

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THOREAU lived in his Walden camp but two years, 1845-1847, and, as his narrative clearly shows, by no means exiled himself from home and companions. His hermitage was within easy walking distance of Concord; and, though his seclusion meant privacy at times, he was by no means debarred from society. The life in the woods was a characteristic expression of his stout independence of conditions, and served his purpose of living frugally and securing leisure for observation, reading, and writing. But since the act was in a way unique, it transferred something of its unique property to the book which recorded it, and the book is more closely identified with Thoreau's fame, has done more to give him distinction, than any other of his writings.

The book "Walden" was what William Ellery Channing calls "the log-book of his woodland cruise at Walden." Thoreau himself tells us that the bulk of the book was written in his hermitage. One bit of verse,

"Light-winged smoke, Icarian bird,"

he had printed in "The Dial;" but nothing else appears to have been garnered from previous publications,

and the book has thus a unity of design which helps to preserve its individual force. "Walden" was not published, however, until 1854, when it was brought out by Ticknor & Fields.