

III

FEBRUARY, 1854

(ÆT. 36)

Feb. 2. Up river on ice to Clematis Brook.

Another warm, melting day, like yesterday. You can see some softening and relenting in the sky. Apparently the vapor in the air makes a grosser atmosphere, more like that of a summer eve. We go up the Corner road and take the ice at Potter's Meadow. The Cliff Hill is nearly bare on the west side, and you hear the rush of melted snow down its side in one place. Here and there are regular round holes in the ice over the meadow, two or three feet in diameter, where the water appears to be warmer, — perchance there is a spring there, — and therein, in shallow water, is seen the cress and one or two other plants, still quite fresh. The shade of pines on the snow is in some lights quite blue.

We stopped awhile under Bittern Cliff, the south side, where it is very warm. There are a few greenish radical leaves to be seen, — primrose and johnswort, strawberry, etc., and spleenwort still green in the clefts. These sunny old gray rocks, completely covered with white and gray lichens and overrun with ivy, are a very cosy place. You hardly detect the melted snow swiftly trickling down them until you feel the drops on your cheek. The winter gnat is seen in the warm air before

the rock. In the clefts of these rocks are the latebræ of many insects, spiders, etc. Were they not sowbugs I found under the *Marchantia polymorpha* (?)? The ice is about eighteen inches thick on Fair Haven. Saw some pickerel just caught there, with a fine lustre to them. Went to the pond in the woods which has an old ditch dug from it near Clematis Brook. The red twigs of the cornels and the yellow ones of the sallows surrounding it are interesting at this season. We prize the least color now. As it is a melting day, the snow is everywhere peppered with snow-fleas, even twenty rods from the woods, on the pond and meadows.

The scream of the jay is a true winter sound. It is wholly without sentiment, and in harmony with winter. I stole up within five or six feet of a pitch pine behind which a downy woodpecker was pecking. From time to time he hopped round to the side and observed me without fear. They are very confident birds, not easily scared, but incline to keep the other side of the bough to you, perhaps.

Already we begin to anticipate spring, and this is an important difference between this time and a month ago. We begin to say that the day is springlike.

Is not January the hardest month to get through? When you have weathered that, you get into the gulf-stream of winter, nearer the shores of spring.

Feb. 3. A driving snow-storm again.

The attractions of the Hollowell Farm were: its complete retirement, being at least two miles from the village, half a mile from any neighbor, and separated

from the highway by a broad field; its bounding on the river; the pleasing ruin of the house and barn; the hollow and lichen-covered apple trees gnawed by rabbits; above all the recollection I had of it from my earliest voyages up the river, when the house was concealed behind a dense grove of red maples, which then stood between it and the river, through which I once heard the house-dog bark; and in general the slight improvements that had been made upon it. These were the motives that swayed, though I did not mention them to the proprietor. To enjoy these things I was ready to carry it on and do all those things which I now see had no other motive or excuse but that I might pay for it and be unmolested in my possession of it; though I knew all the while that it would yield the most abundant crop of the kind I wanted if I could only afford to let it alone. Though it afforded no western prospect, the dilapidated fences were picturesque. I was in some haste to buy, before the proprietor finished getting out some rocks, cutting down some hollow apple trees, and grubbing up some young birches which had sprung up in the pasture, all which in my eyes very much enhanced its value.¹

Varro speaks of two kinds of pigeons, one of which was wont to alight "on the (*columinibus villae*) columns of a villa (*a quo appellatae columbae*), from which they were called *columbae*, which on account of their natural timidity (*summa loca in tectis captant*) delight in the highest places on the roofs (?) (or under cover?)."

¹ [Walden, pp. 92, 93; Riv. 131, 132.]

Feb. 4. F. Brown showed me this afternoon his game killed day before yesterday, — a gray hare, a gray squirrel, and a red squirrel. The red squirrel was peeping out of his nest in a tree. The gray was a fine large fellow in good condition; weighed one pound and a quarter, more than half as heavy as the hare, and his tail still perfectly and beautifully curved over his back. It recovered its place when you stroked it, as if it were full of electricity. All were frozen, the hare, as usual, in the attitude of running. The gray squirrel's ears were white above, edged with tawny brown. He thought that my marsh peep of the fall might [be] the ash-colored sandpiper.

John Moore and Company got about fifty weight of fish at Flint's Pond the same day. Two pickerel weighed nine pounds.

I went over to the Hemlocks on the Assabet this morning. Saw the tracks, I think of a mink, in the shallow snow along the edge of the river, looking for a hole in the ice. A clear, cold morning. The smokes from the village chimneys are quickly purified and dissipated, like vapor, in the air. They do not stream high.

Varro says *Africanae bestiae* for savage or ferocious beasts. Is this a difference of climate merely? Are not some quarters of the globe thus better fitted for the habitation of man for other reasons?

We have not much that is poetic in the accompaniments of the farmer's life. Varro speaks of the swine-herd accustoming the swine or boars to come at the sound of a horn when he fed them with acorns. I remember that my grandmother used to call her cow

home at evening from a near pasture to be milked by thumping on the mortar which held her salt. The tinkling cow-bell cannot be spared. Ever what most attracts us in the farmer's life is not its profitableness. We love to go after the cow, not for the sake of her milk or her beef, or the money they yield, but perchance to hear the tinkling of the cow-bell; and we would fain keep a herd of pigs, not because of the profit there is in bacon, but because we have dreamed of hearing the swineherd's horn. We would keep hens, not for eggs, but to hear the cocks crow and the hens cackle.

As for the locality of beehives, Varro says that they must be placed near the villa, "potissimum ubi non resonent imagines, hic enim sonus harum fugae causa existimatur esse" (especially where there are no echoes, for this sound is thought to be the cause of their flight).

Feb. 5. Have two more old account-books of Ephraim Jones, running from 1741 to 1750 and further, — what are called ledgers, I think. Some of the items of the waste-book are here collected, each man's purchases and credit brought together.

I think he must have kept in the store which Goodnow & How first kept in. Some remember when an Ephraim Jones, probably his grandson, kept there. There appears to have been an Ephraim Jones keeping the jail then (probably a son of the first), in the Revolution. There is said to have been a public house with the sign of a black horse where Mr. Brooks's house stands, and hence the society that worshipped there were called the Black Horse Church.

He sold a few religious books as well as almanacs and primers. In 1745, "to Inchwoods Glimpse of Glory and Mr. (or Wm.) Row's Meditation well Bound," so much. In another place, "to Glimpse of Glory and sundry." Sometimes "a sermon book."

Whitefield was here first in 1741, and there were exciting revivals under Mr. Bliss at this time, says the History. Yet it is a dreary and ghastly life suggested, when you come upon a man's bill for a lock to the Burying Gate, and that is so nearly all that has come down. I picture to myself a rude, straggling village with a wide-open burying-ground gate.

Hezekiah Stratton has credit in 1743, "Feb. 7 by $\frac{1}{2}$ a Catt skin 0-1-4 $\frac{1}{2}$," — of course a wildcat.

Gingerbread is bought several times, flour once or twice, and credit given for butter once or twice. Several times one nutmeg is bought. Credit given for weaving; also for a load of bark and tar and turpentine from Groton. The lime-kiln and iron mine are frequently named. Credit given for so much "mine," meaning apparently iron ore.

Stephen Parks has credit in 1746, "Aug 2. Cr by one wampum belt 0-15-0." To another, in 1744, "Cr by Dressing 50 squirrel skins 0-6-3." Credit is also given for fox skins and a few deer skins. But above all Jones gives credit for timber brought to the store, or, more commonly, carted to Menotomy, Mistick, Medford, or Charlestown. Some customers live in Nisstis-sit (?). Credit is given by "digging mine." (Probably iron, after called "mine.")

For example of the quantity of rum and the like bought, *vide* pages 128-193 of No. 2. Long columns run down the page, of nothing but flip, flip, mug flip, mug flip, today, toddy, punch, punch, bowl of today, brandy punch, etc., etc.; sometimes charges for the breaking of the glass, also for sugar and limes and flip for himself and company. Jones appears to have kept a public house, for he frequently charges for entertainment.

The animal merely makes him a bed, which he warms with his body in a sheltered place. He does not make a house. But man, having discovered fire, warms a spacious apartment up to the same temperature with his body, and without robbing it, so that he can divest himself of cumbersome clothing, — not keeping his bed, — maintain a kind of summer in the midst of winter, and, by means of windows, even admit the light. It was his invention to box up some air and warm it, make that his bed, and in this live and move and have his being still, and breathe as in a congenial climate or summer, without taking to his bed. Thus he goes a step or two beyond instinct and secures a little time for the fine arts.

Though I began to grow torpid when exposed a long time to the pinching winter air, — my hands and feet grew numb, and my ears and face stiffened, — when I had reached the genial atmosphere of my house, I soon recovered my faculties. I did not squat in a form, or lie in a burrow or ensconced in a nest of leaves or grass, like the squirrels, nor become quite dormant in any hole, like the woodchuck. I ameliorated the

winter climate with fire, and lengthened out the day with a lamp.¹

Even Varro, to prove that the ancients did not shave (or that there were no barbers), is obliged to refer his readers to their bearded statues. "Olim tonsores non fuisse adsignificant antiquorum statuae, quod pleraeque habent capillum, et barbam magnam." Yet it was true of the old statues only "for the most part."

P. M. — To walk.

Begins to snow.

At Hubbard's blueberry swamp woods, near the bathing-place, came across a fox's track, which I think was made last night or since. The tracks were about two inches long, or a little less, by one and a half wide, shaped thus where the snow was only half an inch deep on ice:



generally from nine to fifteen inches apart longitudinally and three to four inches apart transversely. It came from the west. I followed it back. At first it was difficult to trace, to *investigate*, it, amid some rabbit tracks, of which I did not know whether they had been made before or since. It soon led out of the woods on to the ice of the meadow to a slight prominence, then turned and followed along the side of the wood, then crossed the meadow directly to the riverside just below the mouth of Nut Meadow Brook, visited a muskrat-house there and left its mark, — watered, — for, dog-like, it turned aside to every muskrat-house or

¹ [Walden, p. 280; Riv. 393.]

the like prominence near its route and left its mark there. You could easily scent it there. It turned into the meadow eastward once or twice as it went up the riverside, and, after visiting another muskrat's house, where it left its manure, large and light-colored, as if composed of fir, crossed the river and John Hosmer's meadow and potato-field and the road south of Nut Meadow Bridge. (If it had been a dog it would have turned when it reached the road.) It was not lost then, but led straight across, through J. Hosmer's field and meadow again, and over ditch and up side-hill in the woods; and there, on the side of the hill, I could see where its tail had grazed the snow. It was then mixed with rabbit-tracks, but was easily unravelled. Passed out of the wood into J. P. Brown's land, over some mice or mole tracks, then over the middle of Brown's meadows westward, to Tarbell's meadows, till at last, by the brook, I found that it had had a companion up to that point, which turned off. Then I saw the large tracks of hounds on the trail. Still it held on, from straight across the road again, some way on an old dog's trail; had trodden and nosed very much about some hardhacks in the field beyond, where were a few mice-tracks, as if for food, the hound's tracks numerous with it; and so I traced it into the Ministerial Swamp, where, the snow-storm increasing, I left it, having traced it back more than a mile westward in a pretty direct course. What expeditions they make in a night in search of food! No doubt the same one crosses the river many times.

Shall we not have sympathy with the muskrat which

gnaws its third leg off, not as pitying its sufferings, but, through our kindred mortality, appreciating its majestic pains and its heroic virtue? Are we not made its brothers by fate? For whom are psalms sung and mass said, if not for such worthies as these? When I hear the church organ peal, or feel the trembling tones of the bass viol, I see in imagination the musquash gnawing off his leg, I offer up a note that his affliction may be sanctified to each and all of us. Prayer and praise fitly follow such exploits. I look round for majestic pains and pleasures. They have our sympathy, both in their joys and in their pains. When I think of the tragedies which are constantly permitted in the course of all animal life, they make the plaintive strain of the universal harp which elevates us above the trivial. When I think of the muskrat gnawing off his leg, it is as the plectrum on the harp or the bow upon the viol, drawing forth a majestic strain or psalm, which immeasurably dignifies our common fate. Even as the worthies of mankind are said to recommend human life by having lived it, so I could not spare the example of the muskrat.¹

That sand foliage! It convinces me that Nature is still in her youth, — that florid fact about which mythology merely mutters, — that the very soil can fabulate as well as you or I. It stretches forth its baby fingers on every side. Fresh curls spring forth from its bald brow. There is nothing inorganic. This earth is not, then, a mere fragment of dead history, strata upon strata, like the leaves of a book, an object for a museum and an anti-quarian, but living poetry, like the leaves of a tree, —

¹ [See *Journal*, vol. i, pp. 481, 482.]

not a fossil earth, but a living specimen. You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth flows out into. The very earth, as well as the institutions upon it, is plastic like potter's clay in the hands of the artist. These florid heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace, showing that nature is in full blast within;¹ but there is no admittance except on business. Ye dead and alive preachers, ye have no business here. Ye will enter only to your tomb.

I fear only lest my expressions may not be extravagant enough, — may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of our ordinary insight and faith, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. I desire to speak somewhere without bounds, in order that I may attain to an expression in some degree adequate to truth of which I have been convinced. From a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments. Wandering toward the more distant boundaries of a wider pasture. Nothing is so truly bounded and obedient to law as music, yet nothing so surely breaks all petty and narrow bonds. Whenever I hear any music I fear that I may have spoken tamely and within bounds. And I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression.² As for books and the adequateness of their statements to the truth, they are as the tower of Babel to the sky.

¹ [Walden, pp. 340, 341; Riv. 476.]

² [Walden, p. 357; Riv. 499, 500.]

In Jones's account there is a paper headed —

	“funerel Charges.
4 P Shug . . .	
¼ of alsprice	
tobackoo	
11 yd Cyprus	
4 goze; hankerchiefs	
4 Par of women black gloves	The prices mostly
1½ yd Lutestring	cut off.
silk feret	
12 pair of mens white gloves	
6 yards of allomode	
silk”	

There was plainly much cooping done in those days.

How dangerous to the foxes and all wild animals is a light snow, accompanied and succeeded by calm weather, betraying their course to the hunters! Here was one track that crossed the road, — did not turn in it like a dog, — track of a wilder life. How distinct from the others! Such as was made before roads were, as if the road were [a] more recent track. This traveller does not turn when he strikes the trail of man. The fox that invaded the farmer's poultry-yard last night came from a great distance.

I followed on this trail so long that my thoughts grew foxy; though I was on the back track, I drew nearer and nearer to the fox each step. Strange as it may seem, I thought several times that I scented him, though I did not stoop.

Feb. 6. The weather has been very changeable for some weeks. First it is warm and thawing, slosly weather; then the thermometer goes down to 19° below

zero, and our shoes squeak on the snow; then, perhaps, it moderates and snows; then is mild and pleasant again and good sleighing; then we wake to find a drifted snow upon the last and a bleak, wintry prospect.

P. M. — To Cliffs and Walden.

It is a very light snow and, though seven or eight inches deep, but a slight obstacle to walking. Its surface in the woods is everywhere creased and scored by the flitting leaves and the snow that has fallen from the trees. For a drifting wind has followed fast upon the snow, shaking it off the trees, and there is a new fall of withered leaves. Probably these leaves decay the faster for being deposited thus in successive layers, alternating with the snow.

From the Cliff Hill the landscape looks very bleak and Nova-Zembla-like. A cold, drifting wind sweeps from the north; the surface of the snow is imbricated on a great scale, being very regularly blown into waves, alike over the high road and the railroad, concealing the tracks and the meadow and the river and the pond. It is all one great wintry-looking snow-field, whose surface consists of great wave-like drifts, maybe twenty feet wide with an abrupt edge on the south. It is like a scaly armor drawn alike over the meadow and the pond. We need not trouble ourselves to speculate how the human race on this globe will be destroyed at last, whether by fire or otherwise. It would be so easy to cut their threads any time with a little sharper blast from the north. We go on dating from the Cold Fridays and the Great Snows and the September gales, but a little colder Friday, or greater snow, or more

violent gale would put a period to man's existence on the globe.¹

I see great shadows on the northeast sides of the mountains, forty miles off, the sun being in the southwest. The snow is so light that few animals have been out. I see the track of a rabbit about the Cliff; there are hollows in the snow on the tops of the rocks, shaped like a milk-pan and as large, where he has squatted or whirled round. I also see the tracks of a few mice or moles. The squirrel, too, has been out. Hear the old owl at 4.30 P. M. Crossing Walden where the snow has fallen quite level, I perceive that my shadow [is of] a delicate or transparent blue rather than black.

Price on the Picturesque says, "The midsummer shoot is the first thing that gives relief to the eye, after the sameness of color which immediately precedes it; in many trees, and in none more than the oak, the effect is singularly beautiful; the old foliage forms a dark background, on which the new appears, relieved and detached in all its freshness and brilliancy: it is spring engrafted upon summer." Is not this the effect which I noticed by Fair Haven side last summer or autumn, toward night, — that watered and variously shaded foliage?

As for autumn, he speaks of "the warm haze, which, on a fine day in that season, spreads the last varnish over every part of the picture."

Gilpin talked as if there was some food for the soul in mere physical light and shadow, as if, without the suggestion of a moral, they could give a man pleasure or pain!

¹ [Walden, p. 280; Riv. 393, 394.]

Feb. 7. Under the waves of the snowy ocean yesterday, roads and rivers, pastures and cultivated fields, all traces of man's occupancy of the globe were for the most part concealed. Water and sand also assume this same form under the influence of wind. And I have seen, on the surface of the Walden ice, great sweeping, waving lines, somewhat like these. It is the track of the wind, the impress which it makes on flowing materials.

P. M. — Down river with C.

The river has not been so concealed by snow before. The snow does not merely lie level on it and on the land, so many inches deep, but great drifts, perchance beginning on the land, stretch quite across it, so that you cannot always tell where it is, for there is no greater levelness than elsewhere to betray it. In some places, where the ice is exposed, little bunches of hoar frost have formed, with perfect ribbed leaves one inch in diameter. This morning was one of the coldest in the winter. Does the whistle of the locomotive sound differently, tear the air any more, this weather? I see the prinus berries turned now a dark, coppery brown, looking blackish at a little distance. We crossed the Great Meadows lengthwise, a broad level plain, roughened only by snowy waves, about two miles long and nearly half as wide. Looking back over it made me think of what I have read of Arctic explorers travelling over snow-covered ice. Saw a few crows. Some green-briar berries quite fresh.

Made a fire on the snow-covered ice half a mile below Ball's Hill. Cut first a large bundle of green

oak twigs with leaves on them, laid them on sticks, then sprinkled on fine dead maple and alder and poplar twigs, and then dry cat-sticks of the same material. We broke up some larger pine trees by striking them on the ice, at the same time letting go to save our hands. Made a large warm fire, whose flame went up straight, there being no wind, and without smoke. Stayed half an hour, and when we took our departure, felt as if we had been in a house all the while, for we had been warm and had looked steadily at the fire instead of looking off. The fire made a large circular cavity in the snow and ice, three feet in diameter and four or five inches deep, with water at the bottom. We had often sailed over this very spot. Sticks in a circle on their ends and slanted over a common centre make a perfect fire. Such is the earliest hearth, with a hole in the roof above it. Our chimney fires are only semi-circles or half-fires, or what is worse, oblong squares, or, in the case of stoves, mere boxes full of fire, without symmetry or form.

Observed in some large cakes of ice left on the river, I thought, the faintest possible tinge of green, also a white, leafy internal frostwork along the planes of the irregular flaring cleavages, — or call them deep conchoidal sometimes.

These afternoons the shadows of the woods have already a twilight length by 3 or 4 P. M. We made our fire in the shadow of a wood rather than in the sun, that the flame might show better, and the sun went down before we left it. Not till we had left our fire many rods behind did we observe the narrow column

of blue smoke rising straight from it against the wood. It had appeared to us pure flame, producing merely that boiling of the air above it through which you see objects confusedly.

Feb. 8. The poets, philosophers, historians, and all writers have always been disposed to praise the life of the farmer and prefer it to that of the citizen. They have been inclined to regard trade and commerce as not merely uncertain modes of getting a living, but as running into the usurious and disreputable. And even at the present day the trader, as carrier or go-between, the speculator, the forestaller, and corporations do not escape a fling. Trade has always been regarded to some extent as a questionable mode of getting a livelihood. Cato says: "Et virum bonum cum laudabant, ita laudabant, bonum agricolam, bonumque colonum. Amplissime laudari existimabatur, qui ita laudabatur. Mercatorem autem strenuum studiosumque rei quaerendae existimo; verum . . . periculosum et calamitosum. At ex agricolis et viri fortissimi, et milites strenuissimi gignuntur, maximeque pius quaestus, stabilissimusque consequitur, minimeque invidiosus: minimeque male cogitantes sunt, qui in eo studio occupati sunt." That is: "When they [*i. e.* our ancestors]¹ praised a good man, they called him a good farmer and a good husbandman (settler?). He was thought to be most amply praised who was so praised. However, I think that the merchant is energetic and studious to make money, but his business is danger-

¹ [Supplied by Thoreau.]

ous and liable to misfortunes. But from the cultivators of the soil, both the men of most fortitude and the hardest soldiers are descended, and theirs is a gain particularly just (honest, pious) and stable, and least of all the subject of envy: and they are the least of all thinking evil who are engaged in this pursuit."

And Varro says: "Viri magni nostri majores non sine causa praeponerent rusticos Romanos urbanis. Ut ruri enim, qui in villa vivunt ignaviores, quam qui in agro versantur in aliquo opere faciundo; sic qui in oppido sederent, quam qui rura colerent, desidiosiores putabant."¹ That is: "Great men, our ancestors, preferred Romans who had lived in the country to those who lived in the city. For, as in the country, they who live in the villa are idler than they who are employed in the field doing some work, so they thought that those who sat in a town were more slothful than they who cultivated the fields." And he says that they did not need the gymnasia of the Greeks, but now one does not think that he has a villa unless he has many places with Greek names in it, and, having stolen into the city, instead of using their hands in swinging (?) a scythe or holding a plow they move them in the theatre and circus and have forgotten husbandry.²

And in another place V. boasts of the antiquity of rustic life, saying that "there was a time when men cultivated the fields, but had no city (fuit tempus, cum rura colerent homines, neque urbem haberent)." And again: "Immani numero annorum urbanos agricolae

¹ *Vide* [p. 111].

² [A free rendering of Varro's Latin.]

praestant. Nec mirum, quod divina natura dedit agros, ars humana aedificavit urbes. (That is: Cultivators of the soil precede citizens by a vast number of years. Nor is it to be wondered at, for divine Nature gave fields, human art built cities.) . . . Nec sine causa Terram eandem appellabant matrem, et Cererem, et qui eam colerent, piam et utilem agere vitam credebant, atque eos solos reliquos esse ex stirpe Saturni regis. (That is: Nor without reason did they [our ancestors] call the same Earth mother and Ceres, and thought that they who cultivated it led a pious and useful life, and that they alone were left of the race of King Saturn.)”

But now, by means of railroads and steamboats and telegraphs, the country is denaturalized, the old pious, stable, and unenvied gains of the farmer are liable to all the suspicion which only the merchant's formerly excited. All milk-farms and fruit-farms, etc., are so many markets with their customs in the country.

Consider the deformities to which the farmer is liable,—the rustic, the clown (*a colono?*), the villain, etc., etc.

Josselyn, speaking of crickets, says, “The Italian who hath them cryed up and down the streets (*Grille che cantelo*) and buyeth them to put into his Gardens, if he were in New England would gladly be rid of them, they make such a din in an Evening.”¹ I am more charmed by the Italian's taste than by Josselyn's impatience.

¹ [John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New England*, p. 118.]

Ann, the Irishwoman who has lived with Deacon Brown so long, says that when he had taken to his bed with his last illness, she was startled by his calling, “Ann, Ann,” “the bitterest Ann that you ever heard,” and that was the beginning of his last illness.

On the 2d I saw the sand foliage in the Cut; pretty good. This is the frost coming out of the ground; this is spring. It precedes the green and flowery spring, as mythology does ordinary literature and poetry.¹

P. M. — Rain, rain, rain, carrying off the snow and leaving a foundation of ice. The wind southeasterly.

Feb. 9. High wind in the night and now, the rain being over. Does it not usually follow rain-storms at this season, to dry up the water? It has cleared off very pleasant and is still quite warm.

9 A. M. — To Pine Hill.

Some of these thaws succeed suddenly to intensely cold weather, and the sky that was tense like a bow that is bent is now relaxed. There is a peculiar softness and luminousness in the air this morning, perhaps the light being diffused by vapor. It is such a warm, moist, or softened, sunlit air as we are wont to hear the first bluebird's warble in. And the brightness of the morning is increased tenfold by the sun reflected from broad sheets of rain and melted snow-water, and also, in a peculiar manner, from the snow on the sides of the Deep Cut. The crowing of cocks and the voices of the school-children sound like spring. I hear the sound of the horses' feet on the bared ice

¹ [*Walden*, p. 340; Riv. 476.]

as on pavements; and the sun is reflected from a hundred rippling sluices of snow-water finding its level in the fields. Are not both sound and light condensed or contracted by cold?

The jays are more lively than usual. That lichen with a white elastic thread for core is like a tuft of hair on the trees, sometimes springing from the centre of another, larger, flat lichen.



There are snow-fleas, quite active, on the half-melted snow on the middle of Walden.

I do not hear Therion's axe far of late. The moment I came on his chopping-ground, the chickadees flew to me, as if glad to see me. They are a peculiarly honest and sociable little bird. I saw them go to his pail repeatedly and peck his bread and butter. They came and went a dozen times while I stood there. He said that a great flock of them came round him the other day while he was eating his dinner and lit on his clothes "just like flies." One roosted on his finger, and another pecked a piece of bread in his hand. They are considerable company for the woodchopper. I heard one wiry *phe-be*. They love to hop about wood freshly split. Apparently they do not leave his clearing all day. They were not scared when he threw down wood within a few feet of them. When I looked to see how much of his bread and butter they had eaten, I did not perceive that any was gone. He could afford to dine a hundred.

I see some chestnut sprouts with leaves on them still. The hollows about Walden, still bottomed with snow, are filled with greenish water like its own. I

do not find any willow catkins started, though many have lost their scales. I have brought home some alder and sweet-gale and put them in water. The black birch has a slender sharp bud, much like the shad-bush. In Stow's meadow by railroad causeway, saw many dusky flesh-colored, transparent worms, about five eighths of an inch long, in and upon the snow, crawling about. These, too, must be food for birds.

I have seen two red squirrels and heard a third since the snow covered the ground. I have seen one gray one, but traces of many.

After "putabant" in Varro, four pages back, comes "Itaque annum ita dividerunt, ut nonis modo diebus urbanas res usurparent, reliquis VII ut rura colerent. (Therefore they so divided the year as to attend to town affairs on the ninth day only, that they might cultivate the fields on the other days)." Hence *nundinae* means a fair, and *oppidum nundinarium* (a ninth-day town) is a market town, and *forum nundinarium* is the market-place.

Columella, referring to Varro, gives the same reason for the setting aside of the ninth day only, and adds: "Illis enim temporibus proceres civitatis in agris morabantur; et cum consilium publicum desiderabatur, a villis arcessebantur in senatum. Ex quo qui eos evocabant, Viatores nominati sunt. (For in those days the chief men of the state stayed on their farms; and when a public council was wanted they were sent for from their villas to the senate. Whence they who called them out were named Road-men.)" These were the times which all Romans loved to praise. But now, so far as the

rulers of the State are concerned, the city for the most part, instead of being a ninth-day town, gets six days, while the country gets only one day and the nights at most. We go to market every day. The city is not a ninth-day place but an every-day place, and the country is only a night or Sunday place. In a Yankee's estimation, it is perhaps the greatest satire on a New England country village to say that it has an air of quietness which reminds him of the Sabbath. He loves the bustle of a market, where things are bought and sold, and sometimes men among the rest. The boys swop jack-knives on Sunday, and their fathers, perchance, barter their own souls.

Howitt describes the harvest moon in August. Did I not put it in September? He speaks of "willow-holts on the banks of rivers." Bailey defines "holt, — a small wood or grove." Does not our "holt" on the river answer to this? It is in this case a poke-logan.¹

My ink was frozen last month, and is now pale.

Howitt says that in Britain the law "is opposed to tracking game in a snow." I feel some pity for the wild animals when I see how their tracks betray them in calm weather after a snow-storm, and consider what risks they run of being exterminated.

Is not January alone pure winter? December belongs to the fall; is a wintry November; February, to the spring; it is a snowy March.

The water was several inches deep in the road last evening, but it has run nearly dry by morning. The illustrious farmer Romans who lived simply on their

¹ *Vide* Wright's *Dictionary of Provincialisms*.

land, to whom Columella refers, are Q. Cincinnatus, C. Fabricius, and Curius Dentatus.

Feb. 10. P. M. — Up railroad to Assabet and return *via* Hollowell place.

The river has risen again, and, instead of ice and snow, there is water over the ice on the meadows. This is the second freshet since the snows. The ice is cracked, and in some places heaved up in the usual manner. The sturdy white oak near the Derby railroad bridge has been cut down. It measures five feet and three inches over the stump, at eighteen inches from the ground. I observe the great well-protected buds of the balm-of-Gilead spear-head-like. There is no shine to them now, and their viscidness is not very *apparent*. A great many willow catkins show a little down peeping from under the points of the scales, but I have no doubt that all this was done last fall. I noticed it then.

Feb. 11. 7.30 A. M. — Snow-fleas lie in black patches like some of those dark rough lichens on rocks, or like ink-spots three or four inches in diameter, about the grass-stems or willows, on the ice which froze last night. When I breathe on them I find them all alive and ready to skip. Also the water, when I break the ice, arouses them. I saw yesterday, in a muddy spring in Tarbell's meadow, many cockle[*sic*]-shells on the bottom, with their feet out, and marks as if they had been moving.

When I read of the catkins of the alder and the

willow, etc., scattering their yellow pollen, they impress me as a vegetation which belongs to the earliest and most innocent dawn of nature; as if they must have preceded other trees in the order of creation, as they precede them annually in their blossoming and leafing. In the winter we so value the semblance of fruit that even the dry black female catkins of the alder are an interesting sight, not to mention, on shoots rising a foot or two above these, the red or mulberry male catkins, in little parcels, dangling at a less than right angle with the stems, and the short female ones at their bases. For how many æons did the willow shed its yellow pollen annually before man was created!

Apparently I read Cato and Varro from the same motives that Virgil did, and as I read the almanac, *New England Farmer*, or *Cultivator*, or Howitt's "Seasons."

Feb. 12. Another cold morning. The patches of snow-fleas on the ice are now much reduced, but still, when I kneel and breathe on them, they begin to skip, though the last two nights and all day yesterday have been severely cold. They look like little patches of rust on the ice.

At first, in clear cold weather, we may be walking on dry snow, which we crunch with squeaking sound under our feet. Then comes a thaw, and we slump about in slosh half a foot deep. Then, in a single night, the surface of the earth is all dried and stiffened, and we stagger over the rough, frozen ground and ice on which it is torture to walk. It becomes quite a study

how a man will shoe himself for a winter. For outdoor life in winter, I use three kinds of shoes or boots: first and chiefly, for the ordinary dry snows or bare ground, cowhide boots; secondly, for shallow thaws, half-shoe depth, and spring weather, light boots and india-rubbers; third, for the worst sloshy weather, about a week in the year, india-rubber boots.

P. M. — Skate to Pantry Brook.

Put on skates at mouth of Swamp Bridge Brook. The ice appears to be nearly two inches thick. There are many rough places where the crystals are very coarse, and the old ice on the river (for I spoke of a new ice since the freshet) is uneven and covered, more or less, with the scales of a thin ice whose water is dried up. In some places, where the wind has been strong, the foam is frozen into great concentric ridges, over which with an impetus I dash. It is hobbling and tearing work.

Just beyond the bathing-place, I see the wreck of an ice-fleet, which yesterday morning must have been very handsome. It reminds me of a vast and crowded fleet of sloops with large slanting sails all standing to the north. These sails are, some of them, the largest specimens of the leaf-structure in ice that I have seen, eight or nine inches long. Perhaps this structure is more apparent now they have wasted so much. Their bases can be seen continuing quite through the level ice which has formed about them, as if the wind and waves, breaking up a thin ice, had held it in that position while it froze in.



One accustomed to glide over a boundless and variegated ice floor like this cannot be much attracted by tessellated floors and mosaic work. I skate over a thin ice all tessellated, so to speak, or in which you see the forms of the crystals as they shot. This is separated by two or three feet of water from the old ice resting on the meadow. The water, consequently, is not dark, as when seen against a muddy bottom, but a clear yellow, against which the white air-bubbles in and under the ice are very conspicuous.

Landed at Fair Haven Hill. I was not aware till I came out how pleasant a day it was. It was very cold this morning, and I have been putting [on] wood in vain to warm my chamber, and lo! I come forth, and am surprised to find it warm and pleasant. There is very little wind, here under Fair Haven especially. I begin to dream of summer even. I take off my mittens.

Here is a little hollow which, for a short time every spring, gives passage to the melting snow, and it was consequently wet there late into the spring. I remember well when a few little alder bushes, encouraged by the moisture, first sprang up in it. They now make a perfect little grove, fifteen feet high, and maybe half a dozen rods long, with a rounded outline, as if they were one mass of moss, with the wrecks of ferns in their midst and the sweet-fern about its edge. And so, perchance, a swamp is beginning to be formed. The shade and the decaying vegetation may at last produce a spongy soil, which will supply a constant rill. Has not something like this been the history of

the alder swamp and brook a little further along? True, the first is on a small scale and rather elevated, part way up the hill; and ere long trout begin to glance in the brook, where first was merely a course for melted snow which turned the dead grass-blades all one way,—which combed the grassy tresses down the hill.

This is a glorious winter afternoon. The clearness of a winter day is not impaired, while the air is still and you feel a direct heat from the sun. It is not like the relenting of a thaw with a southerly wind. There is a bright sheen from the snow, and the ice booms a little from time to time. On those parts of the hill which are bare, I see the radical leaves of the buttercup, mouse-ear, and the thistle.

Especially do gray rocks or cliffs with a southwest exposure attract us now, where there is warmth and dryness. The gray color is nowhere else so agreeable to us as in these rocks in the sun at this season, where I hear the trickling of water under great ice organ-pipes.

What a floor it is I glide thus swiftly over! It is a study for the slowest walker. See the shells of countless air-bubbles within and beneath it, some a yard or two in diameter. Beneath they are crowded together from the size of a dollar downward. They give the ice a white-spotted or freckled appearance. Specimens of every coin (*numismata*) from the first minting downward. I hear the pond faintly boom or mutter in a low voice, promising another spring to the fishes. I saw yesterday deeply scalloped oak leaves which

had sunk nearly an inch into the ice of Walden, making a perfect impression of their forms, on account of the heat they absorbed. Their route is thus downward to dust again, through water and snow and ice and every obstacle. This thin meadow ice with yellow water under it yields a remarkable hollow sound, like a drum, as I rip over it, as if it were about to give way under me, — some of that gong-like roar which I have described elsewhere, — the ice being tense. I crossed the road at Bidens Brook. Here the smooth ice was dusty (from the road) a great distance, and I thought it would dull my skates.

To make a perfect winter day like this, you must have a clear, sparkling air, with a sheen from the snow, sufficient cold, little or no wind; and the warmth must come directly from the sun. It must not be a thawing warmth. The tension of nature must not be relaxed. The earth must be resonant if bare, and you hear the lispng tinkle of chickadees from time to time and the unrelenting steel-cold scream of a jay, unmelted, that never flows into a song, a sort of wintry trumpet, screaming cold; hard, tense, frozen music, like the winter sky itself; in the blue livery of winter's band. It is like a flourish of trumpets to the winter sky. There is no hint of incubation in the jay's scream. Like the creak of a cart-wheel. There is no cushion for sounds now. They tear our ears.

I frequently see three or four old white birches standing together on the edge of a pond or meadow, and am struck by the pleasing manner in which they will commonly be grouped, — how they spread so as

to make room for each other, and make an agreeable impression on the eye. Methinks I have seen groups of three in different places arranged almost exactly alike. I saw these near Lily Bay: The third upright one is lapped over and partly twined round the middle one at base.



Returning, I overhauled a muskrat-house by Bidens Brook. For want of other material, it was composed of grass, flags, and in a great measure (half) of twigs and sticks, mostly sweet-gale, both dead and alive, and roots, from six inches to two feet in length. These were, in fact, the principal material of it, and it was a large one, two feet above the ice. I was surprised to find that these sticks, both green and dead, had, the greater part of them, been gnawed off by the rat, — and some were nearly half an inch in diameter. They were cut off, not at a right angle with a smooth cut, but by successive cuts, smooth as with a knife, across, at the same time bending the twig down, which produced a sloping and, so to speak, terraced surface. I did not know before that they resembled the beaver in this respect also. It was chiefly the sweet-gale thus cut, commonly the top left on, two feet long, but sometimes cut off six inches long, thus:  The bottom of its chamber was barely  raised above the water, and the roof was hung with icicles from rain or frost.

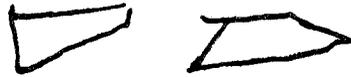
The sun being low, I see as I skate, reflected from the surface of the ice, flakes of rainbow somewhat

like cobwebs, where the great slopes of the crystallization fall at the right angle, six inches or a foot across, but at so small an angle with the horizon that they had seemed absolutely flat and level before. Think of this kind of mosaic and tessellation for your floor! A floor made up of surfaces not absolutely level, — though level to the touch of the feet and to the noonday eye, — composed of crystals variously set, but just enough inclined to reflect the colors of the rainbow when the sun gets low.

See where a muskrat yesterday brought up clams through a hole in the ice over the middle of the river, and left their great violet-tinted shells on the edge of the ice. Sometimes they break the hinge.

Cold as the morning has been, I find the water, as usual, overflowing the ice along the shore and about the willows and button-bushes. Apparently when the river freezes up thus tensely, the ice compresses it, and where the ice is held down near the shore and by the bushes, not being able to rise when the sun comes to warm the water, it bursts out and overflows in such places, even in very cold weather. At last, in warmer weather still, it is difficult to get on or off on this account.

The pond does not thunder every night, and I do not know its law exactly. I cannot tell surely when to expect its thundering, for it feels scarcely perceptible changes in the weather. Who would have suspected so large and cold and thick-skinned a thing to be so sensitive? Yet it has its law to which [it] thunders



obedience when it should, as surely as the buds expand in the spring. For the earth is all alive and covered with feelers of sensation, *papillæ*. The hardest and largest rock, the broadest ocean, is as sensitive to atmospheric changes as the globule of mercury in its tube. Though you may perceive no difference in the weather, the pond does.¹ So the alligator and the turtle, with quakings of the earth, come out of the mud.²

Feb. 13. Monday. 7 A. M. — To Walden.

A warm morning, overcast. The ice does not ring when I strike it with an axe. Tried to drive a stake in two places outside a wood, but found it frozen. Failed also in two places within the wood, but succeeded in a third.

P. M. — It snows again, spoiling the skating, which has lasted only one day. I do not remember the winter when the ice remained uncovered a week.

Feb. 14. P. M. — Down railroad.

A moist, thawing, cloudy afternoon, preparing to rain.

The telegraph resounds at every post. It is a harp with one string, — the first strain from the American lyre. In Stow's wood, by the Deep Cut, hear the *gnah gnah* of the white-breasted, black-capped nuthatch. I went up the bank and stood by the fence. A little family of titmice gathered about me, searching for their food both on the ground and on the trees, with great industry and intentness, and now and then

¹ [*Walden*, p. 333; Riv. 465.] ² [*Walden*, p. 334; Riv. 467.]

pursuing each other. There were two nuthatches at least, talking to each other. One hung with his head down on a large pitch pine, pecking the bark for a long time, — leaden blue above, with a black cap and white breast. It uttered almost constantly a faint but sharp *quivet* or creak, difficult to trace home, which appeared to be answered by a baser and louder *gnah gnah* from the other. A downy woodpecker also, with the red spot on his hind head and his cassock open behind, showing his white robe, kept up an incessant loud tapping on another pitch pine. All at once an active little brown creeper makes its appearance, a small, rather slender bird, with a long tail and sparrow-colored back, and white beneath. It commences at the bottom of a tree and glides up very rapidly, then suddenly darts to the bottom of a new tree and repeats the same movement, not resting long in one place or on one tree. These birds are all feeding and fitting along together, but the chickadees are the most numerous and the most confiding. I observe that three of the four thus associated, *viz.* the chickadee, nuthatch, and woodpecker, have black crowns, at least the first two, very conspicuous black caps. I cannot but think that this sprightly association and readiness to burst into song has to do with the prospect of spring, — more light and warmth and thawing weather. The titmice keep up an incessant faint tinkling *tehip*; now and then one utters a lively *day day day*, and once or twice one commenced a gurgling strain quite novel, startling, and springlike. Beside this I heard the distant crowing of cocks and the divine harmony

of the telegraph, — all spring-promising sounds. The chickadee has quite a variety of notes. The *phebe* one I did not hear to-day.

I perceive that some of these pools by the Walden road which on the 9th looked so green have frozen blue.¹

This greater liveliness of the birds methinks I have noticed commonly in warm, thawing days toward spring. F. Brown, who has been chasing a white rabbit this afternoon with a dog, says that they do not run off far, — often play round within the same swamp only, if it is large, and return to where they were started. Spoke of it as something unusual that one ran off so far that he could not hear the dogs, but he returned and was shot near where he started. He does not see their forms, nor marks where they have been feeding.

Feb. 16. By this time in the winter I do not look for those clear, sparkling mornings and delicate leaf frosts, which, methinks, occur earlier in the winter, as if the air of winter was somewhat tarnished and debauched, — had lost its virgin purity.

Every judgment and action of a man qualifies every other, *i. e.* corrects our estimate of every other, as, for instance, a man's idea of immortality who is a member of a church, or his praise of you coupled with his praise of those whom you do not esteem. For in this sense a man is awfully consistent, above his own consciousness. All a man's strength and all his weakness go to make up the authority of any particu-

¹ [See *Walden*, p. 327: Riv. 457.]

lar opinion which he may utter. He is strong or weak with all his strength and weakness combined. If he is your friend, you may have to consider that he loves you, but perchance he also loves gingerbread.

It must [be] the leaves of the *Chimaphila umbellata*, spotted wintergreen, which Channing left here day before yesterday.

I have not seen *F. hyemalis* since last fall, the snow buntings only during the great and severe snow-storm, no pine grosbeaks nor *F. linaria* this winter.

Snows again this morning. For the last month the weather has been remarkably changeable; hardly three days together alike.

That is an era not yet arrived, when the earth, being partially thawed, melts the slight snows which fall on it.

P. M. — To Walden and Flint's; return by Turnpike.

Saw two large hawks circling over the woods by Walden, hunting, — the first I have seen since December 15th. That Indian trail on the hillside about Walden was revealed with remarkable distinctness to me standing on the middle of the pond, by the slight snow which had lodged on it forming a clear white line unobscured by weeds and twigs. (For snow is a great revealer not only of tracks made in itself, but even in the earth before it fell.) It was quite distinct in many places where you would not have noticed it before. A light snow will often reveal a faint foot or cart track in a field which was hardly discernible before, for it reprints it, as it were, in clear white type, alto-

relievo.¹ Went to the locality of the *Chimaphila maculata* by Goose Pond.

Columella, after saying that many authors had believed that the climate (“*qualitatem caeli statumque*”) was changed by lapse of time (“*longo aevi situ*”), refers to Hipparchus as having given out that the time would be when the poles of the earth would be moved from their place (“*tempus fore, quo cardines mundi loco moverentur*”); and, as confirmatory of this, he (C.) goes on to say that the vine and olive flourish now in some places where formerly they failed.

He gives the names of about fifty authors who had treated *de rusticis rebus* before him.

Feb. 17. P. M. — To Gowing's Swamp.

On the hill at the Deep Cut on the new road, the ground is frozen about a foot deep, and they carry off lumps equal nearly to a cartload at a time. Moore's man is digging a ditch by the roadside in his swamp. I am surprised to see that the earth there — under some snow, it is true — is frozen only about four inches. It may be owing to warm springs beneath. The hill was comparatively bare of snow (and of trees there) and was more exposed. The Irishman showed me small stumps, — larch, methinks, — which he dug and cut out *from the bottom* of the ditch, — very old ones. At Gowing's Swamp I see where some one hunted white rabbits yesterday, and perhaps the day before, with a dog. The hunter has run round and round it on firm ground, while the hare and dog

¹ [Walden, p. 200; Riv. 282.]

have cut across and circled about amid the blueberry bushes. The track of the white rabbit is gigantic compared with that of the gray one. Indeed few, if any (?), of our wild animals make a larger track with their feet alone. Where I now stand, the track of all the feet has an expanse of seven to fifteen inches,—this at intervals of from two to three feet,—and the width at the two fore feet is five inches. There is a considerable but slighter impression of the paw behind each foot.

The mice-tracks are very amusing. It is surprising how numerous they are, and yet I rarely ever see one. They must be nocturnal in their habits. Any tussocky ground is scored with them. I see, too, where they have run over the ice in the swamp,—there is a mere sugaring of snow on it,—ever trying to make an entrance,—to get beneath it. You see deep and distinct channels in the snow in some places, as if a whole colony had long travelled to and fro in them,—a highway, a well-known trail,—but suddenly they will come to an end; and yet they have not dived beneath the surface, for you see where the single traveller who did it all has nimbly hopped along as if suddenly scared, making but a slight impression, squirrel-like, on the snow. The squirrel also, though rarely, will make a channel for a short distance. These mice-tracks are of various sizes, and sometimes, when they are large and they have taken long and regular hops nine or ten inches apart in a straight line, they look at a little distance like a fox-track. I suspect that the mice sometimes build their nests in bushes from the foundation, for, in the swamp-hole on the new road,

where I found two mice-nests last fall, I find one begun with a very few twigs and some moss, close by where the others were, at the same height and also on prinus bushes,—plainly the work of mice wholly. In the open part of Gowing's Swamp I find the *Andromeda Polifolia*. Neither here nor in Beck Stow's does it grow very near the shore, in places accessible in wet weather. Some larch cones are empty, others contain seeds. In these swamps, then, you have three kinds of andromeda. The main swamp is crowded with high blueberry, panicled andromeda, prinus, swamp-pink, etc., etc. (I did not examine them particularly), and then in the middle or deepest part will be an open space, not yet quite given up to water, where the *Andromeda calyculata* and a few *A. Polifolia* reign almost alone. These are pleasing gardens.

In the early part of winter there was no walking on the snow, but after January, perhaps, when the snow-banks had settled and their surfaces, many times thawed and frozen, become indurated, in fact, you could walk on the snow-crust pretty well.

Feb. 18. P. M. — To Yellow Birch Swamp.

As I remember January, we had one (?) great thaw, succeeded by severe cold. It was harder getting about, though there may have been no more snow because it was light, and there was more continuous cold and clear sparkling weather. But the last part of January and all February thus far have been alternate thaw and freeze and snow. It has more thaws, even as the running "r" (root of ῥέω) occurs twice in it and but

once in January. I do not know but the more light and warmth plainly accounts for the difference. It does not take so much fuel to keep us warm of late. I begin to think that my wood will last. We begin to have days precursors of spring.

I see on ice by the riverside, front of N. Barrett's, very slender insects a third of an inch long, with grayish folded wings reaching far behind and two antennæ. Somewhat in general appearance like the long wasps. At the old mill-site, saw two pigeon woodpeckers dart into and out of a white oak. Saw the yellow under sides of their wings. It is barely possible I am mistaken, but, since Wilson makes them common in Pennsylvania in winter, I feel pretty sure. Such sights make me think there must be bare ground not far off south. It is a little affecting to walk over the hills now, looking at the reindeer lichens here and there amid the snow, and remember that ere long we shall find violets also in their midst. What an odds the season makes! The birds know it. Whether a rose-tinted water lily is sailing amid the pads, or Neighbor Hobson is getting out his ice with a cross-cut saw, while his oxen are eating their stalks. I noticed that the ice which Garrison cut the other day contained the lily pads and stems within it. How different their environment now from when the queenly flower, floating on the trembling surface, exhaled its perfume amid a cloud of insects! Hubbard's wooded hill is now almost bare of trees. Barberries still hang on the bushes, but all shrivelled. I found a bird's nest of grass and mud in a barberry bush filled full with them. It must have been done by

some quadruped or bird. The curls of the yellow birch bark form more or less parallel straight lines up and down on all sides of the tree, like parted hair blown aside by the wind, or as when a vest [*sic*] bursts and blows open. Rabbit-tracks numerous there, sometimes quite a highway of tracks over and along the frozen and snow-covered brook. How pleasant the sound of water flowing with a hollow sound under ice from which it has settled away, where great white air bubbles or hollows, seen through the ice and dark water, alternately succeed each other. The *Mitchella repens* berries look very bright amid the still fresh green leaves. In the birch swamp west of this are many red (?) squirrel nests high in the birches. They are composed within of fibres of bark. I see where the squirrels have eaten walnuts along the wall and left the shells on the snow.

Channing has some microscopic reading these days. But he says in effect that these works are purely material. The idealist views things in the large.

I read some of the speeches in Congress about the Nebraska Bill, — a thing the like of which I have not done for a year. What trifling upon a serious subject! while honest men are sawing wood for them outside. Your Congress halls have an ale-house odor, — a place for stale jokes and vulgar wit. It compels me to think of my fellow-creatures as apes and baboons.

What a contrast between the upper and under side of many leaves, — the indurated and colored upper side and the tender, more or less colorless under side, — male and female, — even where they are almost

equally exposed! The under side is commonly white, however, as turned away from the light toward the earth. Many in which the contrast is finest are narrow, revolute leaves, like the delicate and beautiful *Andromeda Polifolia*, the ledum, *Kalmia glauca*. De Quincey says that "the ancients had no experimental knowledge of severe climates." Neither have the English at home as compared with us of New England, nor we, compared with the Esquimaux.

 This is a common form of the birch scale, — black, I think, — not white, at any rate.

The handsome lanceolate leaves of the *Andromeda Polifolia*, dark but pure and uniform dull red above, strongly revolute, and of a delicate bluish white beneath, deserve to be copied on to works of art.

Feb. 19. Many college text-books which were a weariness and a stumbling-block when *studied*, I have since read a little in with pleasure and profit. For several weeks the fall has seemed far behind, spring comparatively near. Yet I cannot say that there is any positive sign of spring yet; only we feel that we are sloping toward it. The sky has sometimes a warmth in its colors more like summer. A few birds have possibly strayed northward further than they have wintered.

P. M. — To Fair Haven by river, back by railroad.

Though the wind is cold, the earth feels the heat of the sun higher in the heavens and melts in plowed fields. The willow twigs rise out of the ice beside the river, the silvery down of each catkin just peeping

from under each scale in some places, — the work probably of last fall's sun, — like a mouse peeping from under its covert. I incline to walk now in swamps and on the river and ponds, where I cannot walk in summer. I am struck by the greenness of the green-briar at this season, still covering the alders, etc., twelve feet high and full of shining and fresh berries. The greenness of the sassafras shoots makes a similar impression.

The large moths apparently love the neighborhood of water, and are wont to suspend their cocoons over the edge of the meadow and river, places more or less inaccessible, to men at least. I saw a button-bush with what at first sight looked like the open pods of the locust or of the water asclepias attached. They were the light ash-colored cocoons of the *A. Promethea*, four or five, with the completely withered and faded leaves wrapped around them, and so artfully and admirably secured to the twigs by fine silk wound round the leaf-stalk and the twig, — which last add nothing to its strength, being deciduous, but aid its deception, — they are taken at a little distance for a few curled and withered leaves left on. Though the particular twigs on which you find some cocoons may never or very rarely retain any leaves, — the maple, for instance, — there are enough leaves left on other shrubs and trees to warrant their adopting this disguise. Yet it is startling to think that the inference has in this case been drawn by some mind that, as most other plants retain some leaves, the walker will suspect these also to. Each and all such disguises

and other resources remind us that not some poor worm's instinct merely, as we call it, but the mind of the universe rather, which we share, has been intended upon each particular object. All the wit in the world was brought to bear on each case to secure its end. It was long ago, in a full senate of all intellects, determined how cocoons had best be suspended, — kindred mind with mine that admires and approves decided it so.¹ The hips of the late rose, though more or less shrivelled, are still red and handsome. It outlasts other hips. The sweet-briar's have lost their color and begun to decay. The former are still very abundant and showy in perfect corymbs of a dozen or so amid the button-bushes. It might be called the water-rose. The trees in the maple swamp squeak from time to time like the first fainter sounds made by the red squirrel. I have little doubt the red squirrel must lay up food, since I see them so rarely abroad. On the cherry twigs you see the shining clasp of caterpillars' eggs. The snow not only reveals a track but sometimes hands it down to the ice that succeeds it. The sled-track which I saw in the slight snow over the ice here February 2d, though we have had many snows since and now there is no snow at all, is still perfectly marked on the ice.

Much study a weariness of the flesh, eh? But did not they intend that we should read and ponder, who covered the whole earth with alphabets, — primers or bibles, — coarse or fine print? The very débris of the cliffs — the stivers [?] of the rocks — are covered

¹ [Channing, p. 132.]

with geographic lichens: no surface is permitted to be bare long. As by an inevitable decree, we have come to times at last when our very waste paper is printed. Was not He who creates lichens the abettor of Cadmus when he invented letters? Types almost arrange themselves into words and sentences as dust arranges itself under the magnet. Print! it is a close-hugging lichen that forms on a favorable surface, which paper offers. The linen gets itself wrought into paper that the song of the shirt may be printed on it. Who placed us with eyes between a microscopic and a telescopic world?

There are so many rocks under Grape-vine Cliff that apparently for this reason the chopper saws instead of cuts his trees into lengths. The wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*?) still green there. And are they not small saxifrages so perfectly green and fresh, as if just started, in the crevices? I wait till sundown on Fair Haven to hear it boom, but am disappointed, though I hear much slight crackling. But, as for the previous cracking, it is so disruptive and produces such a commotion that it extends itself through snow-drifts six inches deep, and is even more distinct there than in bare ice, even to the sharpest angle of its forking. Saw an otter-track near Walden.

Feb. 20. Channing saw yesterday three little birds olive-green above, with yellowish-white breasts and, he thinks, bars on wings. Were they goldfinches?

P. M. — Skating to Fair Haven Pond.

Made a fire on the south side of the pond, using

canoe birch bark and oak leaves for kindlings. It is best to lay down first some large damp wood on the ice for a foundation, since the success of a fire depends very much on the bed of coals it makes, and, if these are nearly quenched in the basin of melted ice, there is danger that it will go out. How much dry wood ready for the hunter, inviting flames, is to be found in every forest, — dry bark fibres and small dead twigs of the white pine and other trees, held up high and dry as if for this very purpose! The occasional loud snapping of the fire was exhilarating. I put on some hemlock boughs, and the rich salt crackling of its leaves was like mustard to the ears, — the firing of uncountable regiments. Dead trees love the fire.

We skated home in the dusk, with an odor of smoke in our clothes. It was pleasant to dash over the ice, feeling the inequalities which we could not see, now rising over considerable hillocks, — for it had settled on the meadows, — now descending into corresponding hollows.

We have had but one ¹ (and that I think was the first) of those gentle moist snows which lodge perfectly on the trees and make perhaps the most beautiful sight of any. Much more common is what we have now, *i. e.* —

Feb. 21. A. M. — A fine, driving snow-storm.

Have seen no good samples of the blue in snow this winter. At noon clears up.

P. M. — To Goose Pond by Tuttle Path.

¹ No more this winter

A little snow, lodged on the north side of the woods, gives them a hoary aspect, — a mere sugaring, however. The snow has just ceased falling — about two inches deep, in the woods, upon the old and on bare ground; but there is scarcely a track of any animal yet to be seen, except here and there the surface of the snow has been raised and broken interruptedly where some mouse came near the surface in its travels, and in one wood I see very numerous tracks, probably of red squirrels, leading to and from three or four holes in the earth close together, somewhat like those in an ant's nest, — quite a broad beaten path to some stumps with white pine cones on them and single tracks to the base of trees. It has now got to be such weather that after a cold morning it is colder in the house, — or we feel colder, — than outdoors, by noon, and are surprised that it is no colder when we come out. You cannot walk too early in new-fallen snow to get the sense of purity, novelty, and unexploredness. The snow has lodged more or less in perpendicular lines on the northerly sides of trees, so that I am able to tell the points of compass as well as by the sun. I guide myself accordingly. It always gladdens me to see a willow, though catkinless as well as leafless, rising above the new-fallen, untrodden snow, in some dry hollow in the woods, for then I feel nearer to spring. There are some peculiarly dry and late looking ones I see there, but it is enough that they are willows. The locust pods are open or opening. Little beans they hold. What delicate satin-like inside linings they have!

The difference between the white and black (?) birch scales (*vide* [p. 130]) is that  the wings of the first are curved backward like a real bird's. The seeds of this also are broadly winged like an insect with two little antennæ. The ice in the fields by the poorhouse road — frozen puddles — amid the snow, looking westward now while the sun is about setting, in cold weather, is green.

Montanus in his account of New Netherland (Amsterdam, 1671), speaking of the beaver, says, "The wind-hairs which rise glittering above the back fall off in the summer and grow again in the fall."

Feb. 22. I measured the thickness of the frozen ground at the deep cut on the new Bedford road, about half-way up the hill. They dig under the frozen surface and then crack it off with iron wedges, with much labor, in pieces from three to six feet square. It was eighteen inches thick and more there — thicker higher up, not so thick lower down the hill.

Saw in Sleepy Hollow a small hickory stump, about six inches in diameter and six inches high, so completely, regularly, and beautifully covered by that winkle-like fungus in concentric circles and successive layers that the core was concealed and you would have taken it for some cabbage-like plant. This was the  way the wound was healed. The cut surface of the stump was completely and thickly covered. Our neighbor Wetherbee was J. Moore's companion when he took that great weight of pickerel this winter. He says it was fifty-six pounds in Flint's, in

one day, and that four of them weighed eighteen pounds and seven ounces. My alder catkins in the pitcher have shed their pollen for a day or two, and the willow catkins have pushed out half an inch or more and show red and yellowish.

Feb. 23. A. M. — The snow drives horizontally from the north or northwesterly, in long waving lines like the outline of a swell or billow. The flakes do not fall perceptibly for the width of a house.

P. M. — Saw some of those architectural drifts forming. The fine snow came driving along over the field like steam curling from a roof. As the current rises to go over the wall, it produces a lull in the angle made by the wall and ground, and accordingly just enough snow is deposited there to fill the triangular calm, but the greater  part passes over and is deposited in the larger calm. A portion of the wind also apparently passes through the chinks of the wall and curves upward against the main drift, appearing to carve it and perforate it in various fashion, holding many snowy particles in suspension in vertical eddies. I am not sure to what extent the drift is carved and perforated, and to what originally deposited, in these forms. How will it look behind a tight fence?

Not that ornamental beauty is to be neglected, but, at least, let it first be inward-looking and essential, like the lining of a shell, of which the inhabitant is unconscious, and not mere outside garnishing.

This forenoon a driving storm, very severe. This afternoon fair, but high wind and drifting snow.

Feb. 24. P. M. — To Walden and Fair Haven.

In Wheeler's Wood by railroad. Nuthatches are faintly answering each other, — tit for tat, — on different keys, — a faint creak. Now and then one utters a loud distinct *gnah*. This bird more than any I know loves to stand with its head downward.

Meanwhile chickadees, with their silver tinkling, are flitting high above through the tops of the pines. Measured the ice of Walden in three places, —

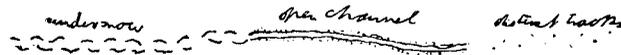
One about 10 rods from the shore, $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick
 25 rods from the shore, “ “ “
 In middle $17\frac{1}{4}$ “ “

Call it then 17 inches on an average. On Fair Haven, in the only place tried, it was 21 inches thick. The portion of the ice in Walden above water was *about* $1\frac{1}{3}$ inches, in Fair Haven *about* $1\frac{3}{4}$. This part then equals $\frac{1}{3}$ + and $\frac{1}{2}$ respectively.

Tried the frost in five different and very *distant* woods in my walk. Found that though the ground is frozen more than 18 inches — from 18 [inches] to $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet — thick on the open hillside on the new Bedford road, notwithstanding some snow on it, I can drive a stake without any trouble in the midst of ordinary level mixed pine and oak woods where the snow is a foot deep, in *very thick* pine and oak woods where the snow is only one inch thick or none at all, and the ground does not slope to the north and east, and probably the northwest, and in sprout-lands where it is 20 inches

thick in some places, and in springy meadows. In Moore's Swamp it is frozen about 4 inches deep in open land. I think that in an average year the ice in such a pond as Fair Haven attains a greater thickness than the snow on a level. The other day I thought that I smelled a fox very strongly, and went a little further and found that it was a skunk. May not their odors differ in intensity chiefly? Observed in one of the little pond-holes between Walden and Fair Haven where a partridge had travelled around in the snow amid the bordering bushes twenty-five rods, had pecked the green leaves of the lambkill and left fragments on the snow, and had paused at each high blueberry bush, fed on its red buds and shaken down fragments of its bark on the snow. These buds appeared its main object. I finally scared the bird.

I see such mice or mole tracks as these: —



The frozen earth at the new road cut is hauled off twenty rods by chains hooked round it, and it lies like great blocks of yellow sandstone for building, cracked out exactly square by wedges. The sexton tells me that he had to dig the last grave through two feet of frozen ground. I measured a block to-day two feet five inches thick after being dragged a dozen rods.

Feb. 26. Kane, ashore far up Baffin's Bay, says, "How strangely this crust we wander over asserts its identity through all the disguises of climate!"

Speaking of the effects of refraction on the water, he says: "The single repetition was visible all around us; the secondary or inverted image sometimes above and sometimes below the primary. But it was not uncommon to see, also, the uplifted ice-berg, with its accompanying or false horizon, joined at its summit by its inverted image, and then above a second horizon, a third berg in its natural position." He refers to Agassiz at Lake Superior as suggesting "that it may be simply the reflection of the landscape inverted upon the surface of the lake, and reproduced with the actual landscape;" though there there was but one inversion.

He says that he saw sledge-tracks of Franklin's party in the neighborhood of Wellington Sound, made on the snow, six years old, which had been covered by the after-snows of five winters. This reminds me of the sled-tracks I saw this winter.

Kane says that, some mornings in that winter in the ice, they heard "a peculiar crisping or crackling sound." "This sound, as the 'noise accompanying the aurora,' has been attributed by Wrangell and others, ourselves among the rest, to changes of atmospheric temperature acting upon the crust of the snow." Kane thinks it is rather owing "to the unequal contraction and dilatation" of unequally presenting surfaces, "not to a sudden change of atmospheric temperature acting upon the snow." Is not this the same crackling I heard at Fair Haven on the 19th, and are not most of the arctic phenomena to be witnessed in our latitude on a smaller scale? At Fair Haven it seemed a slighter contraction of the ice, — not enough to make it thunder.

This morning it began with snowing, turned to a fine freezing rain producing a glaze, — the most of a glaze thus far, — but in the afternoon changed to pure rain.

P. M. — To Martial Miles's in rain.

The weeds, trees, etc., are covered with a glaze. The blue-curl cups are overflowing with icy drops. All trees present a new appearance, their twigs being bent down by the ice, — birches, apple trees, etc., but, above all, the pines. Tall, feathery white pines look like cockerels' tails in a shower. Both these and white [= pitch] pines, their branches being inclined downward, have sharpened tops like fir and spruce trees. Thus an arctic effect is produced. Very young white and pitch pines are most changed, all their branches drooping in a compact pyramid toward the ground except a single plume in the centre. They have a singularly crestfallen look. The rain is fast washing off all the glaze on which I had counted, thinking of the effect of to-morrow's sun on it. The wind rises and the rain increases. Deep pools of water have formed in the fields, which have an agreeable green or blue tint, — sometimes the one, sometimes the other. Yet the quantity of water which is fallen is by no means remarkable but, the ground being frozen, it is not soaked up. There is more water on the surface than before this winter.

Feb. 27. Morning. — Rain over; water in great part run off; wind rising; river risen and meadows flooded. The rain-water and melted snow have run swiftly over

the frozen ground into the river, and raised it with the ice on it and flooded the meadows, covering the ice there which remains on the bottom; so that you have, on the male side, the narrow canal above the ice, then a floating ice everywhere bridging the river, and then a broad meadowy flood above ice again.

Those blocks of frozen earth at the new road cut are in fact a sandstone whose cement is frost. They are dragged by chains about them (and no drag), without losing any appreciable part, for twenty rods, and have preserved their form — their right-angled edges — for a month, left to thaw on the sides of the New Road embankments.

I remarked yesterday the rapidity with which water flowing over the icy ground sought its level. All that rain would hardly have produced a puddle in midsummer, but now it produces a freshet, and will perhaps break up the river.

It looks as if Nature had a good deal of work on her hands between now and April, to break up and melt twenty-one inches of ice on the ponds, — beside melting all the snow, — and before planting-time to thaw from one to two and a half or three feet of frozen ground.

They who live in the outskirts of the town do not like to have woods very near their houses, but cut them down. They are more of a bugbear than an ornament in their eyes. They who live on the village street take still more pains to rear a pine grove about their houses.

The ground being frozen, I saw the rain yesterday dripping or streaming from the edge of the bank at

the base of the wooded hill beyond William Wheeler's as from the caves of a house, and to-day the bank is lined with icicles.

P. M. — To Flint's Pond.

Savin Wood. — Rufus Hosmer accounts for a wooden pin confining a tenon in its mortise gradually working out, — as in a gate for instance, (and this was the case on both sides of R. W. E.'s gate, to which he stepped for illustration), — by saying that, when the whole gate was wet and swelled perhaps a sixteenth of an inch, it carried the pin along with it and shrinking left it there, then swelled again and carried it a sixteenth of an inch further and left it there again, and so finally perhaps dropped it out. Among the savins I saw where rabbits had gnawed many barberry bushes, showing the yellow, and had eaten off many twigs some half an inch in diameter, also young hickories, and had gnawed off and eaten their twigs too in many places, hard as they are. They looked as if a moose had browsed them. *One* small pitch pine had lost some twigs too. I also saw where one which I scared had dropped some umbelled pyrola leaves — or it *may* have been another creature — and had eaten off some green rose-briar shoots. This gray rabbit's tail was very short, and white beneath, and curved short over his back in running. Sportsmen speak of the deer's "white flag."

Feb. 28. A pleasant morning.

What is the cause of that half ice, half water, along

the edge of the river now, of the consistency of molasses or soft solder? I can think of no peculiarity in its formation unless that this water, the river rising, has flowed out over the ice in the night faster than it froze. Stirred with a stick, it shows a mass of crystals.

Probably you can study the habits of rabbits, partridges, etc., more easily in the winter, their tracks being revealed by the snow.

This is now another rise of the river. I see that the ice in hollows in the fields breaks up (partially) in the same manner with that on the river, *viz.* around the shore it is covered with water and rests on the bottom, while the middle is raised with the water, and hence a ridge is heaved up where the two ices meet. I am not certain how far this overflowing of the ice next the shore or on the meadows may be owing to the flood from the hills in the first instance running over, then under it and keeping it down, as well as to its adhesion to the bottom.

F. Brown tells me that he found a quantity of winter-green in the crop of a partridge. I suggested that it *might* be lambkill.