

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE MAINE WOODS was the second volume collected from his writings after Thoreau's death. Of the material which composed it, the first two divisions were already in print. "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods" was the title of a paper printed in 1848 in *The Union Magazine*, and "Chesuncook" was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1858. The book was edited by his friend William Ellery Channing.

It was during his second summer at Walden that Thoreau made his first visit to the Maine woods. It was probably in response to a request from Horace Greeley that he wrote out the narrative from his journal, for Mr. Greeley had shown himself eager to help Thoreau in putting his wares on the market. In a letter to Emerson, January 12, 1848, Thoreau writes: "I read a part of the story of my excursion to Ktaadn to quite a large audience of men and boys, the other night, whom it interested. It contains many facts and some poetry." He offered the paper to Greeley at the end of March, and on the 17th of April Greeley responded: "I inclose you \$25 for your article on Maine scenery, as promised. I know it is worth more, though I have not yet found time to read it; but I have tried once to sell it without success. It is rather long for my columns, and too fine for the million; but I consider it a cheap bargain, and shall print it myself if I do not dispose of it to better advantage. You will not, of course, consider yourself

under any sort of obligation to me, for my offer was in the way of business, and I have got more than the worth of my money." But this generous, high-minded friend was thinking of Thoreau's business, not his own, for in October of the same year he writes, "I break a silence of some duration to inform you that I hope on Monday to receive payment for your glorious account of 'Ktaadn and the Maine Woods,' which I bought of you at a Jew's bargain and sold to *The Union Magazine*. I am to get \$75 for it, and as I don't choose to *exploiter* you at such a rate, I shall insist on inclosing you \$25 more in this letter, which will still leave me \$25 to pay various charges and labors I have incurred in selling your articles and getting paid for them, — the latter by far the most difficult portion of the business."

The third of Thoreau's excursions in the Maine woods was made very largely for the purpose of studying Indian life and character in the person of his guide. He had all his life been interested in the Indians, and Mr. Sanborn tells us — what is also evident from his journal — that it was his purpose to expand his studies into a separate work on the subject, for which he had collected a considerable amount of material from books as well as from his own observations. After his return from the Allegash and East Branch he wrote as follows to Mr. Blake under date of August 18, 1857: "I have now returned, and think I have had a quite profitable journey, chiefly from associating with an intelligent Indian. . . . Having returned, I flatter myself that the world appears in some respects a little larger, and not as usual smaller and shallower for having extended my

range. I have made a short excursion into the new world which the Indian dwells in, or is. He begins where we leave off. It is worth the while to detect new faculties in man, he is so much the more divine; and anything that fairly excites our admiration expands us. The Indian who can find his way so wonderfully in the woods possesses so much intelligence which the white man does not, and it increases my own capacity as well as faith to observe it. I rejoice to find that intelligence flows in other channels than I knew. It redeems for me portions of what seemed brutish before. It is a great satisfaction to find that your oldest convictions are permanent. With regard to essentials I have never had occasion to change my mind. The aspect of the world varies from year to year as the landscape is differently clothed, but I find that the *truth* is still *true*, and I never regret any emphasis which it may have inspired. Ktaadn is there still, but much more surely my old conviction is there, resting with more than mountain breadth and weight on the world, the source still of fertilizing streams, and affording glorious views from its summit if I can get up to it again."