

VII

FEBRUARY, 1857

(ÆT. 39)

Feb. 1. 3 P. M. — Down railroad.

Thermometer at 42°. Warm as it is, I see a large flock of snow buntings on the railroad causeway. Their wings are white above next the body, but black or dark beyond and on the back. This produces that regular black and white effect when they fly past you.

A laborer on the railroad tells me it is Candlemas Day (February 2d) to-morrow and the winter half out. "Half your wood and half your hay," etc., etc.; and, as that day is, so will be the rest of the winter.

Feb. 2. The snow-crust on all hills and knolls is now marked by the streams of water that have flowed down it, like a coarsely combed head; *i. e.*, the unbroken crust is in alternate ridges and furrows from the tops of the hills to the bottoms.

Feb. 3. To Fitchburg to lecture.

Observed that the Nashua at the bridge beyond Groton Junction was open for twenty rods, as the Concord is not anywhere in Concord. This must be owing to the greater swiftness of the former.

Though the snow was not deep, I noticed that an unbroken snow-crust stretched around Fitchburg, and

its several thousand inhabitants had been confined so long to the narrow streets, some of them a track only six feet wide. Hardly one individual had anywhere departed from this narrow walk and struck out into the surrounding fields and hills. If I had had my cowhide boots, I should not have confined myself to those narrow limits, but have climbed some of the hills. It is surprising to go into a New England town in midwinter and find its five thousand inhabitants all living thus on the limits, confined at most to their narrow moose-yard in the snow. Scarcely here and there has a citizen stepped aside one foot to let a sled pass. And almost as circumscribed is their summer life, going only from house to shop and back to house again. If, Indian-like, one examined the dew or bended grass, he would be surprised to discover how little trodden or frequented the surrounding fields were, to discover perhaps large tracts wholly untrodden, which await, as it were, for some caravan to assemble before any will traverse them. It is as if some vigilance committee had given notice that if any should transgress those narrow limits he should be outlawed and his blood should be upon his own head. You don't see where the inhabitants get sufficient exercise, unless they swing dumb-bells down cellar. Let a slight snow come and cover the earth, and the tracks of men will show how little the woods and fields are frequented.

I was pleased to see several loads entirely of beech wood in the street at Fitchburg. It had a peculiarly *green*, solid, sappy look, coasting down the hills into Fitchburg.

Feb. 4. Met Theodore Parker in the cars, who told me that he had recently found in Lake Michigan a single ball, five inches in diameter, like those I presented to the Natural History Society, though he did not observe the eriocaulon. It was late in the season.

Yet along that sled-track (*vide* the 3d) they will have their schools and lyceums and churches, like the snow-heaps crowded up by the furrow, and consider themselves liberally educated, notwithstanding their narrow views and range. And the bare track that leads to the next town and seaboard, only six inches' breadth of iron rails! and a one-eighth-inch wire in the air!

I sometimes hear a prominent but dull-witted worthy man say, or hear that he has said, rarely, that if it were not for his firm belief in "an overruling power," or a "perfect Being," etc., etc. But such poverty-stricken expressions only convince me of his habitual doubt and that he is surprised into a transient belief. Such a man's expression of faith, moving solemnly in the traditional furrow, and casting out all free-thinking and living souls with the rusty mould-board of his compassion or contempt, thinking that he has Moses and all the prophets in his wake, discourages and saddens me as an expression of his narrow and barren want of faith. I see that the infidels and skeptics have formed themselves into churches and weekly gather together at the ringing of a bell.

Sometimes when, in conversation or a lecture, I have been grasping at, or even standing and reclining upon, the serene and everlasting truths that underlie and support our vacillating life, I have seen my audi-

tors standing on their *terra firma*, the quaking earth, crowded together on their Lisbon Quay, and compassionately or timidly watching my motions as if they were the antics of a rope-dancer or mountebank pretending to walk on air: or here and there one creeping out upon an overhanging but cracking bough, unwilling to drop to the adamantine floor beneath, or perchance even venturing out a step or two, as if it were a dangerous kittly-bender, timorously sounding as he goes. So the other day, as I stood on Walden, drinking at a puddle on the ice, which was probably two feet thick, and thinking how lucky I was that I had not got to cut through all that thickness, I was amused to see an Irish laborer on the railroad, who had come down to drink, timidly tiptoeing toward me in his cowhide boots, lifting them nearly two feet at each step and fairly trembling with fear, as if the ice were already bending beneath his ponderous body and he were about to be engulfed. "Why, my man," I called out to him, "this ice will bear a loaded train, half a dozen locomotives side by side, a whole herd of oxen," suggesting whatever would be a weighty argument with him. And so at last he fairly straightened up and quenched his thirst. It was very ludicrous to me, who was thinking, by chance, what a labor it would be to get at the water with an axe there and that I was lucky to find some on the surface.

So, when I have been resting and quenching my thirst on the eternal plains of truth, where rests the base of those beautiful columns that sustain the heavens, I have been amused to see a traveller who had long

confined himself to the quaking shore, which was all covered with the traces of the deluge, come timidly tiptoeing toward me, trembling in every limb.

I see the crowd of materialists gathered together on their Lisbon Quay for safety, thinking it a *terra firma*.

Though the farmer has been all winter teaming wood along the river, the timid citizen that buys it, but who has not stepped out of the road, thinks it all kittly-benders there and warns his boys not to go near it.

Minott says that Dr. Heywood used to have a crazy hen (and he, too, has had one). She went about by herself uttering a peevish *craw craw*, and did not lay. One day he was going along on the narrow peninsula of Goose Pond looking for ducks, away in Walden Woods a mile and a half from Heywood's, when he met this very hen, which passed close by him, uttering as usual a faint *craw craw*. He knew her perfectly well, and says that he was never so surprised at anything in his life. How she had escaped the foxes and hawks was more than he knew.

Told a story about one Josh Piper, a harelippped man, who lived down east awhile, whose wife would not let him occupy her bed; but he used to catch ducks there in a net on the shore as they do pigeons, and so got feathers enough to fill the bed, and therefore thought he had a right to lie on it.

Feb. 5. Mizzling rain.

Feb. 6. 9 A. M. — Down railroad to see the *glaze*, the first we have had this year, but not a very good one.

It is about a fifth or a sixth of an inch thick on the northeast sides of twigs, etc., not transparent, but of an opaque white, granular character. The woods, especially wooded hillsides half a mile or more distant, have a rich, hoary, frosted look, still and stiff, yet it is not so thick but that the green of the pines and the yellow of the willow bark and the leather-color of oak leaves show through it. These colors are pleasantly toned down. The pines transmit a subdued green, — some pitch pines a livelier grass green, — deepest in the recesses, and a delicate buff (?) tinge is seen through the frosty veil of the willow. The birches, owing to the color of their trunks, are the most completely hoary. The elms, perhaps, are the most distinctly frosted, revealing their whole outlines like ghosts of trees, even a mile off, when seen against a dark hillside. The ground is encased in a thin *black* glaze (where it chances to be bare) and the iron rails and the telegraph wire. Insignificant weeds and stubble along the railroad causeway and elsewhere are now made very conspicuous, both by their increased size and bristling stiffness and their whiteness. Each wiry grass stem is become a stiff wand. The wind that begins to rise does not stir them; you only hear a fine crackling sound when it blows hardest. Behind each withered vegetable plant stands a stout ice plant, overlapping and concealing it. Stem answers to stem, and fruit to fruit. The heads of fanny are converted into confectionery somewhat like sugared almonds and regularly roughened (like orange-peel), and those of evening-primrose, and mullein, and hardhack, and lespedeza bear a still

coarser kind. The wild carrot's bird's-nest umbel, now contracted above, is converted into almost a perfect hollow sphere, composed of contiguous thickened meridional ribs, which remind me of the fingers of a starfish (or five-finger). Each plant preserves its character, though exaggerated. Pigweed and Roman wormwood are ragged as ever on a larger scale, and the butterweed as stiffly upright. Tall goldenrod still more recurved. You naturally avoid running against the plant which you did not notice before. Standing on the south-east side, I see the fine dark cores which the stems make. On the opposite side, only the pure white ice plant is seen.

When I reach the woods I am surprised to find that the twigs, etc., are bristling with fine spiculæ, which stand on a thin glaze. I do not remember to have seen them previous winters. They are from one quarter to five eighths of an inch long by one twenty-fifth to one fiftieth of an inch wide at base and quite sharp, commonly on the storm side of the twig only and pointing in all directions horizontally and even vertically within an arc of 90° , but sometimes on opposite sides of the twig. They answer exactly to prickles or spines, especially to those of the locust. I observe them on the locust itself by chance, an icy spine at right angles on a vegetable one, making such a branch as is seen on some species. There are often ten or twelve within an inch along the twigs, but they are most like thorns when fewer. All the twigs and weeds and leaves, even the pine-needles, are armed with them. The pine-needles especially, beside their hoary glaze, are bris-

ting with countless fine spiculæ, which appear to point in almost all directions. It is also interesting to meet with them by accident on the edges of oak leaves, answering exactly to the vegetable spines there (though they are commonly at right angles with the plane of the leaf and often almost as thick as a comb), and on pine cones, suggesting that there should be something in that soil especially favorable to promote the growth of spines. As far as I observed, these spines were chiefly confined to the woods, — at least I had not noticed them on the causeway, — as if a fog might have collected in the former place but not in the last. They were, then, built in the mist, by a more delicate accretion. Thus it seems that not leaves only but other forms of vegetation are imitated by frost.

Already the white pine plumes were drooping, but the pitch pines stood stiffly erect. I was again struck by the deep open cup at the extremity of the latter, formed by the needles standing out very regularly around the red-brown buds at the bottom. It is very warm, and by ten o'clock this ice is rapidly falling from the trees and covering the ground like hail; and before noon all that jewelry was dissolved.

Rice tells me that there was a lark on his place in Sudbury about the 1st of January.

One who has seen them tells me that a covey of thirteen quails daily visits Hayden's yard and barn, where he feeds them and can almost put his hands on them.

Thermometer at noon 52° .

Winckelmann says in his "History of Ancient Art,"

vol. i, page 95: "I am now past forty, and therefore at an age when one can no longer sport freely with life. I perceive, also, that a certain delicate spirit begins to evaporate, with which I raised myself, by powerful soarings, to the contemplation of the beautiful."

Feb. 7. Another warm day, the snow fast going off.

I am surprised to see over Walden Pond, which is covered with puddles, that seething or shimmering in the air which is observed over the fields in a warm day in summer, close over the ice for several feet in height, notwithstanding that the sky is completely overcast. The thermometer was at $52\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ when I came out at 3 P. M. The water on the ice is for the most part several inches deep, and trees reflected in it appear as when seen through a mist or smoke, apparently owing to the color of the ice. It is so warm that I am obliged to take off my greatcoat and carry it on my arm. Now the hollows are full of those greenish pods.

As I was coming through the woods from Walden to Hayden's, I heard a loud or tumultuous warbling or twittering of birds coming on in the air, much like a flock of red-wings in the spring, and even expected to see them at first, but when they came in sight and passed over my head I saw that they were probably redpolls. They fly rather slowly.

Hayden the elder tells me that the quails have come to his yard every day for almost a month and are just as tame as chickens. They come about his wood-shed, he supposes to pick up the worms that have dropped out of the wood, and when it storms hard gather together

in the corner of the shed. He walks within, say, three or four feet of them without disturbing them. They come out of the woods by the graveyard, and sometimes they go down toward the river. They will be about his yard the greater part of the day; were there yesterday, though it was so warm, but now probably they can get food enough elsewhere. They go just the same to Poland's, across the road. About ten years ago there was a bevy of fifteen that used to come from the same woods, and one day, they being in the barn and scared by the cat, four ran into the hay and died there. The former do not go to the houses further from the woods. Thus it seems in severe winters the quails venture out of the woods and join the poultry of the farmer's yard, if it be near the edge of the wood. It is remarkable that this bird, which thus half domesticates itself, should not be found wholly domesticated before this.

Several men I have talked with froze their ears a fortnight ago yesterday, the cold Friday; one who had never frozen his ears before.

Many of the roads about the town, which for long distances have been completely closed by the snow for more than a month, are just beginning to be open. The sleighs, etc., which have all this time gone round through the fields, are now trying to make their way through in some places. I do not [know] when they have been so much obstructed.

Feb. 8. Debauched and worn-out senses require the violent vibrations of an instrument to excite them, but *sound* and still youthful senses, not enervated by

luxury, hear music in the wind and rain and running water. One would think from reading the critics that music was intermittent as a spring in the desert, dependent on some Paganini or Mozart, or heard only when the Pierians or Euterpeans drive through the villages; but music is perpetual, and only hearing is intermittent. I hear it in the softened air of these warm February days which have broken the back of the winter.

For two nights past it has not frozen, but a thick mist has overhung the earth, and you awake to the unusual and agreeable sight of water in the streets. Several strata of snow have been washed away from the drifts, down to that black one formed when dust was blowing from plowed fields.

Riordan's solitary cock, standing on such an icy snow-heap, feels the influence of the softened air, and the steam from patches of bare ground here and there, and has found his voice again. The warm air has thawed the music in his throat, and he crows lustily and unweariedly, his voice rising to the last. Yesterday morning our feline Thomas, also feeling the springlike influence, stole away along the fences and walls, which raise him above the water, and only returned this morning reeking with wet. Having got his breakfast, he already stands on his hind legs, looking wishfully through the window, and, the door being opened a little, he is at once off again in spite of the rain.

Again and again I congratulate myself on my so-called poverty. I was almost disappointed yesterday to find thirty dollars in my desk which I did not know

that I possessed, though now I should be sorry to lose it. The week that I go away to lecture, however much I may get for it, is unspeakably cheapened. The preceding and succeeding days are a mere sloping down and up from it.

In the society of many men, or in the midst of what is called success, I find my life of no account, and my spirits rapidly fall. I would rather be the barrenest pasture lying fallow than cursed with the compliments of kings, than be the sulphurous and accursed desert where Babylon once stood. But when I have only a rustling oak leaf, or the faint metallic cheep of a tree sparrow, for variety in my winter walk, my life becomes continent and sweet as the kernel of a nut. I would rather hear a single shrub oak leaf at the end of a wintry glade rustle of its own accord at my approach, than receive a shipload of stars and garters from the strange kings and peoples of the earth.

By poverty, *i. e.* simplicity of life and fewness of incidents, I am solidified and crystallized, as a vapor or liquid by cold. It is a singular concentration of strength and energy and flavor. Chastity is perpetual acquaintance with the All. My diffuse and vaporous life becomes as the frost leaves and spiculæ radiant as gems on the weeds and stubble in a winter morning. You think that I am impoverishing myself by withdrawing from men, but in my solitude I have woven for myself a silken web or *chrysalis*, and, nymph-like, shall ere long burst forth a more perfect creature, fitted for a higher society. By simplicity, commonly called poverty, my life is concentrated and so becomes organ-

ized, or a *κόσμος*, which before was inorganic and lumpish.

The otter must roam about a great deal, for I rarely see fresh tracks in the same neighborhood a second time the same winter, though the old tracks may be apparent all the winter through. I should not wonder if one went up and down the whole length of the river.

Hayden senior (sixty-eight years old) tells me that he has been at work regularly with his team almost every day this winter, in spite of snow and cold. Even that cold Friday, about a fortnight ago, he did not go to a fire from early morning till night. As the thermometer, even at 12.45 P. M., was at -9° , with a very violent wind from the northwest, this was as bad as an ordinary arctic day. He was hauling logs to a mill, and persevered in making his paths through the drifts, he alone breaking the road. However, he froze his ears that Friday. Says he never knew it so cold as the past month. He has a fine elm directly behind his house, divided into many limbs near the ground. It is a question which is the most valuable, this tree or the house. In hot summer days it shades the whole house. He is going to build a shed around it, inclosing the main portion of the trunk.

P. M. — To Hubbard Bath.

Another very warm day, I should think warmer than the last. The sun is from time to time promising to show itself through the mist, but does not. A thick steam is everywhere rising from the earth and snow,

and apparently this makes the clouds which conceal the sun, the air being so much warmer than the earth. The snow is gone off very rapidly in the night, and much of the earth is bare, and the ground partially thawed. It is exciting to walk over the moist, bare pastures, though slumping four or five inches, and see the green mosses again. This vapor from the earth is so thick that I can hardly see a quarter of a mile, and ever and anon it condenses to rain-drops, which are felt on my face. The river has risen, and the water is pretty well over the meadows. If this weather holds a day or two longer, the river will break up generally.

I see one of those great ash-colored puffballs with a tinge of purple, open like a cup, four inches in diameter. The upper surface is (as it were bleached) quite hoary. Though it is but just brought to light from beneath the deep snow, and the last two days have been misty or rainy without sun, it is just as dry and dusty as ever, and the drops of water rest on it, at first undetected, being coated with its dust, looking like unground pearls. I brought it home and held it in a basin of water. To my surprise, when held under water it looked like a mass of silver or melted lead, it was so coated with air, and when I suffered it to rise, — for it had to be kept down by force, — instead of being heavy like a sponge which has soaked water, it was as light as a feather, and its surface perfectly dry, and when touched it gave out its dust the same as ever. It was impossible to wet. It seems to be encased in a silvery coat of air which is water-tight. The water did not penetrate into it at all, and running off as you lifted it up, it was just as dry as

before, and on the least jar floating in dust above your head.

The ground is so bare that I gathered a few Indian relics.

And now another friendship is ended. I do not know what has made my friend doubt me, but I know that in love there is no mistake, and that every estrangement is well founded. But my destiny is not narrowed, but if possible the broader for it. The heavens withdraw and arch themselves higher. I am sensible not only of a moral, but even a grand physical pain, such as gods may feel, about my head and breast, a certain ache and fullness. This rending of a tie, it is not my work nor thine. It is no accident that we mind; it is only the awards of fate that are affecting. I know of no æons, or periods, no life and death, but these meetings and separations. My life is like a stream that is suddenly dammed and has no outlet; but it rises the higher up the hills that shut it in, and will become a deep and silent lake. Certainly there is no event comparable for grandeur with the eternal separation — if we may conceive it so — from a being that we have known. I become in a degree sensible of the meaning of finite and infinite. What a grand significance the word “never” acquires! With one with whom we have walked on high ground we cannot deal on any lower ground ever after. We have tried for so many years to put each other to this immortal use, and have failed. Undoubtedly our good genii have mutually found the material unsuitable. We have hitherto paid each other the highest possible compliment; we have recognized each other

constantly as divine, have afforded each other that opportunity to live that no other wealth or kindness can afford. And now, for some reason inappreciable by us, it has become necessary for us to withhold this mutual aid. Perchance there is none beside who knows us for a god, and none whom we know for such. Each man and woman is a veritable god or goddess, but to the mass of their fellows disguised. There is only one in each case who sees through the disguise. That one who does not stand so near to any man as to see the divinity in him is truly alone. I am perfectly sad at parting from you. I could better have the earth taken away from under my feet, than the thought of you from my mind. One while I think that some great injury has been done, with which you are implicated, again that you are no party to it. I fear that there may be incessant tragedies, that one may treat his fellow as a god but receive somewhat less regard from him. I now almost for the first time *fear* this. Yet I believe that in the long run there is no such inequality.

Here we are in the backwoods of America repeating Hebrew prayers and psalms in which occur such words as *amen* and *selah*, the meaning of some of which we do not quite understand, reminding me of Moslem prayers in which, it seems, the same or similar words are used. How Mormon-like!

Feb. 10. The thaw which began on the 4th lasted through the 8th.

When I surveyed Shattuck's Merrick's pasture fields, about January 10th, I was the more pleased with the

task because of the three willow-rows about them. One, trimmed a year before, had grown about seven feet, a dense hedge of bright-yellow osiers. But MacManus, who was helping me, said that he thought the land would be worth two hundred dollars more if the willows were out of the way, they so filled the ground with their roots. He had found that you could not plow within five rods [*sic*] of them, unless at right angles with the rows. Hayden, senior, tells me that when he lived with Abel Moore, Moore's son Henry one day set out a row of willow boughs for a hedge, but the father, who had just been eradicating an old willow-row at great labor and expense, asked Hayden who had done that and finally offered him a dollar if he would destroy them, which he agreed to do. So each morning, as he went to and from his work, he used to pull some of them up a little way, and if there were many roots formed he rubbed them off on a rock. And when, at the breakfast-table, Henry expressed wonder that his willows did not grow any better, being set in a rich soil, the father would look at Hayden and laugh.

Burton, the traveller, quotes an Arab saying, "Voyaging is a victory," which he refers to the feeling of independence on overcoming the difficulties and dangers of the desert. But I think that commonly voyaging is a defeat, a rout, to which the traveller is compelled by want of valor. The traveller's peculiar *valor* is commonly a bill of exchange. He is at home anywhere but where he was born and bred. Petitioning some Sir Joseph Banks or other representative of a Geographical

Society to avail himself of his restlessness, and, if not receiving a favorable answer, necessarily going off somewhere next morning. It is a prevalent disease, which attacks Americans especially, both men and women, the opposite to nostalgia. Yet it does not differ much from nostalgia. I read the story of one voyageress round the world, who, it seemed to me, having started, had no other object but to get home again, only she took the longest way round. Snatching at a fact or two in behalf of science as he goes, just as a panther in his leap will take off a man's sleeve and land twenty feet beyond him when travelling down-hill, being fitted out by some Sir Joseph Banks.

It seems that in Arabia, as well as in New England, they have the art of springing a prayer upon you. The Madani or inhabitants of El Medinah are, according to Burton, notwithstanding an assumed austerity and ceremoniousness, not easily matched in volubility and personal abuse. "When a man is opposed to more than his match in disputing or bargaining, . . . he interrupts the adversary with a 'Sall' ala Mohammed,' — bless the Prophet. Every good Moslem is obliged to obey such requisition by responding, 'Allahumma salli alayh,' — O Allah bless him! But the Madani curtails the phrase to 'A'n,' supposing it to be an equivalent, and proceeds in his loquacity. Then perhaps the baffled opponent will shout out 'Wahhid,' *i. e.* 'Attest the unity of the Deity;' when, instead of employing the usual religious phrases to assert that dogma, he will briefly ejaculate, 'Al,' and hurry on with the course of conversation." (Page 283.)

Feb. 11. Wednesday. The meadows, flooded by the thaw of the last half of last week and Sunday, are now frozen hard enough to bear, and it is excellent skating.

Near the other swamp white oak on Shattuck's piece I found another caterpillar on the ice. From its position I thought it *possible* that it had been washed from its winter quarters by the freshet, and so left on top of the ice. It was not frozen in, and may have been blown from the oak. It was of a different species from that of January 8th, about one and one tenth inches long, with but little fuzziness, black with three longitudinal buff stripes, the two lateral quite pale, and a black head; the foremost feet black, the others lighter-colored. It was frozen quite stiffly, as many tested, being curled up like the other, and I did not dare to bend it hard for fear of breaking it, even after I took it out in the house. But being placed on the mantelpiece it soon became relaxed, and in fifteen minutes began to crawl.

Feb. 12. 7.30 A. M. — The caterpillar, which I placed last night on the snow beneath the thermometer, is frozen stiff again, this time not being curled up, the temperature being -6° now. Yet, being placed on the mantelpiece, it thaws and begins to crawl in five or ten minutes, before the rear half of its body is limber. Perhaps they were revived last week, when the thermometer stood at 52 and 53.

To Worcester.

I observe that the Nashua in Lancaster has already

fallen about three feet, as appears by the ice on the trees, walls, banks, etc., though the main stream of the Concord has not begun to fall at all. (It is hardly fallen perceptibly when I return on the 14th. Am not sure it has.) The former is apparently mostly open, the latter all closed.

When I skated on the 11th I saw several pretty large open spaces on the meadow, notwithstanding that the boys had begun to skate on the meadow the 10th and it had been steadily growing colder, and the ice was on the 11th from two and a half to three inches thick generally. These open spaces were evidently owing to the strong wind of the night before, and which was then blowing, but I neglected to observe what peculiarity there was in the locality. Perhaps it was very shallow with an uneven bottom.

Feb. 14. Higginson told me yesterday of a large tract near Fayal and near Pico (Mountain), covered with the reindeer (?) (as I suggested and he assented) lichens, very remarkable and desolate, extending for miles, the effect of an earthquake, which will in course of time be again clothed with a larger vegetation. Described at length remarkable force of the wind on the summit of Pico. Told of a person in West Newbury, who told him that he once saw the moon rising out of the sea from his house in that place, and on the moonlight in his room the distinct shadow of a vessel which was somewhere on the sea between him and the moon!!

It is a fine, somewhat springlike day. The ice is

softening so that skates begin to cut in, and numerous caterpillars are now *crawling* about on the ice and snow, the thermometer in the shade north of house standing 42°. So it appears that they must often thaw in the course of the winter, and find nothing to eat.

Feb. 15. About the 1st of January, when I was surveying the Lee farm, Captain Elwell, the proprietor, asked me how old I thought the house was.

I looked into Shattuck's History and found that, according to him, "*Henry Woodhouse*, or Woodis, as his name was sometimes written, came to Concord from London, about 1650, freeman 1656. His farm, estimated at three hundred and fifty acres, lay between the two rivers, and descended to his son-in-law, Joseph Lee, whose posterity successively held it for more than one hundred years. . . . He d[ied] June 16, 1701." (*Vide* page 389.)

Shattuck says that the principal sachem of our Indians, Tahattawan, lived "near Nahshawtuck hill." Shattuck (page 28) says that the celebrated Waban originally lived in Concord, and he describes Squaw Sachem and John Tahattawan, son of Tahattawan, as Musketaquid Indians. In 1684 "Mantatukwet, a Christian Indian of Natick, aged 70 years or thereabouts," according to the Register at Cambridge, deposed "that about 50 years since he lived within the bounds of that place which is now called Concord, at the foot of an hill, named Nahshawtuck, now in the possession of Mr. Henry Woodis," etc. (page 7). A vote

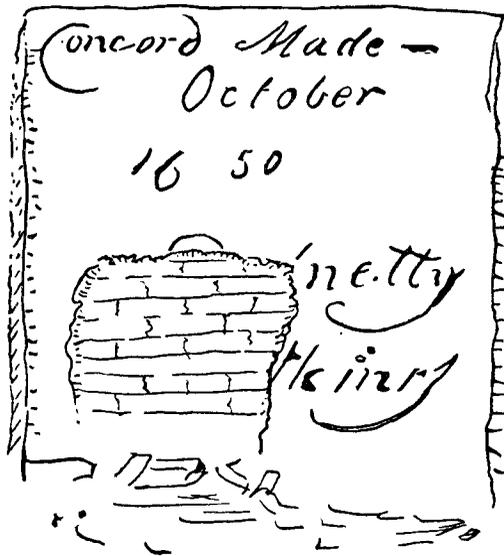
of Henry Woodies in 1654 is mentioned. Under date 1666, Shattuck finds in the South Quarter, among the names of the town at that time, "Henry Woodhouse 1 [lot] 360 [acres]," etc.

When I returned from Worcester yesterday morning, I found that the Lee house, of which six weeks ago I made an accurate plan, had been completely burned up the evening before, *i. e.* the 13th, while I was lecturing in Worcester. (It took fire and came near being destroyed in the night of the previous December 18th, early in morning. I was the first to get there *from town.*) In the course of the forenoon of yesterday I walked up to the site of the house, whither many people were flocking, on foot and in carriages. There was nothing of the house left but the chimneys and cellar walls. The eastern chimney had fallen in the night. On my way I met Abel Hunt, to whom I observed that it was perhaps the oldest house in town. "No," said he, "they saw the date on it during the fire, — 1707." When I arrived I inquired where the date had been seen, and read it for myself on the chimney, but there was too much smouldering fire to permit of my approaching it nearly.

I was interested in the old elm near the southeast corner of the house, which I found had been a mere shell a few years since, now filled up with brick. Flood, who has lived there, told me that Wheeler asked his advice with regard to that tree, — whether he could do better than lay the axe at its root. F. told him that he had seen an ash in the old country which was in the same condition, and is a tenderer tree than an "clum,"

preserved by being filled up, and with masonry, and then cemented over. So, soon after, the mason was set to work upon it under his directions, Flood having scraped out all the rotten wood first with a hoe. The cavity was full three feet wide and eight or ten high commencing at the ground. The mason had covered the bricks and rounded off with mortar, which he had scored with his trowel so that [one] did not observe but it was bark. It seemed an admirable plan, and not only improved the appearance but the strength and durability of the tree.

This morning (the 15th), it having rained in the night, and thinking the fire would be mostly out, I made haste to the ruins of the Lee house to read that inscription. By laying down boards on the bricks and cinders, which were quite too hot to tread on and covered a smothered fire, I was able to reach the chimney. The inscription was on the east side of the east chimney (which had fallen), at the bottom, in a cupboard on the west side of the late parlor, which was on a level with the ground on the east and with the cellar on the extreme west and the cellar kitchen on the north. There was a narrow lower (milk) cellar south and southeast of it, and an equally lower and narrower cellar east of it, under the parlor. This side of the chimney was perhaps fifteen feet from the east side of the house and as far from the north side. The inscription was in a slight recess in the chimney three feet four inches wide and a little more in height up and down, as far as I could see into the pile of bricks, thus:—



It appeared to have been made by the finger or a stick, in the mortar when fresh, which had been spread an inch to an inch and a quarter thick over the bricks, and, where it was too dry and hard, to have been pecked with the point of a trowel. The first three words and the "16" were perfectly plain, the "5" was tolerably plain, though some took it for a three, but I could *feel* it yet more distinctly. The mortar was partly knocked off the rest, apparently by this fire, but the top of some capital letter like a "C," and the letters "netty" were about as plain as represented, and the rest looked like "Henry" (Woodhouse?) or "1(t?)kinry" (?) the "y" (?) at end being crowded for want of room next the side. These last two words *quite* uncertain. The surface of

this recess was slightly swelling or bulging, somewhat like the outside of an oven, and above it the chimney was sloped and rounded off to the narrower shaft of it. The letters were from two and one half to three inches long and one eighth to one half inch deep.

This chimney, as well as the more recent westerly one, had been built chiefly with clay mortar, and I brought away a brick, of a soft kind, eight and seven eighths inches—some nine—long, four and one fourth plus wide, varying one fourth, and two and one half thick, though there were some much smaller near it, probably not so old. The clay (for mortar) was about as hard as mortar on it. The mortar in which the inscription was made contained considerable straw (?) and some *lumps* of clay, now crumbling like sand, with the lime and sand. The outside was white, but the interior ash-colored.

I discovered that the mortar of the inscription was not so old as the chimney, for the bricks beneath it, over which it was spread, were covered with soot, uniformly to the height of seven or eight feet, and the mortar fell off with an eighth of an inch thickness of this soot adhering to it, as if the recess had been a fireplace mortared over.

I have just been reading the account of Dr. Ball's sufferings on the White Mountains. Of course, I do not wonder that he was lost. I should say: Never undertake to ascend a mountain or thread a wilderness where there is any danger of being lost, without taking thick clothing, partly india-rubber, if not a tent or material for one; the best map to be had and a compass;

salt pork and hard-bread and salt; fish-hooks and lines; a good jack-knife, at least, if not a hatchet, and perhaps a gun; matches in a vial stopped water-tight; some strings and paper. Do not take a dozen steps which you could not with tolerable accuracy protract on a chart. I never do otherwise. Indeed, you must have been living all your life in some such methodical and assured fashion, though in the midst of cities, else you will be lost in spite of all this preparation.

HOW TO CATCH A PIG

If it is a wild shoat, do not let him get scared; shut up the dogs and keep mischievous boys and men out of the way. Think of some suitable inclosure in the neighborhood, no matter if it be a pretty large field, if it chances to be tightly fenced; and with the aid of another prudent person give the pig all possible opportunities to enter it. Do not go very near him nor appear to be driving him, only let him avoid you, persuade him to prefer that inclosure. If the case is desperate and it is necessary, you may make him think that you wish him to [go] anywhere else but into that field, and he will be pretty sure to go there. Having got him into that inclosure and put up the fence, you can contract it at your leisure. When you have him in your hands, if he is obstinate, do not try to drive him with a rope round one leg. Spare the neighbors' ears and your pig's feelings, and put him into a cart or wheelbarrow.

The brick above described appears to be of the same size with those of Governor Craddock's house in Med-

ford, said to have been built in 1634 and measured by Brooks. (*Vide* Book of Facts.)

It is remarkable that though Elwell, the last occupant of this house, never has seen this inscription, it being in this obscure nook in the cellar, the inscriber's purpose is served, for now nothing stands but the other chimney and the foundation of this, and the inscription is completely exposed to the daylight and to the sun, and far more legible even a rod or two off than it could have been when made. There it is, staring all visitors in the face, on that clear space of mortar just lifted above the mouldering ruins of the chimney around it. Yesterday you could not get within a rod of it, but distinctly read it over the furnace of hot bricks and coals.

I brought away a brick and a large flake of the mortar with letters on it, but it crumbled in my hands, and I was reminded of the crumbling of some of the slabs of Nineveh in the hands of Layard as soon as brought to light, and felt a similar grief because I could not transport it entire to a more convenient place than that scorching pile, or even lay the crumbling mass down, without losing forever the outlines and the significance of those yet undeciphered words. But I laid it down, of necessity, and that was the end of it. There was our sole Nineveh slab, perhaps the oldest *engraving* in Concord.¹

Webster prided himself on being the first *farmer* in the south parish of Marshfield, but if he was the first they must have been a sorry set, for his farming was a complete failure. It cost a great deal more than it

¹ No: some gravestones are undoubtedly older.

came to. He used other people's capital, and was insolvent when he died, so that his friends and relatives found it difficult to retain the place, if indeed they have not sold it. How much cheaper it would have been for the town or county to have maintained him in the almshouse than as a farmer at large! How many must have bled annually to manure his broad potato-fields, who without inconvenience could have contributed sufficient to maintain him in the almshouse!

Feb. 16. 8 A. M. — To Lee house site again.

It was a rough-cast house when I first knew it. The fire still glowing among the bricks in the cellar. Richard Barrett says he remembers the inscription and the date 1650, but not the rest distinctly. I find that this recess was not in the cellar, but on the west side of the parlor, which was on the same level with the upper cellar at the west end of the house. It was on the back side of a cupboard (in that parlor), which was a few inches deep at the bottom and sloped back to a foot perhaps at top, or on the brick jog three inches at bottom and five and a half at top, and had shelves. The sitting-room of late was on the same level, the west side of this chimney.

The old part of the chimney, judging from the clay and the size of the brick, was seven feet wide east and west and about ten north and south. There was the back side of an old oven visible on the south side (late the front of the house) under the stairs (that had been), which had been filled up with the large bricks in clay.

The chimney above and behind the oven and this recess had been filled in with great stones, many much bigger than one's head, packed in clay mixed with the coarsest meadow-hay. Sometimes there were masses of pure clay and hay a foot in diameter. There was a very great proportion of the hay, consisting of cut-grass, three-sided carex, ferns, and still stouter woody stems, apparently a piece of corn-husk one inch wide and several long. And impressions in the clay of various plants, — grasses, ferns, etc., — exactly like those in coal in character. These are perhaps the oldest pressed plants in Concord. I have a mass eight or nine inches in diameter which is apparently one third vegetable. About these stones there is generally only the width (four and one quarter inches) of one brick, so that the chimney was a mere shell.

Though the inscription was in a coarse mortar mixed with straw, the sooty bricks over which it was spread were laid in a better mortar, without straw, and yet the mass of the bricks directly above this recess, in the chimney, were all laid in *clay*. Perhaps they had used plastering *there* instead of clay because it was a fireplace. A thin coating of whiter and finer mortar or plastering without straw had been spread over the sloping and rounded chimney above the recess and on each side and below it, and this covered many small bricks mingled with the large ones, and though this looked more modern, the straw-mixed mortar of the inscription overlapped at the top about a foot, proving the coarser mortar the more recent.

The inscription, then, was made after the chimney

was built, when some alteration was made, and a small brick had come to be used. Yet so long ago that straw was mixed with the mortar.

If that recess was an old fireplace, then, apparently, the first house fronted east, for the oven was on the south side.

A boy who was at the fire said to me, "This was the chimney in which the cat was burned up; she ran into a stove, and we heard her cries in the midst of the fire." Parker says there was no cat; she was drowned.

According to Shattuck, Johnson, having the period from 1645 to 1650 in view, says of Concord that it *had* been more populous. "The number of families at present are about 50. Their buildings are conveniently placed, chiefly in one strait street under a sunny banke in a low level," etc. (History, page 18.)

According to Shattuck (page 14), Governor Winthrop "selected (judiciously, I think) a lot in Concord [apparently in 1638],¹ which 'he intended to build upon,' near where Captain Humphrey Hunt now lives."

I was contending some time ago that our meadows must have been wetter once than they now are, else the trees would have got up there more. I see that Shattuck says under 1654 (page 33), "The meadows were somewhat drier, and ceased to be a subject of frequent complaint."

According to Wood's "New England's Prospect," the first settlers of Concord for meat bought "venison or rockoons" of the Indians. The latter must have been common then. The wolves robbed them of their swine.

¹ [Brackets in original journal.]

A wonderfully warm day (the third one); about 2 P. M., thermometer in shade 58.

I perceive that some, commonly talented, persons are enveloped and confined by a certain crust of manners, which, though it may sometimes be a fair and transparent enamel, yet only repels and saddens the beholder, since by its rigidity it seems to repress all further expansion. They are viewed as at a distance, or like an insect under a tumbler. They have, as it were, prematurely hardened both seed and shell, and this has severely taxed, if not put a period to, the life of the plant. This is to stand upon your dignity.

Genius has evanescent boundaries, like an altar from which incense rises.

The former are, after all, but hardened sinners in a mild sense. The pearl is a hardened sinner. Manners get to be human parchment, in which sensible books are often bound and honorable titles engrossed, though they may be very stiff and dry.

Feb. 17. Thermometer at 1 P. M., 60°.

The river is fairly breaking up, and men are out with guns after muskrats, and even boats. Some are apprehending loss of fruit from this warm weather. It is as open as the 3d of April last year, at least.

P. M. — To the old Hunt house.

The bricks of the old chimney which has the date on it vary from eight to eight and one half inches in length, but the oldest in the chimney in the rear part are nine to nine and one fourth long by four and one fourth plus wide and two and one fourth to two and one half

thick. This the size also of the bricks in clay behind the boarding of the house. There is straw in the clay and also in the lime used as plastering in both these chimneys. That on the first has a singular blue color. This house is about forty-nine feet on the front by twenty. The middle of door about twenty-five and a half feet from east end. House from fourteen to fifteen feet high. There was a door at the west end within Abel Hunt's remembrance; you can see where. The rear part has a wholly oak frame, while the front is pine. But I doubt if it is older, because the boards on the main part are feather-edged even within this part, as if they had once been on the outside. E. Hosmer says that his father said that Dr. Lee told him that he put on the whole upper, *i. e.* third, story of the Lee house. Says his old house where Everett lives was dated 1736.

Feb. 18. Another remarkably warm and pleasant day. The nights of late nearly as warm as the day. When I step out into the yard I hear that earliest spring note from some bird, perhaps a pigeon woodpecker (or can it be a nuthatch, whose ordinary note I hear?), the rapid *whar whar, whar whar, whar whar*, which I have so often heard before any other note.¹

The snow is nearly all gone, and it is so warm and springlike that I walk over to the hill, listening for spring birds. The roads are beginning to be settled. I step excited over the moist mossy ground, dotted with the green stars of thistles, crowfoot, etc., the outsides of which are withered.

¹ *Vide* Mar. 18th.

Amid the pitch pines by the hemlocks I am surprised to find a great mildew on the ground, three or four feet long by two and a half wide and one fourth to one inch thick, investing the pine-needles and grass stubble and fallen hemlock twigs, like a thick cobweb or veil, through which the ground, etc., is seen dimly. It has a regular vegetable or lichen-like border, creeping outward from a centre, and is more cottony and fibrous there. Like the ground generally thereabouts, it has an inspiring sweet, musty scent when I stoop close to it. I was surprised to find how sweet the whole ground smelled when I lay flat and applied my nose to it; more so than any cow; as it were the promise of the perfect man and new springs to eternity. The mildew apparently occupied the place where a mass of snow ice rested yesterday (it was not yet wholly gone on one side). It was the snow-bank's footprint, or rather its *plantain*. One of the first growths of the new year, surely. Further in the pines there was more of it wherever the snow had but just disappeared, a great many square rods of it all put together. But also there was, very similar to it, yet only a thin veil, the apparent gossamer of spring and fall, close to the edge of the melting snow, and I saw a spider or two. This had only the thickness of a cobweb and was covered with dew, yet was rather hard to distinguish from the mildew. Thin cobwebs were very widely dispersed in the meadows where the snow had just melted.¹

I *thought* at one time that I heard a bluebird. Hear a fly buzz amid some willows.

¹ *Vide* next page [below]. *Vide* Mar. 4, 1860.

Thermometer at 1 P. M., 65.

Sophia says that Mrs. Brooks's spiræas have started considerably!

I hear that geese went over Cambridge last night.

I sit all this day and evening without a fire, and some even have windows open.

P. M. — To Hubbard's Bath.

The frost out of the ground and the ways settled in many places. I see much more of that gossamer (?) of the morning, — still regarding the large mildew as different. It abounds in all low grounds where there is a firm pasture sod, where a snow-bank has just melted or on the edge of one that is fast disappearing. I observe some remarkable ones on Hubbard's land just below the mountain sumachs. They are thin webs over the grass just laid bare close to the snow commonly and over the icy edge of the snow. They are not under the snow. I thought at first it had been formed on the surface of the snow and when it melted rested lightly on the stubble beneath, but I could detect none extending more than three or four inches over the icy edge of the snow, though every stubble half exposed amid the snow even was the source or *point d'appui* of some. Sometimes, to my surprise, it was an extremely thin, but close-woven (?), perhaps air-tight veil, of the same color but still thinner than the thinnest tissue paper or membrane, in patches one to three feet in diameter, resting lightly on the stubble, which supports it in the form of little tents. This is now dry and very brittle, yet I can get up pieces an inch across. It suggests even a scum on the edge of the melting snow, which has

at last dried and hardened into a web. Here is one which, as commonly, springs from three or four inches within the melted snow, partly resting close and flat upon it, and extends thence several feet from its edge over the stubble. None of these have the thickness of mildew, and for cobwebs I see but two or three spiders about and cannot believe that they can have done all this in one night, nor do they make a close web. It lies lightly upon the stubble and the edge of the snow, as if it had settled in the night from the atmosphere. Can it be a scum formed on the melting snow, caught at last on the stubble like the pap of paper taken up in a sieve? Further off on every side I see the same now fretted away, like a coarse and worn-out sieve, where it was perfect perhaps yesterday.

Thus it lasts all day, conspicuous many rods off. I think there must be a square mile of this, at least, in Concord. It is after a very warm, muggy, but fair night, the last snow going off and the thermometer at 50°. Thinnest, frailest, gossamer veils dropped from above on the stubble, as if the fairies had dropped their veils or handkerchiefs after a midnight revel, rejoicing at the melting of the snow.

What can it be? Is it animal or vegetable? I suspect it is allied to mould; or is it a scum? or have the spiders anything to do with it? It suggests even a nebulous vegetable matter in the air, which, under these circumstances, in a muggy night, is condensed into this primitive vegetable form. Is it a sort of *flowing* of the earth, a waste fertility anticipating the more regular growths of spring?

Has not some slightly glutinous substance been deposited from the atmosphere on the snow, which is thus collected into a thin sort of paper, even like the brown-paper conferva? Is it a species of conferva?

I am excited by this wonderful air and go listening for the note of the bluebird or other comer. The very grain of the air seems to have undergone a change and is ready to split into the form of the bluebird's warble. Methinks if it were visible, or I could cast up some fine dust which would betray it, it would take a corresponding shape. The bluebird does not come till the air consents and his wedge will enter easily. The air over these fields is a foundry full of moulds for casting bluebirds' warbles.¹ Any sound uttered now would take that form, not of the harsh, vibrating, rending scream of the jay, but a softer, flowing, curling warble, like a purling stream or the lobes of flowing sand and clay. Here is the soft air and the moist expectant apple trees, but not yet the bluebird. They do not quite attain to song.

What a poem is this of spring, so often repeated! I am thrilled when I hear it spoken of, — as the *spring* of such a year, that fyttle of the glorious epic.

Picked up a mouse-nest in the stubble at Hubbard's mountain sumachs, left bare by the melting snow. It is about five inches wide and three or four high, with one, if not two, small round indistinct entrances on the side, not very obvious till you thrust your finger through them and press aside the fine grass that closes them, ready to yield to the pressure of the mouse's body. It

¹ [Channing, pp. 78, 79.]

is made very firmly and round, far more so than an oven-bird's nest, of the rye and grass stubble which was at hand under the snow, gnawed off to convenient lengths. A very snug and warm nest, where several might have lain very cosily under the snow in the hardest winter. Near by were collected many large green droppings of the usual form, as if for cleanliness, several feet off. Many galleries were visible close to the ground, in the withered grass under the snow. Is it not the nest of a different mouse from the *Mus leucopus* of the woods?

Mr. Prichard says that when he first came to Concord wood was \$2.50 per cord. Father says that good wood was \$3.00 per cord, and he can remember the longest; white pine, \$2.00; maple, sixteen shillings.

When I approached the bank of a ditch this afternoon, I saw a frog diving to the bottom. The warmer water had already awaked him, and perhaps he had been sitting on the bank.

The above-described gossamer often has small roundish spots on it, two or three inches in diameter, which are whiter and much thicker, even like the silvery scales under which some kinds of insects lurk, somewhat. I see none of this over sand or in the road, as I suppose would be the case if it were a mere scum on the snow, or a deposition from the atmosphere. Must it not be of the nature of mildew? It is as if it were a thin and tender membrane that envelops the infant earth in earliest spring, at once rent and dissipated.

Feb. 19. Cloudy and somewhat rainy, the thermometer at last fallen to thirty-two and thirty-three degrees.

I have often noticed that the surface of the snow was rippled or waved like water. The dust from plowed ground collects on the ridges which bound these waves, and there it becomes very conspicuous as the snow melts, the ridges standing out more and more, for the dirt apparently protects the snow from the sun. Why do water and snow take just this form?

Some willow catkins have crept a quarter of an inch from under their scales and look very red, probably on account of the warm weather.

A man cannot be said to succeed in this life who does not satisfy one friend.

An old man, one of my neighbors, is so demented that he put both legs into one leg of his pantaloons the other morning!

Mr. Cheney tells me that Goodwin brought him a partridge to sell in the midst of the late severe weather. C. said it was a pity to kill it, it must find it hard to get a living. "I guess she did n't find it any harder than I do," answered G.

It would be pleasant to recall to mind the different styles of boats that have been used on this river from the first, beginning with the bark canoe and the dug-out, or log canoe, or pirogue. Then, perhaps, some simple log canoe, or such a boat as now prevails, which probably has its prototype on English rivers, — call it dory, skiff, or what-not, — made as soon as boards were sawed here; the smaller, punt-like ones for one man; the round-bottomed boats from below, and the

half-round or lapstreaked, sometimes with sails; the great canal-boats; and the hay-boats of the Sudbury meadows; and lastly what the boys call "shell-boats," introduced last year, in imitation of the Esquimaux kayak.

At evening it begins to snow, and —

(*Feb. 20*) this morning the ground is once more covered about one inch deep.

Minott says that the house he now lives in was framed and set up by Captain Isaac Hoar just beyond the old house by Moore's, this side the one he was born in, his mother's (?) house (whose well is that buried by Alcott on the sidewalk), and there the frame stood several years, Hoar having gone off, he thinks, to Westminster. (M. helped a man take down its chimney when he was a boy; it was very old, laid in clay.) He was quite a lad and used to climb up on the frame and, with a teaspoon, take the eggs of the house wren out of the mortise-holes. At last his grandfather, Dr. Abel Prescott, "an eminent physician," bought it and moved it to where it now stands, and died in [it] in 1805, aged eighty-eight (born 1717). Said he died exactly where I sat, and the bed stood so and so, north and south from the clock. This Dr. Prescott had once probably lived with his nephew Willoughby Prescott, where Loring's is. After, when married, lived in the old rough-cast house near the poorhouse where Minott's mother was born. It was Dr. Abel P.'s son Abel (Minott's uncle) who rode into Concord before the British. Minott's father was rich, and died early in the army. Aunt says.

Minott always sits in the corner behind the door, close to the stove, with commonly the cat by his side, often in his lap. Often he sits with his hat on. He says that Frank Buttrick (who for a great many years worked at carpentering for John Richardson, and was working for him when he died) told him that Richardson called him when he was at the point of death and told him that he need not stop working on account of his death, but he might come in to the prayer if he wished to. R. is spoken of as a strong and resolute man.

I wish that there was in every town, in some place accessible to the traveller, instead [of] or beside the common directories, etc., a list of the worthies of the town, *i. e.* of those who are *worth* seeing.

Miss Minott has several old pieces of furniture that belonged to her grandfather Prescott, one a desk made for him and marked 1760. She said the looking-glass was held oldest furniture, she thought. It has the name John scratched on the middle by a madeap named John Bulkley from college, who had got so far with a diamond before he was stopped.

Beverly, after describing the various kinds of fowl that frequented the shores of Virginia, "not to mention beavers, otters, musk rats, minxes," etc., etc., says, "Although the inner lands want these benefits (which, however, no pond or plash is without)," etc. I admire the offhand way of describing the superfluous fertility of the land and water.

What is the relation between a bird and the ear that appreciates its melody, to whom, perchance, it is more

charming and significant than to any else? Certainly they are intimately related, and the one was made for the other. It is a natural fact. If I were to discover that a certain kind of stone by the pond-shore was affected, say partially disintegrated, by a particular natural sound, as of a bird or insect, I see that one could not be completely described without describing the other. I am that rock by the pond-side.

What is hope, what is expectation, but a seed-time whose harvest cannot fail, an irresistible expedition of the mind, at length to be victorious?

Feb. 21. The puffball is used by doctors to stop bleeding. Has not this property to do with its power of repelling moisture? Some have now almost entirely lost their dust, leaving a dry almost woolly substance. Am surprised to see this afternoon a boy collecting red maple sap from some trees behind George Hubbard's. It runs freely. The earliest sap I made to flow last year was March 14th. It must be owing to the warm weather we have had.

The river for some days has been open and its sap visibly flowing, like the maple.

Feb. 22. P. M. — To Dugan Desert.

The Tommy Wheeler house, like the Hunt house, has the sills projecting inside. Its bricks are about the same size with those of the Lee chimney; they are eight and three quarters to nine inches long by four and a half, but not in clay. A part at least of the back side has bricks on their edges in clay, as at the Hunt house, and there

are bricks in clay flat on the plate, close under roof at the eaves. I think that by the size of the bricks you cannot tell the age of an *old* house within fifty years.

Feb. 23. P. M. — See two yellow-spotted tortoises in the ditch south of Trillium Wood. You saunter expectant in the mild air along the soft edge of a ditch filled with melted snow and paved with leaves, in some sheltered place, yet perhaps with some ice at one end still, and are thrilled to see stirring amid the leaves at the bottom, sluggishly burying themselves from your sight again, these brilliantly spotted creatures. There are commonly two, at least. The tortoise is stirring in the ditches again. In your latest spring they still look incredibly strange when first seen, and not like cohabitants and contemporaries of yours.

I say in my thought to my neighbor, who was once my friend, "It is of no use to speak the truth to you, you will not hear it. What, then, shall I say to you?" At the instant that I seem to be saying farewell forever to one who has been my friend, I find myself unexpectedly near to him, and it is our very nearness and dearness to each other that gives depth and significance to that forever. Thus I am a helpless prisoner, and these chains I have no skill to break. While I think I have broken one link, I have been forging another.

I have not yet known a friendship to cease, I think. I fear I have experienced its decaying. Morning, noon, and night, I suffer a physical pain, an aching of the breast which unfits me for my tasks. It is perhaps most intense at evening. With respect to Friendship I feel

like a wreck that is driving before the gale, with a crew suffering from hunger and thirst, not knowing what shore, if any, they may reach, so long have I *breasted* the conflicting waves of this sentiment, my seams open, my timbers laid bare. I float on Friendship's sea simply because my specific gravity is less than its, but no longer that stanch and graceful vessel that careered so buoyantly over it. My planks and timbers are scattered. At most I hope to make a sort of raft of Friendship, on which, with a few of our treasures, we may float to some firm land.

That aching of the breast, the grandest pain that man endures, which no ether can assuage.

You cheat me, you keep me at a distance with your manners. I know of no other dishonesty, no other devil. Why this doubleness, these compliments? They are the worst of lies. A lie is not worse between traders than a compliment between friends. I would not, I cannot speak. I will let you *feel* my thought, my feeling.

Friends! they are united for good and for evil. They can delight each other as none other can. They can distress each other as none other can. Lying on lower levels is but a trivial offense compared with civility and compliments on the level of Friendship.

I visit my friend for joy, not for disturbance. If my coming hinders him in the least conceivable degree, I will exert myself to the utmost to stay away, I will get the Titans to help me stand aloof, I will labor night and day to construct a rampart between us. If my coming casts but the shadow of a shadow before it, I will retreat swifter than the wind and more untrackable. I will be

gone irrevocably, if possible, before he fears that I am coming.

If the teeth ache they can be pulled. If the heart aches, what then? Shall we pluck it out?

Must friends then expect the fate of those Oriental twins, — that one shall at last bear about the corpse of the other, by that same ligature that bound him to a living companion?

Look before you leap. Let the isthmus be cut through, unless sea meets sea at exactly the same level, unless a perfect understanding and equilibrium has been established from the beginning around Cape Horn and the unnamed northern cape. What a tumult! It is Atlantic and Atlantic, or it is Atlantic and Pacific.

What mean these turtles, these coins of the muddy mint issued in early spring? The bright spots on their backs are vain unless I behold them. The spots *seem* brighter than ever when first beheld in the spring, as does the bark of the willow.

I have seen signs of the spring. I have seen a frog swiftly sinking in a pool, or where he dimpled the surface as he leapt in. I have seen the brilliant spotted tortoises stirring at the bottom of ditches. I have seen the clear sap trickling from the red maple.

Feb. 24. A fine spring morning. The ground is almost completely bare again. There has been a frost in the night. Now, at 8.30, it is melted and wets my feet like a dew. The water on the meadow this still, bright morning is smooth as in April. I am surprised to hear the strain of a song sparrow from the riverside, and as

I cross from the causeway to the hill, thinking of the bluebird, I that instant hear one's note from deep in the softened air. It is already 40°, and by noon is between 50° and 60°. As the day advances I hear more bluebirds and see their azure flakes settling on the fence-posts. Their short, rich, crispy warble curls through the air. Its grain now lies parallel to the curve of the bluebird's warble, like boards of the same lot. It *seems* to be one of those early springs of which we have heard but have never experienced. Perhaps they are fabulous. I have seen the probings of skunks for a week or more. I now see where one has pawed out the worm-dust or other chankings from a hole in base of a walnut and torn open the fungi, etc., there, exploring for grubs or insects. They are very busy these nights.

If I should make the least concession, my friend would spurn me. I am obeying his law as well as my own.

Where is the actual friend you love? Ask from what hill the rainbow's arch springs! It adorns and crowns the earth.

Our friends are our kindred, of our species. There are very few of our species on the globe.

Between me and my friend what unfathomable distance! All mankind, like motes [?] and insects, are between us.

If my friend says in his mind, I will *never* see you again, I translate it of necessity into *ever*. That is its definition in Love's lexicon.

Those whom we can love, we can hate; to others we are indifferent.

P. M. — To Walden.

The railroad in the Deep Cut is dry as in spring, almost dusty. The best of the sand foliage is already gone. I walk without a greatcoat. A chickadee with its winter lisp flits over, and I think it is time to hear its *phebe* note, and that instant it pipes it forth. Walden is still covered with thick ice, though melted a foot from the shore.

The French (in the Jesuit Relations) say *fil de l'eau* for that part of the current of a river in which any floating thing would be carried, generally about equidistant from the two banks. It is a convenient expression, for which I think we have no equivalent.¹

Get my boat out the cellar.

Feb. 25. I hear of lilac buds expanding, but have not looked at them. I go through the woods behind the Kettle place. The leaves rustle and look all dry on the ground in the woods, as if quite ready to burn. The flies buzz out of doors. Though I left my outside coat at home, this single thick one is too much. I go across the Great Fields to Peter's, but can see no ducks on the meadows. I suspect they have not come yet, in spite of the openness. The fragrant everlasting has retained its fragrance all winter. That mildew, or gossamer-like scum, of the 18th is still visible here and there. It is like very thin and frail isinglass. Goodwin says he saw a robin this morning. The thermometer is at 65° at noon.

¹ [Thoreau afterward used an English equivalent, "thread of the river." See *postea*. The term is given in the dictionaries, but may be more recent than Thoreau's time.]

Feb. 26. Cold and windy. The river fast going down. Paint the bottom of my boat.

What an accursed land, methinks unfit for the habitation of man, where the wild animals are monkeys!

I saw Mrs. Brooks's spiræas to-day grown half an inch (!!), whose starting I heard of on the 18th.¹

Feb. 27. Before I opened the window this cold morning, I heard the peep of a robin, that sound so often heard in cheerless or else rainy weather, so often heard first borne on the cutting March wind or through sleet or rain, as if its coming were premature.

P. M. — To the Hill.

The river has skimmed over again in many places. I see many crows on the hillside, with their sentinel on a tree. They are picking the cow-dung scattered about, apparently for the worms, etc., it contains. They have done this in so many places that it looks as if the farmer had been at work with his maul. They must save him some trouble thus.² I see cinders two or three inches in diameter, apparently burnt clapboards, on the bank of the North River, which came from the burning Lee house! Yet it was quite a damp night, after rain in the afternoon, and rather still. They are all curled by the heat, so that you can tell which side was first exposed to it. The grain is more distinct than ever. Nature so abhors a straight line that she curls each cinder as she launches it on the fiery whirlwind. All the *lightness* and ethereal spirit of the wood is gone,

¹ *Vide* Mar. 4th.

² Notice the like extensively early in March, 1860.

and this black earthy residuum alone returned. The russet hillside is spotted with them. They suggest some affinity with the cawing crows.

I see some of those large purplish chocolate-colored puffballs. They grow in dry pastures. They are in various states. I do not understand their changes.¹ Some are quite pulverulent, and emitting a cloud of dust at every touch. Others present a firm, very light ash-colored surface above, in a shallow saucer, with a narrow, wrinkled, crenate border, and beneath this firm skin is a perfectly dry spongy mass, less ashy, more reddish than the last, and fibrous, with very little dust in it but many small ribbed grubs. The surface often looks as if it had been pecked by birds in search of these grubs. Sometimes there is, above the white skin of the saucer, considerable pulverulent substance, as if in the other case this had been dissipated. Sometimes two large ones are joined at the root. Was there any portion (now dissipated) above this light-colored skin? Did the portion beneath the skin originally contain more dust, which has escaped? Or will it yet come to dust?

Are not fungi the best hygrometers?

Feb. 28. Nearly two inches of snow in the night.

P. M. — To Lee's Cliff.

I see the track, apparently of a muskrat (?), — about five inches wide with very sharp and distinct trail of tail, — on the snow and thin ice over the little rill in

¹ See both these and *Lycoperdon stellatum* when ground is laid bare in spring, as about Mar. 1, 1860 (no account).

the Miles meadow. It was following up this rill, often not more than thrice as wide as itself, and sometimes its precise locality concealed under ice and snow, yet he kept exactly above it on the snow through all its windings, where it was open occasionally taking to the water and sometimes swimming under the ice a rod or two. It is interesting to see how every little rill like this will be haunted by muskrats or minks. Does the mink ever leave a track of its tail?

At the Cliff, the tower-mustard, early crowfoot, and perhaps buttercup appear to have started of late. It takes several years' faithful search to learn where to look for the earliest flowers.

It is a singular infatuation that leads men to become clergymen in regular, or even irregular, standing. I pray to be introduced to new men, at whom I may stop short and taste their peculiar sweetness. But in the clergyman of the most liberal sort I see no perfectly independent human nucleus, but I seem to see some indistinct scheme hovering about, to which he has lent himself, to which he belongs. It is a very fine cobweb in the lower stratum of the air, which stronger wings do not even discover. Whatever he may say, he does not know that one day is as good as another. Whatever he may say, he does not know that a man's creed can never be written, that there are no particular expressions of belief that deserve to be prominent. He dreams of a certain sphere to be filled by him, something less in diameter than a great circle, maybe not greater than a hoghead. All the staves are got out, and his sphere is already hooped. What's the use of talking to

him? When you spoke of sphere-music he thought only of a thumping on his cask. If he does n't know something that nobody else does, that nobody told him, then he's a telltale. What great interval is there between him who is caught in Africa and made a plantation slave of in the South, and him who is caught in New England and made a Unitarian minister of? In course of time they will abolish the one form of servitude, and, not long after, the other. I do not see the necessity for a man's getting into a hogshead and so narrowing his sphere, nor for his putting his head into a halter. Here's a man who can't butter his own bread, and he has just combined with a thousand like him to make a dipped toast for all eternity!¹

Nearly one third the channel is open in Fair Haven Pond. The snow lies on the ice in large but very shallow drifts, shaped, methinks, much like the holes in ice, broad crescents (apparently) convex to the northwest.

¹ [Channing, p. 99.]