

1841

Henry Clay fought in the Senate to establish the Whig program, which he had shrewdly termed the "American System," only to see an important part of it vetoed by Tyler, who had just succeeded to the presidency on Harrison's death and was proving that you cannot always count on what a vice-president will do after he becomes president. Horace Greeley began to publish the *New-York Tribune*. The first passenger train was run on the Erie Railroad. John C. Fremont reached Sutter's Fort in California. Calomel was still one of the doctors' favorite remedies; patent medicines, making enormous claims almost without exception, probably killed a good many more persons than they cured. Among the typical nostrums were Dr. Leidy's Vegetable Febrile Elixir and Goelicke's Matchless Sanative, whose effectiveness produced "Trembling among American Physicians." Brook Farm, one of the most famous American communistic experiments, was founded by the Transcendentalists.

Starting at the end of April Thoreau solved his problem of making a living by going to work at R. W. Emerson's house. His job was to be a caretaker, a friend, and a handyman. It is a tribute to Emerson's unassuming greatness that Thoreau accepted the job and continued in it for two years. He also lectured on the lyceum platform, though he found, he confesses for the *Journal*, that in "a public performer, the simplest actions, which at other times are left to unconscious nature, as the ascending a few steps in front of an audience, acquire a fatal importance and become arduous deeds." He wrote a good deal in the *Journal* and published three interesting poems in the *Dial*. He acquired a disciple in a Buffalo law student, Isaiah Williams. His esteem grew, it appears, for both Mrs. Emerson and her sister Mrs. Lucy Brown.

From EMERSON

My dear Henry

We have here G. P. Bradford, R. Bartlett, Lippitt C S Wheeler & Mr Alcott. Will you not come down & spend an hour?

Yours,
R W E

Thursday P. M.

Emerson's guests are identified by Rusk (Emerson Letters, II, 409-12) as George Partridge Bradford, one of Emerson's best friends; Robert Bartlett, then a tutor at Harvard; George Warren Lippitt, a member of the senior class at the Harvard Divinity School; Charles Stearns Wheeler, Thoreau's Harvard classmate; and Bronson Alcott. Though Emerson's note is undated, the general course of his biography and correspondence makes June of 1841 the most probable date. The circumstances—especially the gathering of these particular guests in Emerson's household at this particular time—support this date. MS., Berg.

To MRS. LUCY BROWN

Concord, July 21, 1841.

Dear Friend,—

Don't think I need any prompting to write to you; but what tough earthenware shall I put into my packet to travel over so many hills, and thrid so many woods, as lie between Concord and Plymouth? Thank fortune it is all the way down hill, so they will get safely carried; and yet it seems as if it were writing against time and the sun to send

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a letter east, for no natural force forwards it. You should go dwell in the West, and then I would deluge you with letters, as boys throw feathers into the air to see the wind take them. I should rather fancy you at evening dwelling far away behind the serene curtain of the West,—the home of fair weather,—than over by the chilly sources of the east wind.

What quiet thoughts have you nowadays which will float on that east wind to west, for so we may make our worst servants our carriers,—what progress made from *can't* to *can*, in practice and theory? Under this category, you remember, we used to place all our philosophy. Do you have any still, startling, well moments, in which you think grandly, and speak with emphasis? Don't take this for sarcasm, for not in a year of the gods, I fear, will such a golden approach to plain speaking revolve again. But away with such fears; by a few miles of travel we have not distanced each other's sincerity.

I grow savager and savager every day, as if fed on raw meat, and my tameness is only the repose of untamableness. I dream of looking abroad summer and winter, with free gaze, from some mountain-side, while my eyes revolve in an Egyptian slime of health,—I to be nature looking into nature with such easy sympathy as the blue-eyed grass in the meadow looks in the face of the sky. From some such recess I would put forth sublime thoughts daily, as the plant puts forth leaves. Now-a-nights I go on to the hill to see the sun set, as one would go home at evening; the bustle of the village has run on all day, and left me quite in the rear; but I see the sunset, and find that it can wait for my slow virtue.

But I forget that you think more of this human nature than of this nature I praise. Why won't you believe that mine is more human than any single man or woman can be? that in it, in the sunset there, are all the qualities that can adorn a household, and that sometimes, in a fluttering leaf, one may hear all your Christianity preached.

You see how unskillful a letter-writer I am, thus to have come to the end of my sheet when hardly arrived at the beginning of my story. I was going to be soberer, I assure you, but now have only room to add, that if the fates allot you a serene hour, don't fail to communicate some of its serenity to your friend,

Henry D. Thoreau.

No, no. Improve so rare a gift for yourself, and send me of your leisure.

Mrs. Brown, a sister of Emerson's second wife, was boarding with the Thoreau family as early as 1837, when Thoreau composed his first love poem, "Sic Vita," for her. Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 40-43.

TO MRS. LUCY BROWN

Concord, Wednesday evening, September 8, [1841.]

Dear Friend,—

Your note came wafted to my hand like the first leaf of the Fall on the September wind, and I put only another interpretation upon its lines than upon the veins of those which are soon to be strewed around me. It is nothing but Indian Summer here at present. I mean that any weather seems reserved expressly for our late purposes whenever we happen to be fulfilling them. I do not know what right I have to so much happiness, but rather hold it in reserve till the time of my desert.

What with the crickets and the crowing of cocks, and the lowing of kine, our Concord life is sonorous enough. Sometimes I hear the cock bestir himself on his perch under my feet, and crow shrilly before dawn; and I think I might have been born any year for all the phenomena I know. We count sixteen eggs daily now, when arithmetic will only fetch the hens up to thirteen; but the world is young, and we wait to see this eccentricity complete its period.

My verses on Friendship are already printed in the "Dial"; not expanded but reduced to completeness by leaving out the long lines, which always have, or should have, a longer or at least another sense than short ones.

Just now I am in the mid-sea of verses, and they actually rustle around me as the leaves would round the head of Autumnus himself should he thrust it up through some vales which I know; but, alas! many of them are but crisped and yellow leaves like his, I fear, and will deserve no better fate than to make mould for new harvests. I see the stanzas rise around me, verse upon verse, far and near, like the mountains from Agiocochook, not all having a terrestrial existence as yet, even as some of them may be clouds; but I fancy I see the gleam of

some Sebago Lake and Silver Cascade, at whose well I may drink one day. I am as unfit for any practical purpose—I mean for the furtherance of the world's ends—as gossamer for ship-timber; and I, who am going to be a pencil-maker to-morrow, can sympathize with God Apollo, who served King Admetus for a while on earth. But I believe he found it for his advantage at last,—as I am sure I shall, though I shall hold the nobler part at least out of the service.

Don't attach any undue seriousness to this threnody, for I love my fate to the very core and rind, and could swallow it without paring it, I think. You ask if I have written any more poems? Excepting those which Vulcan is now forging, I have only discharged a few more bolts into the horizon,—in all, three hundred verses,—and sent them, as I may say, over the mountains to Miss Fuller, who may have occasion to remember the old rhyme:—

"Three scipen gode
Comen mid than flode
Three hundred cnihten."

But these are far more Vandalic than they. In this narrow sheet there is not room even for one thought to root itself. But you must consider this an odd leaf of a volume, and that volume

Your friend
Henry D. Thoreau.

Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 43-45; the date 1841 is supplied by Sanborn.

From ISAIAH T. WILLIAMS

Buffalo N.Y. Sept. 24, 1841—

Mr. D. H. Thoreau
My dear Sir,

Your kind offer to receive and answer any communications from me, is not forgotten. I owe myself an apology for so long neglecting to

avail myself of so generous an offer. Since I left Concord I have hardly found rest for the sole of my foot. I have followed the star of my destiny till it has, at length, come and stood over this place. Here I remain engaged in the study of Law— Part of the time I have spent in New Hampshire part in Ohio & part in New York and so precarious was my residence in either place that I have rarely known whither you might direct a letter with any certainty of its reaching me.

When I left Concord I felt a strong desire to continue the conversation I had so fortunately commenced with some of those whom the Public call Transcendentalists. Their sentiments seemed to me to possess a peculiar fitness. Though full of doubt I felt I was fed & refreshed by those interviews. The doctrines I there heard have ever since, been uppermost in my mind—and like balmy sleep over the weary limbs, have they stolen over me quite unawares. I have not embraced them but they have embraced me—I am led, their willing captive. Yet I feel I have but yet taken the first step. I would know more of this matter. I would be taken by the hand and led up from this darkness and torpidity where I have so long groveled like an earthworm. I know what it is to be a slave to what I thought a Christian faith—and with what rapture do grasp the hand that breaks my chains—& the voice that bids me—live.

Most of the books you recommended to me I was not able to obtain—"Nature" I found—and language can not express my admiration of it. When gloom like a thick cloud comes over me in that I find an amulet that dissipates the darkness and kindles anew my highest hopes. Few copies of Mr Emerson's Essays have found their way to this place. I have read part of them and am very much delighted with them. Mr. Park's German I have also found and as much as I should have shrunk from such sentiments a year ago—half, so I already receive them. I have also obtained "Hero Worship"—which of course I read with great interest and as I read I blush for my former bigotry and wonder that I have not known it all before wonder what there is in chains that I should have loved them so much— Mr. E's oration before the Theological Class at Cambridge I very much want. If you have it in your possession, allow me to beg you to forward it to me & I will return it by mail after perusing it. Also Mr. Alcott's "Human Culture." I will offer no apology for asking this favor—for I know you will not require it.

I find I am not alone here, your principals are working their way even in Buffalo—this emporium of wickedness and sensuality. We look to

the east for our guiding star for there our sun did rise. Our motto is that of the Grecian Hero—"Give but to see—and Ajax asks no more."

For myself my attention is much engrossed in my studies—entering upon them as I do without a Public Education—I feel that nothing but the most undivided attention and entire devotion to them will ensure me even an ordinary standing in the profession. There is something false in such devotion. I already feel its chilling effects I fear I shall fall into the wake of the profession which is in this section proverbially bestial. Law is a noble profession it calls loudly for men of genius and integrity to fill its ranks. I donot aspire to be a great lawyer. I know I cannot be, but it is the sincere desire of my heart that I may be a true one.

You are ready to ask—how I like the West. I must answer—not very well—I love New England so much that the West is comparatively odious to me. The part of Ohio that I visited was one dead level—often did I strain my eyes to catch a glimpse of some distant mountain—that should transport me in imagination to the wild country of my birth, but the eternal level spread itself on & on & I almost felt myself launched forever. Aloud did I exclaim—"My own blue hills—O, where are they!"—I did not know how much I was indebted to them for the happy hours I'd passed at home. I knew I loved them—and my noble river too—along whose banks I'd roamed half uncertain if in earth or heaven—I never shall—I never can forget them all—though I drive away the remembrances of them which ever in the unguarded moments throngs me laden with ten thousands incidents before forgotten & so talismanic its power—that I wake from the enchantment as from a dream. If I were in New England again I would never leave her but now I am away—I feel forever—I must eat of the Lotus—and forget her. Tis true we have a noble Lake—whose pure waters kiss the foot of our city—and whose bosom bears the burdens of our commerce—her beacon light now looks in upon me through my window as if to watch, lest I should say untruth of that which is her nightly charge. But hills or mountains we have none.

My sheet is nearly full & I must draw to a close—I fear I have already wearied your patience. Please remember me to those of your friends whose acquaintance I had pleasure to form while in Concord—I engaged to write your brother—Mr Alcott also gave me then the same privilege—which I hope soon to avail myself of. I hope sometime to visit your town again which I remember with so much satisfaction—yet with so much regret—regret that I did not earlier avail myself of the

acquaintances, it was my high privilege to make while there and that the lucubrations of earlier years did not better fit me to appreciate & enjoy. I cheer myself with fanning the fading embers of a hope that I shall yet retrieve my fault that such an opportunity will again be extended to me and that I may once more look upon that man whose name I never speak without reverence—whom of all I most admire—almost adore—Mr Emerson—I shall wait with impatience to hear from you.

Believe me

ever yours—
Isaiah T. Williams.

Isaiah Williams, now a young law student in Buffalo, had resided for a while in Concord, teaching school, and had formed a friendship with Thoreau. Emerson, in his letter to Margaret Fuller of June 7, 1843, calls him "very handsome very intelligent" and adds "whom I wish you could see." Among books to which Williams refers are Emerson's famous little volume, the 1836 Nature, Edwards Amasa Park's Selections from German Literature (1839), and Bronson Alcott's Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture (1836). Rusk (Emerson Letters III, 180 n.) confuses Isaiah Williams with a Charles H. S. William. MS., Berg, copy made by Thoreau's disciple H. G. O. Blake; previously unpublished.

TO MRS. LUCY BROWN

Concord, October 5, 1841.

Dear Friend,—

I send you Williams's letter as the last remembrancer to one of those "whose acquaintance he had the pleasure to form while in Concord." It came quite unexpectedly to me, but I was very glad to receive it, though I hardly know whether my utmost sincerity and interest can

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inspire a sufficient answer to it. I should like to have you send it back by some convenient opportunity.

Pray let me know what you are thinking about any day,—what most nearly concerns you. Last winter, you know, you did more than your share of the talking, and I did not complain for want of an opportunity. Imagine your stove-door out of order, at least, and then while I am fixing it you will think of enough things to say.

What makes the value of your life at present? what dreams have you, and what realizations? You know there is a high table-land which not even the east wind reaches. Now can't we walk and chat upon its plane still, as if there were no lower latitudes? Surely our two destinies are topics interesting and grand enough for any occasion.

I hope you have many gleams of serenity and health, or, if your body will grant you no positive respite, that you may, at any rate, enjoy your sickness occasionally, as much as I used to tell of. But here is the bundle going to be done up, so accept a "good-night" from

Henry D. Thoreau.

Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 45-46.

TO ISAIAH T. WILLIAMS

Concord Sept. 8th 1841

Dear Friend

I am pleased to hear from you out of the west, as if I heard the note of some singing bird from the midst of its forests, which travellers report so grim and solitary— It is like the breaking up of Winter and the coming in of Spring, when the twigs glitter and tinkle, and the first sparrow twitters in the horizon. I doubt if I can make a good echo— Yet it seems that if a man ever had the satisfaction to say once entirely and irrevocably what he believed to be true he would never leave off to cultivate that skill.

I suppose if you see any light in the east it must be in the eastern

state of your own soul, and not by any means in these New England States. Our eyes perhaps do not rest so long on any as on the few who especially love their own lives—who dwell apart at more generous intervals, and cherish a single purpose behind the formalities of society with such steadiness that of all men only their two eyes seem to meet in one focus. They can be eloquent when they speak—they can be graceful and noble when they act. For my part if I have any creed it is so to live as to preserve and increase the susceptibleness of my nature to noble impulses—first to observe if any light shine on me, and then faithfully to follow it. The Hindoo Scripture says, "Single is each man born; single he dies; single he receives the reward of his good, and single the punishment of his evil deeds."

Let us trust that we have a good conscience. The steady light whose ray every man knows will be enough for all weathers. If any soul look abroad even today it will not find any word which does it more justice than the New Testament,—yet if it be faithful enough it will have experience of a revelation fresher and directer than that, which will make that to be only the best tradition. The strains of a more heroic faith vibrate through the week days and the fields than through the Sabbath and the Church. To shut the ears to the immediate voice of God, and prefer to know him by report will be the only sin. Any respect we may yield to the paltry expedients of other men like ourselves—to the Church—the State—or the School—seems purely gratuitous, for in our most private experience we are never driven to expediency. Our religion is where our love is. How vain for men to go musing one way, and worshipping another. Let us not fear to worship the muse. Those stern old worthies—Job and David and the rest, had no Sabbath-day worship but sung and revelled in their faith, and I have no doubt that what true faith and love of God there is in this age will appear to posterity in the happy system of some creedless poet.

I think I can sympathize with your sense of greater freedom.— The return to truth is so simple that not even the nurses can tell when we began to breathe healthily, but recovery took place long before the machinery of life began to play freely again when on our pillow at midnoon or midnight some natural sound fell naturally on the ear. As for creeds and doctrines we are suddenly grown rustic—and from walking in streets and squares—walk broadly in the fields—as if a man were wise enough not to sit in a draft, and get an ague, but moved buoyantly in the breeze.

It is curious that while you are sighing for New England the scene of our fairest dreams should lie in the west—it confirms me in the opinion that places are well nigh indifferent. Perhaps you have experienced that in proportion as our love of nature is deep and pure we are independent upon her. I suspect that ere long when some hours of faithful and earnest life have imparted serenity into your Buffalo day, the sunset on lake Erie will make you forget New England. It was the Greeks made the Greek isle and sky, and men are beginning to find Archipelagos elsewhere as good. But let us not cease to regret the fair and good, for perhaps it is fairer and better to
them.

I am living with Mr. Emerson in very dangerous prosperity. He gave me three pamphlets for you to keep, which I sent last Saturday. The "Explanatory Preface" is by Elizabeth Peabody who was Mr. Alcott's assistant, and now keeps a bookstore and library in Boston. Pray let me know with what hopes and resolutions you enter upon the study of law—how you are to make it a solid part of your life. After a few words interchanged we shall learn to speak pertinently and not to the air. My brother and Mr. Alcott express pleasure in the anticipation of hearing from you and I am sure that the communication of what most nearly concerns you will always be welcome to
Yours Sincerely

H. D. Thoreau

Isaiah T. Williams Buffalo, N.Y.

Although Thoreau had moved to the Emerson house the preceding April, we find here the first reference to the fact in his letters. Method of Spiritual Culture: Being an Explanatory Preface to the Second Edition of Record of a School (1836) is the booklet referred to. The letter, clearly in answer to Williams's of September 24, should have been dated October. MS., Berg, copy in H. G. O. Blake's hand; the blank space at the end of the next to the last paragraph comes from his copy; previously unpublished.

To RUFUS W. GRISWOLD

Concord Oct. 9th 1841.

Dear Sir,

I am sorry that I can only place at your disposal three small poems printed in the "Dial"—that called "Sympathy" in no. 1.—"Sic Vita" in no. 5—and "Friendship" in no. 6. If you see fit to reprint these will you please to correct the following errors?

In the second stanza of "Sympathy"

		for posts read ports.
"	5th	" breeze " haze.
"	"	" the eyes " our eyes
"	"	" worked " works.
"	13th	" dearest " truest.
"	4th	" "Friendship"
		for our read one.
"	10th	" warden " warder.

I was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, and was graduated at Harvard University, in 1837.

Yrs respectfully
Henry D. Thoreau.

A note clipped to the manuscript identifies it as corrections for an edition (probably the first) of The Poets and Poetry of America, but none of Thoreau's poems appeared in that or any other of Griswold's anthologies. MS., Berg.

Concord Oct. 9th 1841.

Dear Sir,

I am sorry that I can only place at your disposal three small poems printed in the "Dial"—that called "Sympathy" in no. 1.—"Sic Vita" in no. 5.—and "Friendship" in no. 6. If you see fit to reprint these will you please to correct the following errors?

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"	"	" " the eyes " our eyes
"	"	" " worked " works.
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"	"	" " "Friendship"
"	"	" " for our read one.
"	"	10 th " " warden " warder.

I was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, and was graduated at Harvard University, in 1837.

Yrs respectfully
Henry D. Thoreau.

From MARGARET FULLER

18 Oct 1841,

I do not find the poem on the mountains improved by mere compression, though it might be by fusion and glow.

Its merits to me are a noble recognition of nature, two or three manly thoughts, and, in one place, a plaintive music. The image of the ships does not please me originally. It illustrates the greater by the less and affects me as when Byron compares the light on Jura to that of the dark eye of woman. I cannot define my position here, and a large class of readers would differ from me. As the poet goes on to

Unhewn, primeval timber
For knees so stiff, for masts so limber"

he seems to chase an image, already rather forced, into conceits.

Yet now that I have some knowledge of the man, it seems there is no objection I could make to his lines, (with the exception of such offenses against taste as the lines about the humors of the eye &c as to which we are already agreed) which I would not make to himself. He is healthful, sure, of open eye, ready hand, and noble scope. He sets no limits to his life, nor to the invasions of nature; he is not wilfully pragmatical, cautious, ascetic or fantastical. But he is as yet a somewhat bare hill which the warm gales of spring have not visited. Thought lies too detached, truth is seen too much in detail, we can number and rank the substances embedded in the rock. Thus his verses are startling, as much as stern; the thought does not excuse its conscious existence by letting us see its relation with life; there is a want of fluent music. Yet what could a companion do at present unless to tame the guardian of the Alps too early. Leave him at peace amid his native snows. He is friendly; he will find the generous office that shall educate him. It is not a soil for the citron and the rose, but for the whortleberry, the pine or the heather. The unfolding of affections, a wider and deeper human experience, the harmonizing influences of other natures will mould the man, and melt his verse. He will seek thought less and find knowledge the more. I can have no advice or criticism for a person so sincere, but if I give my impression of him I will say He says too constantly of nature She is mine; She is not yours till you have been more hers. Seek the lotus, and take a draught of rapture. Say not so confidently All places,

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all occasions are alike. This will never come true till you have found it false.

I do not know that I have more to say now, Perhaps these words will say nothing to you. If intercourse should continue, perhaps a bridge may be made between two minds so widely apart, for I apprehended you in spirit, and you did not seem to mistake me as widely as most of your kind do. If you should find yourself inclined to write to me, as you thought you might, I dare say many thoughts would be suggested to me; many have already by seeing you day by day. Will you finish the poem in your own way and send it for the Dial. Leave out 'And seems to milk the sky'

The image is too low. Mr Emerson thought so too. Farewell. May Truth be irradiated by Beauty! — Let me know whether you go to the lonely hut, and write me about Shakspeare, if you read him there. I have many thoughts about him which I have never yet been led to express.

Margaret F.

The pencilled paper Mr E. put into my hands. I have taken the liberty to copy it You expressed one day my own opinion that the moment such a crisis is passed we may speak of it. There is no need of artificial delicacy, of secrecy, it keeps its own secret; it cannot be made false. Thus you will not be sorry that I have seen the paper. Will you not send me some other records of the good week.

Once again Margaret Fuller rejected a manuscript that Thoreau had submitted for publication in the Dial. The poem was "With frontier strength ye stand your ground," eventually included in his essay "A Walk to Wachusett" and published in the Boston Miscellany for January 1843. Thoreau accepted some of Miss Fuller's suggestions in his final version, but ignored others. The "lonely hut" is probably a reference to the Hollowell Farm, which Thoreau was talking of purchasing, rather than to any intent thus early to go to Walden. The "good week" indicates that he was already working on his first book. The reference to Byron is to Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III, Stanza XCII. MS., University of Texas Library.

From ISAIAH T. WILLIAMS

Buffalo N. Y. Nov 27 1841—

My dear Friend

I feel rebuked as I draw your most interesting letter from my file and sit down to answer it—that I have so long delayed so grateful a task—For though I surely get away from the world & Law long enough to enter within myself and inquire how I am—how I feel and what sentiments and what response my heart gives out in answer to your voice whose notes of sweetest music comes from that “Land of every land the pride Beloved of Heaven o’er all the World beside” “That spot of earth divinely blest—That dearer sweeter spot than all the rest” Yet—when weary and heart sick—when disgusted with the present—and memory, as if to give relief, retires to wander in the ‘Graveyard of the past’—she passes not unmindful nor lingers briefly around that spot where more than in any other I feel I first tasted of that bread I hope will yet nourish my youth strengthen my manhood—cheer and solace “whe[n] the daughters of music are brought low.”

Time’s devastating hand is beginning already to obliterate the traces of my youthful feelings—and I am becoming more & more contented with my present situation and feel less and less a desire inexorable to return and be a child once more.

This I suppose to be the natural tendency of the circumstances in which I *am* placed. Man’s ends are shaped for him and he must abide his destiny. This seems a little like futility—yet, how can we avoid the conclusion that the soul is shaped by circumstances and many of those circumstances beyond man’s control? I think that could I always be “true to the dream of Childhood” I should always be happy—I can imagine circumstances in which I think I might be so—but they are not my present circumstances—these are my fate—I would not complain of them did they not war against what I feel to be my highest interest and indeed I will not as it is, for I know not what is my highest good—I know not the goal whither I am bound, and as I donot know but all is well as far as the external is concerned I will trust to the author of my being—the author and creator of those beautiful fields and woods I so much enjoy in my morning and evening walks—the author of the glorious lake sunsets—that all is well. I have already half answered your interrogat-

ing in relation to my hopes and feelings as I enter upon the study of Law—With so little knowledge—so a—stranger in its walks—with my face only set toward the temple just spying its tapering finger pointing to the heavens as the throne of its justice—its golden dome glittering as though it were the light of that city which “has no need of a candle neither the light of the Sun” —not yet passed under its gateway—or wandered among the trees and flowers of its paradisaean garden—viewed the stones of its foundation or laid hold of its massy pillars. I hardly know what to hope or how to feel at all—I must say, if I would speak truly, that I do not “burn with high hopes” Tis not that “the way seems steep and difficult” but that “the event is feared”; tis the prospect of a life in “daily contact with the things I loath” I love the profession It presents a boundless field—a shoreless ocean where my bark may drift—and bound & leap from wave to wave in wild but splendid rays—without the fear of rock or strand. Yet I chose it not so much for the love I bore it for I knew that in it my intercourse must be with the worst specimens of humanity—as knowing that by it I might get more knowledge, dis[c]ipline and intellectual culture than in any other which I could choose simply as a means of livelihood—have more time to devote to literature and philosophy—and, as I have said, be better prepared intellectually for progress in these pursuits than in any other branch of business followed simply to provide for the bodily wants— So—you see—this profession I chose simply as a means to enable me to pursue what I most delight in—and for that end I think it the wisest selection I could make I know this motive will not lead me to any eminence in the profession—yet I donot know as I wish to be great in that respect even if I could— My books tell me that on entering the profession I must bid adieu to literature—everything and give up myself wholly to Law—I thought I would do so for a time—and I sat down to Blackstone with a heavy heart. Adieu ye Classic halls. My Muse adieu! I wept—as I took perhaps my last look of her—her *form* lessening in the distance—she cast her eye over her shoulder to rest once more on me. O, it was all pity, love and tenderness—I called aloud for her—but she hastened on—grieved, she heeded not my call— It was too much— What ever might by standing as a Lawyer—I would not turn my back to literature—philosophy theology or poetry—Would give them their place & Law its place—A thousand thanks for the pamphlets you forwarded me. I have read them with great pleasure—and shall read them many times more. The Oration at Waterville I very much admire—it is circulating among

Mr. E's admirers in this place who all express great admiration of it—Human Culture I admire more and more as I read it over. I loaned it to a young man who told me on returning it that he had almost committed it to memory—and wished the loan of it again as soon as the other friends had read it.

I have read some of your poetry in the Dial—I want to see more of it—it transports me to my childhood and makes everything look as playful as when first I looked upon them in my earliest morning. I only wish it were more liquid—smooth I should admire Pope's Homer if it were for nothing but that it flows so smoothly.

Remember me affectionately to the friends in Concord and believe me

ever yours
I. T. Williams

The works referred to are Emerson's Method of Nature (1841), a lecture before the Society of Adelpi at Waterville College in Maine, and Bronson Alcott's Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture (1836). Thoreau's poems "Sic Vita" and "Friendship" had appeared in the Dial of July and October. MS., Berg, copy in H.G.O. Blake's hand; previously unpublished.