no freezing in the night, though high winds. Are we not apt to have high winds after rain?

P. M. — To Walden, Goose Pond, and Britton's Camp.

The landscape is now patches of bare ground and snow; much running water with the sun reflected from it. Lately all was clean, dry, and tight. Now, though clear and bright, all is moist and dissolving. The cocks crow with new brag. Even the telegraph harp seems to sound as with a vernal sound, heralding a new year. Those pools of greenish-yellow water with a snow bot-

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 312, 313; *Riv.* 437.]

tom, in hollows in fields and woods, are now much increased, ready to be frozen. These thawing days must have been to some extent lichen days too. I did not examine. The stumps are now richly bronzed with greenish mealy lichens. A rich scale is slowly creeping over and covering them. How the red coxcomb lichens contrast with the snow! Some of these days I have heard Therien's axe more than a mile distinctly. He has already carried it home and ground it twice, having dulled it on a stone. Walden is covered with puddles, in which you see a dim reflection of the trees and hills, as in weak soapsuds, on the grayish or light-colored snow-ice.

I saw yesterday my snowshoe tracks quite distinct, though made January 2d. Though they pressed the snow down four or five inches, they consolidated it, and it now endures and is two or three inches above the general level there, and more white.

The water on Walden has been flowing into the holes cut for pickerel and others. It has carried with it, apparently from the surface, a sort of dust that collects on the surface, which produces a dirty or grayish-brown foam. It lies sometimes several feet wide, quite motionless on the surface of the shallow water above the ice, and is very agreeably and richly figured, like the hide of some strange beast—how cheap these colors in nature!—parts of it very much like the fur of rabbits, the tips of their tails. I stooped to pick it up once or twice,—now like bowels overlying one another, now like tripe, now like flames, *i. e.* in form, with the free, bold touch of Nature. One would not believe that the

impurities which thus color the foam could be arranged in such pleasing forms. Give any material, and Nature begins to work it up into pleasing forms.

In the deep hollow this side of Britton's Camp, I heard a singular buzzing sound from the ground, exactly like that of a large fly or bee in a spider's web. I kneeled down, and with pains traced it to a small bare spot as big as my hand, amid the snow, and searched there amid the grass stubble for several minutes, putting the grass aside with my fingers, till, when I got nearest to the spot, not knowing but I might be stung, I used a stick. The sound was incessant, like that of a large fly in agony, but though it made my ears ache, and I had my stick directly on the spot, I could find neither prey nor oppressor. At length I found that I interrupted or changed the tone with my stick, and so traced it to a few spires of dead grass occupying about a quarter of an inch in diameter and standing in the melted snow water. When I bent these one side it produced a duller and baser tone. It was a sound issuing from the earth, and as I stooped over it, the thought came over me that it might be the first puling infantine cry of an earthquake, which would ere long engulf me. There was no bubble in the water. Perhaps it was air confined under the frozen ground, now expanded by the thaw, and escaping upward through the water by a hollow grass stem. I left it after ten minutes, buzzing as loudly as at first. Could hear it more than a rod.

Schoolcraft says, "The present name is derived from the Dutch, who called it Roode Eylant (Red Island),

from the autumnal color of its foliage." (Coll. R. I. Hist. Soc. vol. iii.)

Jan. 14. If the writers of the brazen age are most suggestive to thee, confine thyself to them, and leave those of the Augustan age to dust and the book-worms.

Was surprised this morning to see how much the river was swollen by the rain of day before yesterday. The channel, or river itself, is still covered with ice, but the meadows are broad sheets of dark-blue water, contrasting with the white patches of snow still left. The ice on the river rises with the water in this case, while it remains attached to the bottom by one edge on each side, and is heaved up and cracked in consequence along the line of the willows, thus:—



All the water on the meadows lies over ice and snow. The other day I started a partridge from a sumach bush with berries on it, and to-day from a barberry bush with berries. I suspect that they eat the berries of both.

Cato makes the vineyard of first importance to a farm; second, a well-watered garden; third, a willow plantation (*salictum*); fourth, an olive-yard (*oletum*); fifth, a meadow or grass ground (?) (*pratium*); sixth, a grain-field or tillage (?) (*campus frumentarius*); seventh, a copsewood (?) for fuel (?) (*silva caedua*) (Varro speaks of planting and cultivating this); eighth, an

arbustum (Columella says it is a plantation of elms, etc., for vines to rest on) (*arbustum*); ninth, a wood that yields mast (*glandaria silva*). He says elsewhere the *arbustum* yields *ligna et virgae*.

He says: "In earliest manhood the master of a family must study to plant his ground; as for building he must think a long time about it (*diu cogitare*); he must not think about planting, but do it. When he gets to be thirty-six years old, then let him build, if he has his ground planted. So build, that the villa may not have to seek the farm, nor the farm the villa." This contains sound advice, as pertinent now as ever.

As for farming implements, I do not see but the Romans had as great a variety as are now exhibited in the Crystal Palace.

The master of a family must have in his rustic villa "cellam olcariam, vinariam, dolia multa, uti lubeat caritatem exspectare, et rei et virtuti, et gloriae erit" (an oil and wine cellar, many casks, so that it may be pleasant to expect hard times; it will be for his advantage, and virtue and glory).

This, too, to make farmers prudent and thrifty: "Cogitatoquotannis tempestates magnas venire, et oleam dejicere solere" (Consider that great tempests come every year, and the olive is wont to fall). The steward must not lend seed for sowing, etc. He may have two or three families of whom to borrow and to whom to lend and no more.

I just had a coat come home from the tailor's. Ah me! Who am I that should wear this coat? It was

fitted upon one of the devil's angels about my size. Of what use that measuring of me if he did not measure my character, but only the breadth of my shoulders, as it were a peg to hang it on. This is not the figure that I cut. This is the figure the tailor cuts. That presumptuous and impertinent fashion whispered in his ear, so that he heard no word of mine. As if I had said, "Not my will, O Fashion, but thine be done." We worship not the Parcæ, nor the Graces, but Fashion, offspring of Proteus and Vanessa, of Whim and Vanity. She spins and weaves and cuts with the authority of the Fates. Oh, with what delight I could thrust a spear through her vitals or squash her under my heel! Every village might well keep constantly employed a score of knights to rid it of this monster. It changes men into bears or monkeys with a single wave of its wand. The head monkey at Paris, Count D'Orsay, put on the traveller's cap, and now all the monkeys in the world do the same thing. He merely takes the breadth of my shoulders and proceeds to fit the garment to Puck, or some other grotesque devil of his acquaintance to whom he has sold himself.

I despair of ever getting anything quite simple and honest done in this world by the help of men. They would have to be passed through a powerful press, à la cider-mill, that their old notions might be thoroughly squeezed out of them, and it would be some time before they would get upon their legs again. Then undoubtedly there would be some one with a maggot in his head, offspring of an egg deposited there nobody knows when; fire does not kill these things, and you

would have lost your labor.¹ I could cry, if it were not for laughing.

"If you have done one thing late, you will do all your work late," says Cato to the farmer. They raised a sallow (*salicem*) to tie vines with. Ground subject to fogs is called *nebulosus*. They made a cheap wine of poor grapes, called *vinum praeliganeum*, for the laborers to drink. (So our farmers give their men rum or weak cider.)

Oxen "must have muzzles [or little baskets, *fiscellas*],² that they may not go in quest of grass (*ne herbam sectentur*) when they plow."

Jan. 17. Surveying for William O. Benjamin in east part of Lincoln. Saw a red squirrel on the wall, it being thawing weather. Human beings with whom I have no sympathy are far stranger to me than inanimate matter, — rocks or earth. Looking on the last, I feel comparatively as if I were with my kindred.

Cato, prescribing a *medicamentum* for oxen, says, "When you see a snake's slough, take it and lay it up, that you may not have to seek it when it is wanted." This was mixed with bread, corn, etc.

He tells how to make bread and different kinds of cakes, *viz.*, a *libum*, a *placenta*, a *spira* (so called because twisted like a rope, perhaps like doughnuts), *scriblita* (because ornamented with characters like writing), *globi* (globes), etc., etc. Tells how to make a vow

¹ [*Walden*, p. 28; Riv. 42. See also *Familiar Letters*, pp. 225, 226; Riv. 271, 272.]

² [The brackets are Thoreau's.]

for your oxen to Mars Sylvanus in a wood with an offering, no woman to be present nor know how it is done.

When the brine will float a dry *maena* (a fish) or an egg, then it will preserve meat. Tells how to cram hens and geese. If you wish to remove an ill savor from wine, he recommends to heat a brick and pitch it and let it down by a string to the bottom of the cask and there remain two days, the cask being stopped.

“If you wish to know if water has been added to wine, make a little vessel of ivy wood (*materia edera- cea*). Put into it the wine which you think has water in it. If it has water, the wine will run out (*effluet*), the water will remain. For a vessel of ivy wood does not hold wine.”

“The dogs must be shut up by day that they may be more sharp (*acriores*, more fierce (?)) and vigilant by night.” So I might say of a moon and star gazer.

“Make a sacrificial feast for the oxen when the pear is in blossom. Afterward begin to plow in the spring.” “That day is to be holy (*feriae*) to the oxen, and herdsmen, and those who make the feast.” They offer wine and mutton to Jupiter Dapalis, also to Vesta if they choose.

When they thinned a consecrated grove (*lucum con- lucare*) (as if [to] let in the light to a shaded place) they were to offer a hog by way of expiation and pray the god or goddess to whom it was sacred to be favorable to them, their house and family and children. Whatever god or goddess thou art to whom this grove is sacred, I pray thee be propitious. Should not all groves

be regarded as a *lucus*, or consecrated grove, in this sense? I wish that our farmers felt some such awe when they cut down our consecrated groves; would realize that they are sacred to some god.

A *lustrum*, or sacrifice, of a sow, sheep, and bull (*suovitaurilia*) was performed every fifth year, when various things were prayed for.

Gives several charms to cure diseases, mere magi- cian's words.

Jan. 19. Went to Cambridge to court.

Dr. Harris says that my cocoons found in Lincoln in December are of the *Attacus cecropia*, the largest of our emperor moths. He made this drawing¹ of the four kinds of emperor moths which he says we have. The *cecropia* is the largest. The cocoon must be right end uppermost when they are ready to come out. The *A. Promethea* is the *only moth* whose cocoon has a *fastening wound round the petiole of the leaf*, and *round the shoot, the leaf partly folded round it*.

That spider whose hole I found, and which I carried him, he is pretty sure is the *Lycosa fatifera*.

In a large and splendid work on the insects of Georgia, by Edwards and Smith (?), near end of last century, up-stairs, I found plates of the above moths, called not *Attacus* but *Phalæna*, and other species of *Phalæna*.

He thinks that small beetle, slightly metallic, which I saw with grubs, etc., on the yellow lily roots last fall was a *Donax* or one of the *Donasia* (?).²

¹ [Dr. Harris's drawing is inserted here.]

² [*Donacia* is a genus of beetles. *Donax* is a genus of molluscs.]

In Josselyn's account of his voyage from London to Boston in 1638, he says, "June the first day in the afternoon, very thick foggie weather, we sailed by an enchanted island," etc. This kind of remark, to be found in so many accounts of voyages, appears to be a fragment of tradition come down from the earliest account of Atlantis and its disappearance.

Varro, having enumerated certain writers on agriculture, says accidentally [*sic*] that they wrote *soluta ratione, i. e.* in prose. This suggests the difference between the looseness of prose and the precision of poetry. A perfect expression requires a particular rhythm or measure for which no other can be substituted. The prosaic is always a loose expression.

Varro divides fences into four kinds, — *unum naturale, alterum agreste, tertium militare, quartum fabrile*. (Many kinds of each.) The first is the living hedge. One kind of *sepes agrestis* is our rail fence, and our other dead wooden farm fences would come under this head. The military *sepes* consists of a ditch and rampart; is common along highways; sometimes a rampart alone. The fourth is the mason's fence of stone or brick (burnt or unburnt), or stone and earth together.

Jan. 22. Saw, January 20th, some tree sparrows in the yard. Once or twice of late I have seen the mother-of-pearl tints and rainbow flocks in the western sky. The usual time is when the air is clear and pretty cool, about an hour before sundown. Yesterday I saw a very permanent specimen, like a long knife-handle of mother-of-pearl, very pale with an interior blue and

rosaceous tinges. Methinks the summer sky never exhibits this so finely.

When I was at C.'s the other evening, he punched his cat with the poker because she purred too loud for him.

R. Rice says he saw a white owl two or three weeks since. Harris told me on the 19th that he had never found the snow-flea.

No second snow-storm in the winter can be so fair and interesting as the first. Last night was very windy, and to-day I see the dry oak leaves collected in thick beds in the little hollows of the snow-crust. These later falls of the leaf.

A fine freezing rain on the night of the 19th produced a hard crust on the snow, which was but three inches deep and would not bear.

Jan. 23. Love tends to purify and sublime itself. It mortifies and triumphs over the flesh, and the bond of its union is holiness.

The increased length of the days is very observable of late. What is a winter unless you have risen and gone abroad frequently before sunrise and by starlight? Varro speaks of what he calls, I believe, before-light (*antelucana*) occupations in winter, on the farm. Such are especially milking, in this neighborhood.¹

¹ Speaking of the rustic villa, you must see that the kitchen is convenient, "because some things are done there in the winter before daylight (*antelucanis temporibus*); food is prepared and taken." In the study are not some things to be done before daylight, and a certain food to be prepared there?

If one may judge from Josselyn, they began to be weather-wise very early in New England. He says: "The obscuring of the smaller stars is a certain sign of tempests approaching. . . . The resounding of the sea from the shore, and murmuring of the winds [*sic* in Josselyn] in the woods without apparent wind, sheweth wind to follow.¹ . . . The redness of the sky in the morning, is a token of winds, or rain, or both," etc., etc. "If the white hills look clear and conspicuous, it is a sign of fair weather; if black and cloudy, of rain; if yellow, it is a certain sign of snow shortly to ensue," etc. *Vide* his "Two Voyages."² He speaks of "the Earth-nut bearing a princely flower, the beautiful leaved Pirola,"³ etc. Is n't this the glossy-leaved winter-green?

At noon, go to Worcester.

Jan. 24. In Worcester.

From 9 A. M. to 4 P. M., walked about six miles north-west into Holden with Blake, returning by Stonehouse Hill. A very cold day. Less forest near Worcester than in Concord, and that hardwood. No dark pines in the horizon. The evergreen laurel is a common underwood, contrasting agreeably with the snow. Large, broad-backed hills.

De Quincey's "Historical and Critical Essays" I have not read (2 vols.). Saw a red squirrel out.

Jan. 25. At noon return to Concord.

¹ [*Cape Cod*, p. 98; Riv. 115.]

² [*Two Voyages to New England*, pp. 56, 57.] ³ [*Op. cit.*, p. 59.]

A very cold day.

Saw a man in Worcester this morning who took a pride in never wearing gloves or mittens. Drives in the morning. Said he succeeded by keeping his arm and wrist well covered. He had a large hand, one of his fingers as big as three of mine. But this morning he had to give up. The 22d, 23d, 24th, and 25th of this month have been the coldest spell of weather this winter.

Clear and cold and windy.

Jan. 26. All day at court at Cambridge.

Jan. 27. I have an old account-book, found in Deacon R. Brown's garret since his death. The first leaf or two is gone. Its cover is brown paper, on which, amid many marks and scribblings, I find written:—

" Mr. Ephraim Jones
His Wast Book
Anno Domini
1742 "

It extends from November 8th, 1742, to June 20th, 1743 (inclusive). It appears without doubt from the contents of this book that he is the one of whom Shattuck writes in his history that he "married Mary Hayward, 1728, and died November 29th, 1756, aged 51; having been captain, town-clerk, and otherwise distinguished." His father's name was Ephraim, and he had a son Ephraim. The entries are made apparently by himself, or a boy, or his wife, or some other when he was out. The book is filled with familiar Concord

names, the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the present generation. Dr. Hartshorn — he lived to be ninety-two — and Dr. Temple send to the store once or twice. It is more important now what was bought than who bought it.

The articles most commonly bought were mohair (commonly with buttons) (a kind of twist to sew on buttons with), rum (often only a gill to drink at the store), — more of these than anything; salt, molasses, shalloon, fish, calico, some sugar, a castor hat, almanac, psalter (and sometimes primer and testament), paper, knee-buckles and shoe-buckles, garters and spurs by the pair, deer skins, a fan, a cart whip, various kinds of cloth and trimmings, — as half-thick, osnaburg, a very little silk, ferret, quality, serge for breeches, etc., etc., — gloves, a spring knife, an ink-horn, a gun, cap, spice, a pocket case, timber, iron, etc., earthenware; no tea (?) (I am in doubt about one or perhaps two entries), nor coffee, nor meal, nor flour. Of the last two they probably raised all they wanted. Credit is frequently given for timber and once for cloth brought to the store.

On the whole, it is remarkable how little provision was sold at the store. The inhabitants raised almost everything for themselves. Chocolate is sold once. Rum, salt, molasses, fish, a biscuit with their drink, a little spice, and the like are all that commonly come under this head that I remember.

On a loose piece of paper is a bill for “todey,” “a bowl of punch,” etc., and on another piece is Jonathan Dwight’s (innholder’s?) bill against the Estate of

Capt. Ephraim Jones for entertainment, etc., etc. (apparently he treated his company) at divers times for half a dozen years, amounting to over £146. One entry is “Dea Brown to flip & rum.”

The people apparently made their own cloth and even thread, and hence for the most part bought only buttons and mohair and a few trimmings.

Feb. 1, 1742. “Town of Concord Dr to sundry for the funerel of Widow Williams daughter to 5 pr gloves @ 1/9 1 D P. @ 2/1 ½	0-10-10½ ”
Jan. 10, 1742 (3). “Jon ^a Edes to 3 Raccoon skins } @ 2/9 2 minks @ 1/6 4 musquash @ /3 ½	0-12- 5 ”
Jan. 18, 1742 (3). “John Melven Cr by 1 Grey fox	0- 2- 3 ”
Feb. 14, 1742 (3). “Aaron Parker Cr by 100 squirell skins	0- 6- 3 ”

Deer skins were sold at from ten to seventeen shillings. Sometimes it is written “old” or “new tenor.”

Many of the customers came from as far as Harvard, or much farther.

A fan, a jack-knife, or a pair of garters are much more important relatively to the other goods sold than now.

No butter, nor rice, nor oil, nor candles are sold. They must have used candles [of their own making], made their own butter, and done without rice. There is no more authentic history of those days than this “Wast Book” contains, and, being money matters, it is more explicit than almost any other statement; something *must* be said. Each line contains and states explicitly a fact. It is the best of evidence of several facts. It tells distinctly and authoritatively who sold, who bought, the article, amount, and value, and the date. You could

not easily crowd more facts into one line. You are warned when the doctor or deacon had a new suit of clothes, by the charge for mohair, buttons, and trimmings, or a castor hat; and here also is entered the rum which ran down their very throats.

Attended the auction of Deacon Brown's effects a little while to-day, — a great proportion of old traps, rubbish, or trumpery, which began to accumulate in his father's day, and now, after lying half a century in his garret and other dust-holes, is not burned, but surviving neighbors collect and view it, and buy it, and carefully transport it to their garrets and dust-holes, to lie there till their estates are settled, when it will start again. Among his effects was a dried tapeworm and various articles too numerous and worthless to mention. A pair of old snow-shoes is almost regularly sold on these occasions, though none of this generation has seen them worn here.

I have some good friends from whom I am wont to part with disappointment, for they neither care what I think nor mind what I say. The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I *thought*, and attended to my answer.

We begin to die, not in our senses or extremities, but in our divine faculties. Our members may be sound, our sight and hearing perfect, but our genius and imagination betray signs of decay. You tell me that you are growing old and are troubled to see without glasses, but this is unimportant if the divine faculty of the seer shows no signs of decay.

Cut this afternoon a cake of ice out of Walden and

brought it home in a pail, another from the river, and got a third, a piece of last year's ice from Sam Barrett's Pond, at Brown's ice-house, and placed them side by side. These lumps are not large enough to show the color. Walden ice has a green tint close by, but is distinguished by its blueness at a distance. The river ice inclines to a more opaque white.¹ Comparing the lumps, Walden ice was, you might say, more crystalline than the river, but both showed the effect of heat more than the Barrett ice of last year, the bubbles being very much elongated and advanced toward the honeycomb stage, while in the Barrett ice they were spherical and there were wide clear spaces. This looked as if it would keep best.

Varro, on grafting, says when the wood is of a close and dry texture they tie a vessel over it from which water drops slowly, that the shoot may not dry up before it coalesces; also "by the turning of some leaves you can tell what season (*tempus*) of the year it is, as the olive and white poplar, and willow. For when their leaves turn, the solstice is said to be past." They had not such a brilliant change of the leaf as we.

Speaking of the nursery, he says: "Herbaeque elidendae, et dum tenerae sunt vellendae, prius enim aridae factae rixantur, ac celerius rumpuntur, quam sequuntur (and the weeds are to be levelled and, while they are tender, pulled up, for if they have first grown tough they resist and break sooner than come up). . . . Contra herba in pratis ad spem foeniciscae nata, non modo non evellenda in nutricatu, sed etiam non cal-

¹ [*Walden*, p. 327; Riv. 457.]

canda. Quo pecus a prato ablegandum, et omne jumentum, ac etiam homines. Solum enim hominis exitium herbae, et semitae fundamentum. (On the other hand, grass in grass-ground, raised with a view to hay, not only is not to be pulled up while it is growing, but is not even to be trodden upon. Wherefore the cattle are to be driven from the mowing, and every beast of burden, and even men. For the sole (track?) of a man's foot is the destruction of the grass, and the foundation of a (foot)path.)" Even so early did the farmers raise this hue and cry about your treading down or going through their grass.

Jan. 29. A very cold morning. Thermometer, or mercury, 18° below zero.

Varro says that *gluma* seems to be a *glubendo* because the grain is shelled from its follicle (*deglubitur*). *Arista*, the beard of grain, is so called because it dries first (*quod arescit prima*). The grain, *granum*, is a *gerendo*, for this is the object of planting, that this may be borne. "But the *spica* (or ear), which the rustics call *speca*, as they have received it from their forefathers, seems to be named from *spes* (hope), since they plant because they *hope* that *this* will be hereafter (*eam enim quod sperant fore*)."

The village is the place to which the roads tend, a sort of expansion of the highway, as a lake of a river, the thoroughfare and ordinary of travellers, a trivial or quadrivial place. It is the body of which roads are the arms and legs. It is from the Latin *villa*, which, together with *via* (a way), or more anciently *vea* and

vella, Varro derives from *veho* (to carry), because the villa is the place to and from which things are carried. The steward or overseer of the villa was a *vilicus*, and those who got their living by teaming (?) (*vecturis*) were said *vellaturam facere*. And whence the Latin *vilis* and our word *villain* (?). The inhabitants are way-worn by the travel that goes by and over them without travelling themselves.

Jan. 30. Another cold morning. Mercury down to 13° below zero.

Frank showed me last night a white hare he had killed. It was frozen stiff, weighed four pounds, and was nearly three feet long. Its hind feet made soft brushes, which painters use in graining doors, etc. The plumage of partridges is most perfect nowadays. The white hare is a dirty white in winter, grayish (?) or brownish in summer; has peculiar puss-like expression in profile. This was frozen in the attitude of running, careering with elastic bound over the snow and amid the bushes. Now, dead, it is the symbol of that speed it was capable of. Frozen as it was, it nearly spanned one breadth of the carpet, or three feet.¹ This morning, though not so cold by a degree or two as yesterday morning, the cold has got more into the house, and the frost visits nooks never known to be visited before. The sheets are frozen about the sleeper's face; the teamster's beard is white with ice. Last night I felt it sting cold as I came up the street at 9 o'clock; it bit my ears and face, but the stars shone all the

² *Vide* [p. 86].

brighter. The windows are all closed up with frost, as if they were ground glass.

The greater part of last week there was no melting in the roads nor on roofs. No more yesterday and to-day. The snow is dry and squeaks under the feet, and the teams creak as if they needed greasing, — sounds associated with extremely cold weather.

P. M. — Up river on ice and snow to Fair Haven Pond.

There is a few inches of snow, perfectly level, which now for nearly a week has covered the ice. Going toward the sun, you are snow-blinded. At each clump of willows on the meadow, it looks as if there were a hillock, out of which they grow. This appearance is produced by the willow twigs holding up the ice to [the] height at which it was frozen after the last thaw, about two feet above the present level. It forms a regularly rounded hillock. We look at every track in the snow. Every little while there is the track of a fox — maybe the same one — across the river, turning aside sometimes to a muskrat's cabin or a point of ice, where he has left some traces, and frequently the larger track of a hound, which has followed his trail. It is much easier and pleasanter to walk thus on the river, the snow being shallow and level, and there is no such loud squeaking or cronching of the snow as in the road, and this road is so wide that you do not feel confined in it, and you never meet travellers with whom you have no sympathy.

The winter, cold and bound out as it is, is thrown to us like a bone to a famishing dog, and we are expected

to get the marrow out of it. While the milkmen in the outskirts are milking so many scores of cows before sunrise these winter mornings, it is our task to milk the winter itself. It is true it is like a cow that is dry, and our fingers are numb, and there is none to wake us up. Some desert the field and go into winter quarters in the city. They attend the oratorios, while the only music that we countrymen hear is the squeaking of the snow under our boots. But the winter was not given to us for no purpose. We must thaw its cold with our genialness. We are tasked to find out and appropriate all the nutriment it yields. If it is a cold and hard season, its fruit, no doubt, is the more concentrated and nutty. It took the cold and bleakness of November to ripen the walnut, but the human brain is the kernel which the winter itself matures. Not till then does its shell come off. The seasons were not made in vain. Because the fruits of the earth are already ripe, we are not to suppose that there is no fruit left for winter to ripen. It is for man the seasons and all their fruits exist. The winter was made to concentrate and harden and mature the kernel of his brain, to give tone and firmness and consistency to his thought. Then is the great harvest of the year, the harvest of thought. All previous harvests are stubble to this, mere fodder and green crop. Now we burn with a purer flame like the stars; our oil is winter-strained. We are islanded in Atlantic and Pacific and Indian Oceans of thought, Bermudas, or Friendly or Spice Islands.

Shall we take refuge in cities in November? Shall the nut fall green from the tree? Let not the year be

disappointed of its crop. I knew a crazy man who walked into an empty pulpit one Sunday and, taking up a hymn-book, remarked: "We have had a good fall for getting in corn and potatoes. Let us sing Winter." So I say, "Let us sing winter." What else can we sing, and our voices be in harmony with the season?

As we walked up the river, a little flock of chickadees (apparently) flew to us from a wood-side fifteen rods off, and uttered their lively *day day day*, and followed us along a considerable distance, flitting by our side on the button-bushes and willows. It is the most, if not the only, sociable bird we have.

Now is the time to fill ice-houses, for fear they may not have another chance for solid ice. Brown filled his last week.

I will be a countryman. I will not go to the city, even in winter, any more than the sallows and sweet-gale by the river do. I see their yellow osiers and freckled, handsomely imbricated buds,¹ still rising above the ice and snow there, to cheer me.

The white rabbit is a large fellow, well furred. What does he get to eat, being a vegetable liver? He must be hardy and cunning in his way. His race have learned by long practice to find their food where a newcomer would inevitably starve.

How retired an otter manages to live! He grows to be four feet long without any mortal getting a glimpse of him, — as long as a boy.

Sometimes one of those great cakes of green ice from Walden or Sam Barrett's Pond slips from the ice-man's

¹ Or catkins.

sled in the street and lies there like a great emerald, an object of interest to all travellers.¹

The hips of the late rose are still abundant and perfect, amid the button-bushes.

Jan. 31. P. M. — To Great Meadows and Beck Stow's.

The wind is more southerly, and now the warmth of the sun prevails, and is felt on the back. The snow softens and melts. It is a beautiful clear and mild winter day. Our washwoman says she is proud of it. Any clear day, methinks, the sun is ready to do his part, and let the wind be right, and it will be warm and pleasant-like, at least now that the sun runs so high a course. But I do not melt; there is no thaw in me; I am bound out still.

I see the tree sparrows, one or two at a time, now and then, all winter, uttering a faint note, with their bright-chestnut crown and spot on breast and barred wings. They represent the sparrows in the winter.

Went to the Great Meadows by the Oak Island. The maples along the edge of the meadow, which all winter have been perfectly leafless, have an agreeable mixed, slightly pepper-and-salt look, spotted or barred with white lichens. It is an agreeable maze to the eye, so thick their bare and clean gray limbs.

Many tracks of partridges there along the meadow-side in the maples, and their droppings where they appear to have spent the night about the roots and between the stems of trees. I think they eat the buds of

¹ [Walden, p. 327; Riv. 457.]

the azalea. And now, with a mew, preluding a whir, they go off before me. Coming up, I follow her tracks to where she eased herself for lightness, and immediately after are five or six parallel cuts in the snow, ~~the~~

 where her wing struck when she lifted herself from the ground, but no trace more.

I pass the woodchoppers, busily felling trees or cutting up those which they have felled. One is measuring his lengths with his axe-helve and does not see me.

The pitch pines are yellowish, the white incline to bluish. In the winter, when there are no flowers and leaves are rare, even large buds are interesting and somewhat exciting. I go a-budding like a partridge. I am always attracted at this season by the buds of the swamp-pink, the poplars, and the sweet-gale.

A hundred years ago, as I learned from Ephraim Jones's ledger, they sold bark in our street. He gives credit for a load. Methinks my genius is coeval with that time. That is no great wildness or *selvaggia* that cannot furnish a load of bark, when the forest has lost its shagginess. This is an attempt to import this wildness into the cities in a thousand shapes. Bark is carried thither by ship and by cartloads. Bark contains the principle of tannin, by which not only the fibre of skins but of men's thoughts is hardened and consolidated. It was then that a voice was given to the dog, and a manly tone to the human voice. Ah! already I shudder for these comparatively degenerate days of the village, when you cannot collect a load of bark of good thickness.

Varro thinks that when man reached the pastoral or second stage and domesticated animals (*pecus*), "primum non sine causa putant oves assumptas, et propter utilitatem, et propter placiditatem" (they think not without reason that sheep were first taken, both on account of their usefulness and on account of their gentleness); for, as he says, they furnish milk, cheese, their fleece, and skin. It looks to me as if the sheep had been supplied with a superfluity of clothing that it might share it with man, and, as Varro suggests, did not this fleece, on account of its value, come to be called golden? was not this the origin of the fable?

We too have our thaws. They come to our January moods, when our ice cracks, and our sluices break loose. Thought that was frozen up under stern experience gushes forth in feeling and expression. There is a freshet which carries away dams of accumulated ice. Our thoughts hide unexpressed, like the buds under their downy or resinous scales; they would hardly keep a partridge from starving. If you would know what are my winter thoughts look for them in the partridge's crop. They are like the laurel buds, — some leaf, some blossom buds, — which, though food for such indigent creatures, will not expand into leaves and flowers until summer comes.

"Et primitus oritur herba imbribus primoribus evocata," says Varro.¹

¹ [Walden, p. 343; Riv. 479.]