Postage on letters was reduced to five cents for 300 miles and ten cents for greater distances. The recipient still paid the postage. Texas was annexed by a joint resolution of the houses of Congress. Our dispute with Britain over the Oregon boundary began to warm up; President Polk devoted to it a fifth of his message to Congress. Pittsburgh and New York City were devastated by fires. Capital stock in the famous Lowell knitting mills was valued at $10,850,000. The average wage of women workers there, in addition to board, was $1.75 a week, and there were 6,320 women working in the mills. The Infidel Convention assembled at the New York Coliseum in May, with about 500 persons attending. The socialist Robert Owen, in addressing them, mentioned that he disliked the appellation of "Infidel" and recommended instead "Friends of Universal Mental Freedom and Unlimited Charity."

And Thoreau, on July 4, went to live beside Walden Pond.

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My dear Thoreau

The hand-writing of your letter is so miserable, that I am not sure I have made it out. If I have it seems to me you are the same old sixpence you used to be, rather rusty, but a genuine piece.

I see nothing for you in this earth but that field which I once christened "Briars"; go out upon that, build yourself a hut, & there begin the grand process of devouring yourself alive. I see no alternative, no other hope for you. Eat yourself up; you will eat nobody else, nor anything else.

Concord is just as good a place as any other; there are indeed, more people in the streets of that village, than in the streets of this. This is a singularly muddy town; muddy, solitary, & silent.

They tell us, it is March; it has been all March in this place, since I came. It is much warmer now, than it was last November, foggy, rainy, stupefactive weather indeed.

In your line, I have not done a great deal since I arrived here; I do not mean the Pencilline, but the Staten Island line, having been there once, to walk on a beach by the Telegraph, but did not visit the scene of your dominical duties, Staten Island is very distant from No. 30 Ann St.

I saw polite William Emerson in November last, but have not caught any glimpse of him since then. I am as usual offering the various alternations from agony to despair, from hope to fear, from pain to pleasure. Such wretched one-sided productions as you, know nothing of the universal man; you may think yourself well off.

That baker,—Hecker, who used to live on two crackers a day I have not seen, nor Black, nor Vathek [Vethake?], nor Danedaz nor [Isaiah] Bynders, or any of Emerson's old cronies, excepting Henry James, a little fat, rosy Swedenborgian amateur, with the look of a broker, & the brains & heart of a Pascal,—Wm Channing I see nothing of him; he is the dupe of good feelings, & I have all-too-many of these now.
THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THOREAU

I have seen something of your friends, Waldo, and Tappan, I have also seen our goodman "McKean," the keeper of that stupid place of the "Mercantile Library." I have been able to find there no hook which I should like to read.

Respecting the country about this city, there is a walk at Brooklyn rather pleasing, to ascend upon the high ground & look at the distant ocean. This is a very agreeable sight. I have been four miles up the island in addition, where I saw, the bay; it looked very well, and appeared to be in good spirits.

I should be pleased to hear from Kamkatscha occasionally; my last advices from the Polar Bear are getting stale. In addition to this, I find that my corresponding members at Van Diemans's land, have wandered into limbo. I acknowledge that I have not lately corresponded very much with that section.

I hear occasionally from the World; ('vorthingseems to be promising in that quarter, business is flourishing, & the people are in good spirits. I feel convinced that the Earth has less claim to our regard, than formerly, these mild winters deserve a severe censure. But I am well aware that the Earth will talk about the necessity of routine, taxes, &c. On the whole, it is best not to complain without necessity.

Mumbo Jumbo is recovering from his attack of sore eyes, & will soon be out, in a pair of canvas trousers, scarlet jacket, & cocked hat. I understand he intends to demolish all the remaining species of Fetishism at a meal; I think it's probable it will vomit him. I am sorry to say, that Role-Poly has received intelligence of the death of his only daughter, Maria; this will be a terrible wound to his paternal heart.

I saw Teufelsrock a few days since; he is wretchedly poor, has an attack of the colic, & expects to get better immediately. He said a few words to me, about you. Says he, that fellow Thoreau might be something, if he would only take a journey through the "Everlasting No," thence for the North Pole. By God," said the old clothes-bag "warming up," I should like to take that fellow out into the Everlasting No, & explode him like a bombshell; he would make a loud report. He needs the Blumine flower business; that would be his salvation. He is too dry, too confused, too chalky, too concrete. I want to get him into my fingers. It would be fun to see him pick himself up. I "camped" the old fellow in a majestic style.

Does that execrable compound of sawdust & stagnation, Alcott still prose about nothing, & that nutmeg-grater of a Homer yet shriek about nothing,—does anybody still think of coming to Concord to live, I mean new people? If they do, let them beware of you philosophers.

EVEN IN MY DEAR THOREAU

[1845]

This Carlyleish letter from Ellery Channing gives the first direct reference to Thoreau's Walden experiment. "Briars" was the Emerson woodlot on Walden Pond where Thoreau before the month was over started to erect his cabin. Mumbo Jumbo, according to Canby (Thoreau, p. 252), was Horace Greeley, the editor of the New-York Tribune and at the moment Channing's employer. Sanborn (Henry D. Thoreau, p. 210) suggests that Teufelsdriehch was "the satirical man in the writer himself." (Sartor Resartus, thanks to Emerson, had recently been published in America.) Holbrook Jackson (Dreamers of Dreams, p. 248 n.) suggests: "Blumine represents the love notice in Carlyle's Sartor Resartus which brought colour and music into the heart of Teufelsdriehch: 'Thus did soft melodies flow through his heart; tones of an infinite gratitude; sweetest intimations that he also was a man, that for him also unutterable joys had been provided.'" (Sartor Resartus, chap. v., "Romance.") Canby (p. 254), basing his judgment on Sanborn's incomplete version of the letter, mistakenly substitutes Alcott for Charles Lane and Hosmer for Alcott, MS., Abernethy (typescript).

TO THE EDITOR OF THE LIBERATOR

Concord, Mass. March 12th, 1845.

Mr. Editor: We have now, for the third winter, had our spirits refreshed, and our faith in the destiny of the Commonwealth strengthened, by the presence and the eloquence of Wendell Phillips; and we wish to tender to him our thanks and our sympathy. The admission of this gentleman into the Lyceum has been strenuously opposed by a respectable portion
of our fellow-citizens, who themselves, we trust, whose descendants, at least, we know, will be as faithful conservers of the true order, whenever that shall be the order of the day,—and in each instance, the people have voted that they would hear him, by coming themselves and bringing their friends to the lecture room, and being very silent that they might hear. We saw some men and women, who had long ago come out, going in once more through the free and hospitable portals of the Lyceum; and many of our neighbors confessed, that they had had a "sound season" this once.

It was the speaker's aim to show what the State and above all the Church, had done, and now, alas! have done, with Texas and Slavery, and how much, on the other hand, the individual should have to do with Church and State. These were fair themes, and not mistimed; and his words were addressed to "fit audience, and not few."

We must give Mr. Phillips the credit of being a clean, erect, and what was once called a consistent man. He at least is not responsible for slavery, nor for American Independence; for the hypocrisy and superstition of the Church, nor the timidity and selfishness of the State; nor for the indifference and willing ignorance of any. He stands so distinctly, so firmly, and so effectively, alone, and one honest man is so much more than a host, that we cannot but feel that he does himself in justice when he reminds us of "the American Society, which he represents." It is rare that we have the pleasure of listening to so clear and orthodox a speaker, who obviously has so few cracks or flaws in his moral nature—who, having words at his command in a remarkable degree, has much more than words, if these should fail, in his unquestionable earnestness and integrity—and, aside from their admiration at his rhetoric, securesthe genuine respect of his audience. He unconsciously tells his biography as he proceeds, and we see him nearly and earnestly deliberating on these subjects, and wisely and bravely, without counsel or consent of any, occupying a ground at first, from which the varying titles of public opinion cannot drive him.

No one could mistake the genuine modesty and truth with which he affirmed, when speaking of the framers of the Constitution,—"I am wiser than they," who with him has improved these sixty years' experience of its working; or the uncompromising consistency and frankness of the prayer which concluded, not like the Thanksgiving proclamations, with —"God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," but God dash it into a thousand pieces, till there shall not remain a fragment on which a man can stand, and dare not tell his name—referring to the case of Frederick--------; to our disgrace we know not what to call him, unless Scotland will lend us the spoils of one of her Douglasses, out of history or fiction, for a season, till we be hospitable and brave enough to hear his proper name,—a fugitive slave in one more sense than we; who has proved himself the possessor of a fair intellect, and has won a colorless reputation in these parts; and who, we trust, will be as superior to degradation from the sympathies of Freedom, as from the antipathies of Slavery. When, said Mr. Phillips, he communicated to a New-Bedford audience, the other day, his purpose of writing his life, and telling his name, and the name of his master, and the place he ran from, the murmur ran around the room, and was anxiously whispered by the sons of the Pilgrims, "He had better not!" and it was echoed under the shadow of Concord monument, "He had better not!"

We would fain express our appreciation of the freedom and steady wisdom, so rare in the reformer, with which he declared that he was not born to abolish slavery, but to do right. We have heard a few, a very few, good political speakers, who afforded us the pleasure of great intellectual power and acuteness, of soldier-like steadiness, and of a graceful and natural oratory; but in this man the audience might detect a sort of moral principle and integrity, which was more stable than their firmness, more discriminating than his own intellect, and more graceful than his rhetoric, which was not working for temporary or trivial ends. It is so rare and encouraging to listen to an orator, who is content with another alliance than with the popular party, or even with the sympathising school of the martyrs, who can afford sometimes to be his own auditor if the mob stay away, and hears himself without reproof, that we feel ourselves in danger of slandering all mankind by affirming, that laure is one, who is at the same time an eloquent speaker and a righteous man.

Perhaps, on the whole, the most interesting fact elicited by these addresses, is the readiness of the people at large, of whatever sect or party, to entertain, with good will and hospitality, the most revolutionary and heretical opinions, when frankly and adequately, and in some sort cheerfully, expressed. Such clear and candid declaration of opinion served like an electuary to whet and clarify the intellect of all parties, and furnished each one with an additional argument for that right he asserted.

We consider Mr. Phillips one of the most conspicuous and efficient
champions of a true Church and State now in the field, and would say to him, and such as are like him—'God speed you.' If you know of any champion in the ranks of his opponents, who has the valor and courtesy even of Paynim chivalry, if not the Christian graces and refinement of this knight, you will do us a service by directing him to these fields forthwith, where the lists are now open, and he shall be hospitably entertained. For as yet the Red-cross knight has shown us only the gallant device upon his shield, and his admirable command of his steed, prancing and curvetting in the empty lists; but we wait to see who, in the actual breaking of lances, will come tumbling upon the plain.

The Concord Lyceum invited Wendell Phillips to speak on slavery. He was known to hold radical views, and two of the curators resigned in protest. Thoreau was chosen to fill one of the vacancies. Phillips delivered his lecture March 11. Thoreau immediately wrote a report in the form of a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the Liberator, who printed it. Text, The Liberator, March 28, 1845.