

THOREAU'S JOURNAL I

[The extracts which have been chosen for the first installment of the Journal are taken from the earliest manuscript volumes, which have already been largely drawn upon by Thoreau himself in the *Week* and *Walden*, as well as by H. G. Blake in his four volumes of selected passages. The hitherto unprinted paragraphs which are here given are therefore much briefer and more unconnected than the extracts from the later volumes, which will appear in subsequent installments. — THE EDITORS.]

October 22, 1837.

"WHAT are you doing now?" he asked; "Do you keep a journal?" So I make my first entry to-day.

Solitude.

To be alone I find it necessary to escape the present, — I avoid myself. How could I be alone in the Roman emperor's chamber of mirrors? I seek a garret. The spiders must not be disturbed, nor the floor swept, nor the lumber arranged.

November 5, 1837.

Truth.

Truth strikes us from behind, and in the dark, as well as from before and in broad daylight.

February 9, 1838.

Fear.

All fear of the world or consequences is swallowed up in a manly anxiety to do Truth justice.

March 5, 1838.

Such is man, — toiling, heaving, struggling ant-like to shoulder some stray unappropriated crumb and deposit it in his granary; then runs out, complacent, gazes heavenward, earthward (for even pismires can look down), heaven and earth meanwhile looking downward, upward; there seen of men, world-seen, deed-delivered, vanishes into all-grasping night. And is he doomed ever to run the same course? Can he not, wriggling, screwing, self-exhorting, self-constraining, wriggle or screw out something that shall live, — respected, intact, intangible, not to be sneezed at?¹

¹ "Carlyleish" is written in the margin against this passage.

March 6, 1838.

How can a man sit down and quietly pare his nails, while the earth goes gyrating ahead amid such a din of sphere music, whirling him along about her axis some twenty-four thousand miles between sun and sun, but mainly in a circle some two millions of miles actual progress? And then such a hurly-burly on the surface, — wind always blowing, now a zephyr, now a hurricane; tides never idle, ever fluctuating; no rest for Niagara, but perpetual ran-tan on those limestone rocks; and then that summer simmering which our ears are used to, which would otherwise be christened confusion worse confounded, but is now ironically called "silence audible;" and, above all, the incessant tinkering named "hum of industry," the hurrying to and fro and confused jabbering of men. Can man do less than get up and shake himself?

April 1, 1838.

The Indian Axe.

The Indian must have possessed no small share of vital energy to have rubbed industriously stone upon stone for long months till at length he had rubbed out an axe or pestle, — as though he had said in the face of the constant flux of things, I at least will live an enduring life.

April 15, 1838.

Conversation.

Thomas Fuller relates that "In Merionethshire, in Wales, there are high mountains, whose hanging tops come so close together that shepherds on the tops of several hills may audibly talk together, yet will it be a day's journey for their

bodies to meet, so vast is the hollowness of the valleys betwixt them." As much may be said in a moral sense of our intercourse in the plains, for, though we may audibly converse together, yet is there so vast a gulf of hollowness between that we are actually many days' journey from a veritable communication.

April 24, 1838.

Steamships.

Men have been contriving new means and modes of motion. Steamships have been westerling during these late days and nights on the Atlantic waves, — the fugglers of a new evolution to this generation. Meanwhile plants spring silently by the brooksides, and the grim woods wave indifferent; the earth emits no howl, pot on fire simmers and seethes, and men go about their business.

August 5, 1838.

Divine Service in the Academy Hall.

In dark places and dungeons these words might perhaps strike root and grow, but utter them in the daylight and their dusky hues are apparent. From this window I can compare the written with the preached word: within is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; without, grain fields and grasshoppers, which give those the lie direct.

August 13, 1838.

Consciousness.

If with closed ears and eyes I consult consciousness for a moment, immediately are all walls and barriers dissipated, earth rolls from under me, and I float, by the impetus derived from the earth and the system, a subjective, heavily-laden thought, in the midst of an unknown and infinite sea, or else heave and swell like a vast ocean of thought, without rock or headland, where are all riddles solved, all straight lines making there their two ends to meet, eternity and space gambolling familiarly through my depths. I am from the beginning, knowing no end, no aim. No sun illumines me, for I dissolve all

lesser lights in my own intenser and steadier light. I am a restful kernel in the magazine of the universe.

Resource.

Men are constantly dinging in my ears their fair theories and plausible solutions of the universe, but ever there is no help, and I return again to my shoreless, islandless ocean, and fathom unceasingly for a bottom that will hold an anchor, that it may not drag.

August 29, 1838.

Deformity.

Here at the top of Nawshawtuct this mild August afternoon, I can discern no deformed thing. The profane haymakers in yonder meadow are yet the haymakers of poetry, forsooth Faustus and Amyntas. Yonder schoolhouse of brick, than which, near at hand, nothing can be more mote-like to my eye, serves even to heighten the picturesqueness of the scene. Barns and out-buildings, which in the nearness mar by their presence the loveliness of nature, are not only endurable, but, observed where they lie by some waving field of grain or patch of woodland, prove a very cynosure to the pensive eye. Let man after infinite hammering and din of crows uprear a deformity on the plain, yet will nature have her revenge on the hilltop. Retire a stone's throw and she will have changed his base metal into gold.

September 15, 1838.

Flow of Spirits in Youth.

How unaccountable the flow of spirits in youth! You may throw sticks and dirt into the current, and it will only rise the higher. Dam it up you may, but dry it up you may not, for you cannot reach its source. If you stop up this avenue or that, anon it will come gurgling out where you least expected and wash away all fixtures. Youth grasps at happiness as an inalienable right. The tear does no sooner gush than glisten. Who shall say when the tear that sprung of sorrow first sparkled with joy?

April 9, 1839.

Fat Pine for Spearing.

Fat roots of pine lying in rich veins as of gold or silver, even in old pastures where you would least expect it, make you realize that you live in the youth of the world, and you begin to know the wealth of the planet. Human nature is still in its prime, then. Bring axe, pick-axe, and shovel, and tap the earth here where there is most sap. The marrowy store gleams like some vigorous sinew, and you feel a new suppleness in your own limbs. These are the traits that conciliate man's moroseness, and make him civil to his fellows; every such pine root is a pledge of suavity. If he can discover absolute barrenness in any direction there will be some excuse for peevishness.

June 4, 1839.

My Attic.

I sit here this fourth of June, looking out on men and nature from this that I call my perspective window, through which all things are seen in their true relations. This is my upper empire, bounded by four walls, viz., three of boards yellow-washed, facing the north, west, and south, respectively, and the fourth of plaster, likewise yellow-washed, fronting the sunrise, — to say nothing of the purlieus and out-lying provinces, unexplored as yet but by rats.

July 11, 1839.

Every Man is a Roman Forum.

All things are up and down, — east and west, — to me. In me is the forum out of which go the Appian and Sacred Ways, and a thousand beside, to the ends of the world. If I forget my centralness, and say a bean winds with or against the sun, and not right or left, it will not be true south of the equator.

January 26, 1840.

Friends.

They are like air bubbles on water, hastening to flow together.

History tells of Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pythias, but why should we not put to shame those old reserved worthies by a community of such?

This conjunction of souls, like waves which meet and break, subsides also backward over things, and gives all a fresh aspect.

I would live henceforth with some gentle soul such a life as may be conceived, double for variety, single for harmony, — two, only that we might admire at our oneness, — one, because indivisible. Such community to be a pledge of holy living. How could aught unworthy be admitted into our society? To listen with one ear to each summer sound, to behold with one eye each summer scene, our visual rays so to meet and mingle with the object as to be one bent and doubled; with two tongues to be wearied, and thought to spring ceaselessly from a double fountain.

March 21, 1840.

The world is a fit theatre to-day in which any part may be acted. There is this moment proposed to me every kind of life that men lead anywhere, or that imagination can paint. By another spring I may be a mail-carrier in Peru, or a South African planter, or a Siberian exile, or a Greenland whaler, or a settler on the Columbia River, or a Canton merchant, or a soldier in Florida, or a mackerel fisher off Cape Sable, or a Robinson Crusoe in the Pacific, or a silent navigator of any sea. So wide is the choice of parts, what a pity if the part of Hamlet be left out!

I am freer than any planet; no complaint reaches round the world. I can move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education, from society. Shall I be reckoned a rateable poll in the county of Middlesex, or be rated at one spear under the palm trees of Guinea? Shall I raise corn and potatoes in Massachusetts, or figs and olives in Asia Minor? sit out the day in my office on State Street, or ride it out on

the steppes of Tartary? For my Brobdignag I may sail to Patagonia; for my Lilliput, to Lapland. In Arabia and Persia my day's adventures may surpass the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. I may be a logger on the head waters of the Penobscot, to be treated in fable hereafter as an amphibious river god by as sounding a name as Triton or Proteus; carry furs from Nootka to China, and so be more renowned than Jason and his golden fleece; or go on a South Sea exploring expedition to be hereafter recounted along with the periplus of Hanno. I may repeat the adventures of Marco Polo or Mandeville. These are but few of my chances, and how many more things may I do with which there are none to be compared!

June 18, 1840.

I should be pleased to meet man in the woods. I wish he were to be encountered like wild caribous and moose.

Of what consequence whether I stand on London bridge for the next century, or look into the depths of this bubbling spring which I have laid open with my hoe?

June 30, 1840.

I have a deep sympathy with war, it so apes the gait and bearing of the soul.

July 16, 1840.

We are as much refreshed by sounds as by sights, or scents, or flavors, — as the barking of a dog heard in the woods at midnight, or the tinklings which attend the dawn.

As I picked blackberries this morning, by starlight, the distant yelping of a dog fell on my inward ear, as the cool breeze on my cheek.

July 19, 1840.

These two days that I have not written in my Journal, set down in the calendar as the 17th and 18th of July, have been really an æon in which a Syrian empire might rise and fall. How many Persias have been lost and won in the interim? Night is spangled with fresh stars.

July 27, 1840.

Nature refuses to sympathize with our sorrow. She seems not to have provided for, but by a thousand contrivances against, it. She has bevelled the margins of the eyelids that the tears may not overflow on the cheek.

Saturday, January 30, 1841.

Sometimes I come out suddenly upon a high plain which seems to be the upper level and true surface of the earth and by its very baldness aspires and lies up nearer to the stars, — a place where a decalogue might be let down or a saint translated.

There is all the romance of my youthfullest moment in music. Heaven lies about us, as in our infancy. There is nothing so wild and extravagant that it does not make true. It makes a dream my only real experience, and prompts faith to such elasticity that only the incredible can satisfy it. It tells me again to trust the remotest, and finest, as the divinest instinct. All that I have imagined of heroism, it reminds and reassures me of. It is a life un-lived, a life beyond life, where at length my years will pass. I look under the lids of Time.

Saturday, February 6, 1841.

When one gets up to address briefly a strange audience, in that little he may have opportunity to say, he will not quite do himself injustice. For he will instantly and instinctively average himself to his audience, and, while he is true to his own character still, he will in a few moments make that impression which a series of months and years would but expand. Before he answers, his thought like lightning runs round the whole compass of his experiences, and he is scrupulous to speak from that which he is, and with a more entire truthfulness than usual.

Sunday, February 7, 1841.

Without greatcoat or drawers I have advanced thus far into the snowbanks of the winter, without thought and with im-

punity.¹ When I meet my neighbors in muffs and furs and tippets, they look as if they had retreated into the interior fastnesses from some foe invisible to me. They remind me that this is the season of winter in which it becomes a man to be cold. For feeling, I am a piece of clean wood of this shape which will do service till it rots, and, though the cold has a physical effect on me, it is a kindly one, for it "finds its acquaintance there." My diet is so little stimulating, and my body in consequence so little heated, as to excite no antagonism in nature, but flourishes like a tree which finds even the winter genial to its expansion and the secretion of sap. May not the body defend itself against cold by its very nakedness, and its elements be so simple and single that they cannot congeal? Frost does not affect one but several. My body now affords no more pasture for cold than a leafless twig. I call it a protestant warmth. My limbs do not tire as formerly, but I use myself as any other piece of nature, and from mere indifference and thoughtlessness *me*, break the timber.

It is the vice of the last season which compels us to arm ourselves for the next. If man always conformed to Nature, he would not have to defend himself against her, but find her his constant nurse and friend, as do plants and quadrupeds.

February 8, 1841.

My Journal.

I find it everywhere as free as the leaves which troop along the lanes in autumn. The crow, the goose, the eagle, carry my quill, and the wind blows the leaves as far as I go. Or if my imagination does not soar, but gropes in slime and mud, then I write with a reed.

Wednesday, February 10, 1841.

I asked a man to-day if he would rent me some land, and he said he had four acres as good soil "as any outdoors." It was a true poet's account of it. He and

¹ See below. February 14. also. February 23.

I, and all the world, went outdoors to breathe the free air and stretch ourselves. For the world is but outdoors, and we duck behind a panel.

Sunday, February 14, 1841.

I am confined to the house by bronchitis, and so seek to content myself with that quiet and serene life there is in a warm corner by the fireside, and see the sky through the chimney top. Sickness should not be allowed to extend further than the body. We need only to retreat further within us, to preserve uninterrupted the continuity of serene hours to the end of our lives.

As soon as I find my chest is not of tempered steel, and heart of adamant, I bid good bye to these and look out a new nature. I will be liable to no accidents.²

Thursday, February 18, 1841.

I do not judge men by anything they can do. Their greatest deed is the impression they make on me. Some serene, inactive men can do everything. Talent only indicates a depth of character in some direction. We do not acquire the ability to do new deeds, but a new capacity for all deeds. The gnarled stump has as tender a bud as the sapling.

Sunday, February 21, 1841.

It is hard to preserve equanimity and greatness on that debatable ground between love and esteem. There is nothing so stable and unfluctuating as love. The waves beat steadfast on its shore forever, and its tide has no ebb. It is a resource in all extremities, and a refuge even from itself. And yet love will not be leaned on.

February 22, 1841.

The whole of the day should not be daytime, nor of the night night-time, but some portion be rescued from time to oversee time in. All our hours must not

² This passage has been printed by Blake, but it should be read in connection with the entries for February 7 and February 23.

be current; all our time must not lapse. There must be one hour at least which the day did not bring forth, — of ancient parentage and long established nobility, — which will be a serene and lofty platform overlooking the rest. We should make our notch every day on our characters, as Robinson Crusoe on his stick. We must be at the helm at least once a day; we must feel the tiller-ropes in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer.

Tuesday, February 23, 1841.

The care of the body is the highest exercise of prudence. If I have brought this weakness on my lungs, I will consider calmly and disinterestedly how the thing came about, that I may find out the truth and render justice. Then, after patience, I shall be a wiser man than before.

Thursday, April 15, 1841.

The gods are of no sect; they side with no man. When I imagine that nature inclined rather to some few earnest and faithful souls, and specially existed for them, I go to see an obscure individual who lives under the hill, letting both gods and men alone, and find that strawberries and tomatoes grow for him too, in his garden there, and the sun lodges kindly under his hillside, and am compelled to acknowledge the unbribable charity of the gods.

Any simple, unquestioned mode of life is alluring to men. The man who picks peas steadily for a living is more than respectable. He is to be envied by his neighbors.

Sunday, April 18, 1841.

We take little steps, and venture small stakes, as if our actions were very fatal and irretrievable. There is no swing to our deeds. But our life is only a retired valley where we rest on our packs awhile. Between us and our end there is room for any delay. It is not a short and easy southern way, but we must go over snow-capped mountains to reach the sun.

April 20, 1841.

You can't beat down your virtue; so much goodness it must have.

When a room is furnished, comfort is not furnished.

Great thoughts hallow any labor. To-day I earned seventy-five cents heaving manure out of a pen, and made a good bargain of it. If the ditcher muses the while how he may live uprightly, the ditching spade and turf knife may be engraved on the coat-of-arms of his posterity.

There are certain current expressions and blasphemous moods of viewing things, as when we say "he is doing a good business," — more profane than cursing and swearing. There is death and sin in such words. Let not the children hear them.

Thursday, April 22, 1841.

There are two classes of authors: the one write the history of their times, the other their biography.

Friday, April 23, 1841.

Any greatness is not to be mistaken. Who shall cavil at it? It stands once for all on a level with the heroes of history. It is not to be patronized. It goes alone.

When I hear music, I flutter, and am the scene of life, as a fleet of merchantmen when the wind rises.

April 25, 1841.

A momentous silence reigns always in the woods, and their meaning seems just ripening into expression. But alas! they make no haste. The rush sparrow,¹ nature's minstrel of serene hours, sings of an immense leisure and duration.

When I hear a robin sing at sunset, I cannot help contrasting the equanimity of nature with the bustle and impatience of man. We return from the lyceum and caucus with such stir and excitement, as if a crisis were at hand; but no natural

¹ Field sparrow. Nuttall's *Fringilla junco*. Nuttall gives both Field Sparrow and Rush Sparrow as the vernacular names.

scene or sound sympathizes with us, for Nature is always silent and unpretending as at the break of day. She but rubs her eyelids.

Monday, April 26, 1841.

At R. W. E.'s.

The charm of the Indian to me is that he stands free and unconstrained in nature, is her inhabitant and not her guest, and wears her easily and gracefully. But the civilized man has the habits of the house. His house is a prison, in which he finds himself oppressed and confined, not sheltered and protected. He walks as if he sustained the roof; he carries his arms as if the walls would fall in and crush him, and his feet remember the cellar beneath. His muscles are never relaxed. It is rare that he overcomes the house, and learns to sit at home in it, and roof and floor and walls support themselves, as the sky and trees and earth.

It is a great art to saunter.

Wednesday, April 28, 1841.

We falsely attribute to men a determined character; putting together all their yesterdays and averaging them, we presume we know them. Pity the man who has a character to support. It is worse than a large family. He is silent poor indeed. But in fact character is never explored, nor does it get developed in time, but eternity is its development, time its envelope. In view of this distinction, a sort of divine politeness and heavenly good breeding suggests itself, to address always the enveloped character of a man. I approach a great nature with infinite expectation and uncertainty, not knowing what I may meet. It lies as broad and unexplored before me as a scraggy hillside or pasture. I may hear a fox bark, or a partridge drum, or some bird new to these localities may fly up. It lies out there as old, and yet as new. The aspect of the woods varies every day, what with their growth and the changes of the seasons and the influence of the elements, so that the eye of the forester

never twice rests upon the same prospect. Much more does a character show newly and variedly, if directly seen. It is the highest compliment to suppose that in the intervals of conversation your companion has expanded and grown. It may be a deference which he will not understand, but the nature which underlies him will understand it, and your influence will be shed as finely on him as the dust in the sun settles on our clothes. By such politeness we may educate one another to some purpose. So have I felt myself educated sometimes; I am expanded and enlarged.

April 29, 1841.

Birds and quadrupeds pass freely through nature, without prop or stilt. But man very naturally carries a stick in his hand, seeking to ally himself by many points to nature, as a warrior stands by his horse's side with his hand on his mane. We walk the gracefuller for a cane, as the juggler uses a leaded pole to balance him when he dances on a slack wire.

Better a monosyllabic life than a ragged and muttered one; let its report be short and round like a rifle, so that it may hear its own echo in the surrounding silence.

Monday, May 3, 1841.

We are all pilots of the most intricate Bahama channels. Beauty may be the sky overhead, but Duty is the water underneath. When I see a man with serene countenance in the sunshine of summer, drinking in peace in the garden or parlor, it looks like a great inward leisure that he enjoys; but in reality he sails on no summer's sea, but this steady sailing comes of a heavy hand on the tiller. We do not attend to larks and bluebirds so leisurely but that conscience is as erect as the attitude of the listener. The man of principle gets never a holiday. Our true character silently underlies all our words and actions, as the granite underlies the other strata. Its steady pulse does not cease for

any deed of ours, as the sap is still ascending in the stalk of the fairest flower.

Sunday, May 9, 1841.

The pine stands in the woods like an Indian, untamed, with a fantastic wildness about it even in the clearings. If an Indian warrior were well painted, with pines in the background, he would seem to blend with the trees, and make a harmonious expression. The pitch pines are the ghosts of Philip and Massasoit. The white pine has the smoother features of the squaw.

Sunday, May 23, 1841.

Barn.

The distant woods are but the tassels of my eye.

Books are to be attended to as new sounds merely. Most would be put to a sore trial if the reader should assume the attitude of a listener. They are but a new note in the forest. To our lonely, sober thought the earth is a wild unexplored. Wildness as of the jay and muskrat reigns over the great part of nature. The oven-bird and plover are heard in the horizon. Here is a new book of heroes, come to me like the note of the chewink from over the fen, only over a deeper and wider fen. The pines are unrelenting sifters of thought; nothing petty leaks through them. Let me put my ear close and hear the sough of this book, that I may know if any inspiration yet haunts it. There is always a later edition of every book than the printer wots of, no matter how recently it was published. All nature is a new impression every instant.

Thursday, May 27, 1841.

I sit in my boat on Walden, playing the flute, this evening, and see the perch, which I seem to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the bottom, which is strewn with the wrecks of the forest, and feel that nothing but the wildest imagination can conceive of the manner of life we are living. Nature is a wizard. The Concord nights are stranger than the Arabian nights.

We not only want elbow room, but eye room in this gray air which shrouds all the fields. Sometimes my eyes see over the county road by daylight to the tops of yonder birches on the hill, as at others by moonlight.

Heaven lies above, because the air is deep.

In all my life hitherto I have left nothing behind.

Wednesday, June 2, 1841.

I am brought into the near neighborhood and am become a silent observer of the moon's paces to-night, by means of a glass, while the frogs are peeping all around me on the earth, and the sound of the accordion seems to come from some bright saloon yonder. I am sure the moon floats in a human atmosphere. It is but a distant scene of the world's drama. It is a wide theatre the gods have given us, and our actions must befit it. More sea and land, mountain and valley, here is, — a further West, — a freshness and wildness in reserve when all the land shall be cleared.

I see three little lakes between the hills near its edge, reflecting the sun's rays. The light glimmers as on the water in a tumbler. So far off do the laws of reflection hold. I seem to see the ribs of the creature. This is the aspect of their day, its outside, — their heaven above their heads, towards which they breathe their prayers. So much is between me and them. It is noon there, perchance, and ships are at anchor in the havens or sailing on the seas, and there is a din in the streets, and in this light or that shade some leisurely soul contemplates.

But now dor-bugs fly over its disk and bring me back to earth and night.

Wednesday, August 4, 1841.

Nawshawtuct.

Far in the east I read *Nature's Corn Law Rhymes*. Here, in sight of Wachusett and these rivers and woods, my mind goes singing to itself of other themes than taxation. The rush sparrow sings still un-

intelligible, as from beyond a depth in me which I have not fathomed, where my future lies folded up. I hear several faint notes, quite outside me, which populate the waste.

This is such fresh and flowing weather, as if the waves of the morning had subsided over the day.

August 9, 1841.

It is vain to try to write unless you feel strong in the knees.

August 18, 1841.

The best poets, after all, exhibit only a tame and civil side of nature. They have not seen the west side of any mountain.

Thursday, September 2, 1841.

There is but one obligation, and that is the obligation to obey the highest dictate. None can lay me under another which will supersede this. The gods have given me these years without any incumbrance; society has no mortgage on them. If any man assist me in the way of the world, let him derive satisfaction from the deed itself, for I think I never shall have dissolved my prior obligations to God. Kindness repaid is thereby annulled. I would let his deed lie as fair and generous as it was intended. The truly beneficent never relapses into a creditor; his great kindness is still extended to me and is never done. Of those noble deeds which have me for their object I am only the most fortunate spectator, and would rather be the abettor of their nobleness than stay their tide with the obstructions of impatient gratitude. As true as action and reaction are equal, that nobleness which was as wide as the universe will rebound not on him the individual, but on the world. If any have been kind to me, what more do they want? I cannot make them richer than they are. If they have not been kind, they cannot take from me the privilege which they have not improved. My obligations will be my lightest load, for that gratitude which is of kindred stuff in me, expanding every pore, will easily sustain the pressure.

We walk the freest through the air we breathe.

Wednesday, December 29, 1841.

One does not soon learn the trade of life. That one may work out a true life requires more art and delicate skill than any other work. There is need of the nice fingers of the girl as well as the tough hand of the farmer. The daily work is too often toughening the pericarp of the heart as well as the hand. Great familiarity with the world must be nicely managed, lest it win away and bereave us of some susceptibility. Experience bereaves us of our innocence; wisdom bereaves us of our ignorance. Let us walk in the world without learning its ways.

Friday, January 7, 1842.

The great God is very calm withal. How superfluous is any excitement in his creatures! He listens equally to the prayers of the believer and the unbeliever. The moods of man should unfold and alternate as gradually and placidly as those of nature. The sun shines for aye! The sudden revolutions of these times and this generation have acquired a very exaggerated importance. They do not interest me much, for they are not in harmony with the longer periods of nature. The present, in any aspect in which it can be presented to the smallest audience, is always mean. God does not sympathize with the popular movements.

February 21, 1842.

I must confess there is nothing so strange to me as my own body. I love any other piece of nature, almost, better.

I was always conscious of sounds in nature which my ears could never hear, that I caught but the prelude to a strain. She always retreats as I advance. Away behind and behind is she and her meaning. Will not this faith and expectation make to itself ears at length? I never saw to the end, nor heard to the end, but the best part was unseen and unheard.

I am like a feather floating in the at-

mosphere; on every side is depth unfathomable.

I feel as if years had been crowded into the last month,¹ and yet the regularity of what we call time has been so far preserved as that I

[Two lines missing.]

will be welcome in the present. I have lived ill for the most part because too near myself. I have tripped myself up, so that there was no progress for my own narrowness. I cannot walk conveniently and pleasantly but when I hold myself afar off in the horizon. And the soul dilutes the body and makes it passable. My soul and body have tottered along together of late, tripping and hindering one another like unpractised Siamese twins. They two should walk as one, that no obstacle may be nearer than the firmament.

There must be some narrowness in the soul that compels one to have secrets.

July 6, 1845.

I wish to meet the facts of life, — the vital facts, which [are] the phenomena or actuality the gods meant to show us, — face to face, and so I came down here.² Life! Who knows what it is, — what it does? If I am not quite right here, I am less wrong than before; and now let us see what they will have.

July 7.

I am glad to remember to-night, as I sit by my door, that I too am at least a remote descendant of that heroic race of men of whom there is tradition. I too sit here on the shore of my Ithaca, a fellow wanderer and survivor of Ulysses. How symbolical, significant of I know not what, the pitch pine stands here before my door, unlike any glyph I have seen sculptured or painted yet, one of Nature's later designs, yet perfect as her Grecian art. There it is, a done tree. Who can mend it? And now where is the genera-

¹ His brother John died in February, 1842.

² Thoreau had gone to Walden to live on July 4, 1845. Some of the following extracts from the Journal are undated, but they all belong to the Walden period.

tion of heroes whose lives are to pass amid these our northern pines? whose exploits shall appear to posterity pictured amid these strong and shaggy forms?

I have carried an apple in my pocket to-night, — a Sopsivine they call it, — till, now that I take my handkerchief out, it has got so fine a fragrance that it really seems like a friendly trick of some pleasant daemon to entertain me with. It is redolent of sweet-scented orchards, of innocent, teeming harvests. I realize the existence of a goddess Pomona, and that the gods have really intended that men should feed divinely, like themselves, on their own nectar and ambrosia. They have so painted this fruit, and freighted it with such a fragrance, that it satisfies much more than an animal appetite. Grapes, peaches, berries, nuts, etc., are likewise provided for those who will sit at their sideboard. I have felt, when partaking of this inspiring diet, that my appetite was an indifferent consideration; that eating became a sacrament, a method of communion, an ecstatic exercise, a mingling of bloods, and [a] sitting at the communion table of the world. And so have not only quenched my thirst at the spring, but the health of the universe.

The indecent haste and grossness with which our food is swallowed have cast a disgrace on the very act of eating itself. But I do believe that if this process were rightly conducted, its aspects and effects would be wholly changed, and we should receive our daily life and health Antaus-like, with an ecstatic delight, and, with upright front, an innocent and graceful behavior, take our strength from day to day. This fragrance of the apple in my pocket has, I confess, deterred me from eating of it; I am more effectually fed by it another way.

A man must find his own occasion in himself. The natural day is very calm and will hardly reprove our indolence. If there is no elevation in our spirits, the pond will not seem elevated like a moun-

tain tarn, but a low pool, a silent, muddy water, a place for fishermen.

All nature is classic and akin to art; the sumach and pine and hickory which surround my house remind me of the most graceful sculpture. Sometimes their tops, or a single limb or leaf, seem to have grown to a distinct expression, as if it were a symbol for me to interpret.

Poetry, Painting, and Sculpture claim at once and associate with themselves those perfect specimens of the art of nature, — leaves, vines, acorns, pine cones, etc.

The critic must at last stand as mute though contented before a true poem as before an acorn or a vine leaf. The perfect work of art is received again into the bosom of nature, whence its material proceeded, and that criticism which can only detect its unnaturalness has no longer any office to fulfill. The choicest maxims that have come down to us are more beautiful or integrally wise than they are wise to our understandings. This wisdom which we are inclined to pluck from their stalk is the point only of a single association. Every natural form, — palm leaves and acorns, oak-leaves and sumach and dodder, — are untranslatable aphorisms.

Most men are so taken up with the cares and rude practice of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Literally the laboring man has not leisure for a strict and lofty integrity day by day. He cannot afford to sustain the fairest and noblest relations. His labor will depreciate in the market.

Most men have forgotten that it was ever morning; but a few serene memories, healthy and wakeful natures, there are, who assure us that the sun rose clear, heralded by the singing of birds, — this very day's sun, which rose before Memnon was ready to greet it.

To live to a good old age such as the ancients reached, serene and contented, dignifying the life of man, leading a simple, epic, country life in these days of confusion and turmoil, — that is what Wordsworth has done, retaining the tastes and innocence of his youth. There is more wonderful talent, but nothing so cheering and world-famous as this.

The life of man would seem to be going all to wrack and pieces and no instance of permanence and the ancient natural health, notwithstanding Burns, and Coleridge, and Carlyle. It will not do for men to die young. The greatest genius does not die young. Whom the gods love most do, indeed, die young, but not until their life is matured; and their years are like those of the oak, for they are the products half of nature and half of God. What should nature do without old men, — not children, but men?

The life of men, not to become a mockery and a jest, should last a respectable term of years. We cannot spare the age of those old Greek Philosophers. They live long who do not live for a near end, who still forever look to the immeasurable future for their manhood.

What seems so fair and poetic in antiquity — almost fabulous — is realized, too, in Concord life. As poets and historians brought their work to the Grecian games, and genius wrestled there as well as strength of body, so have we seen works of kindred genius read at our Concord games, by their author, in their own Concord amphitheatre. It is virtually repeated by all ages and nations.

The way to compare men is to compare their respective ideals. The actual man is too complex to deal with.

All the laws of nature will bend and adapt themselves to the least motion of man.

(*To be continued.*)