

1849

Gold fever became an American epidemic. On January 30 the *New-York Tribune* listed 131 vessels sailing for California and carrying more than 8,000 passengers to the gold fields. The overland trail was even more popular. On the basis of records kept at Fort Laramie it has been estimated that 30,000 people passed westward over the trail during this year. Beards were popular again, and not only in the West. The United States imported \$148,000,000 worth of goods and metals and exported \$2,000,000 less—a cause of some headshaking among old-line economists. Food cost roughly one quarter what it costs now. Hoop skirts were coming in. They could be bought or made at home; they were constructed of such materials as steel wires and webbing or reeds and muslin.

In May *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* was published by the Boston firm of James Munroe. Book buyers ignored it. Thoreau finally had to make a thousand dollars' worth of pencils for enough profit to pay off the hundred dollars he owed Munroe. But the book was and is, as Alcott said, "purely American, fragrant with the lives of New England woods and streams." It is at least a minor classic. *Walden* itself was ready for publication this year; the lack of success, however, of the *Week* must have delayed it considerably. Even though *Walden* failed to appear, Thoreau was able to publish another and much shorter work that has had its own considerable influence. "Resistance to Civil Government," later called "Civil Disobedience," was included in a set of so-called *Aesthetic Papers* edited by Elizabeth Peabody. Again Thoreau's *Journal* for the year, if it has survived, has not been printed. His letters deal with publishing, lecturing, and nature study.

From TICKNOR & CO.

Boston Feb. 8, 1849

Henry D. Thoreau Esq.
Concord
Mass.

Dear Sir:

We find on looking over publishing matters that we cannot well undertake anything more at present. If however you feel inclined we will publish "Walden or Life in the Woods" on our own acc, say one Thousand copies, allowing for 10 p^r.c^t. copyright on the Retail Price on all that are sold. The style of printing & binding to be like Emerson's Essays.

Respy
Ticknor & Co.

MS., Harvard (*typescript*).

To GEORGE THATCHER

Concord Feb. 16 1849

Dear George,

I am going as far as Portland to lecture before their Lyceum on the 3d Wednesday in March.—By the way they pay me \$25.00. Now I am not sure but I may have leisure then to go on to Bangor and so up river. I have a great desire to go up to Chesuncook before the ice breaks

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up—but I should not care if I had to return down the banks and so saw the logs running; and I write you chiefly to ask how late it will probably do to go up the river—or when on the whole would be the best time for me to start? Will the 3d week in March answer?

I should be very glad if you would go with me, but I hesitate to ask you now, it is so uncertain whether I go at all myself. The fact is I am once more making a bargain with the Publishers Ticknor & Co., who talk of printing a book for me, and if we come to terms I *may* then be confined here correcting proofs—or at most I should have but a few days to spare.

If the Bangor Lyceum should want me about those times, that of course would be very convenient, and a seasonable aid to me.

Shall I trouble you then to give me some of the statistics of a winter excursion to Chesuncook?

Of Helen I have no better news to send. We fear that she may be very gradually failing, but it may not be so. She is not very uncomfortable and still seems to enjoy the day. I do not wish to foresee what change may take place in her condition or in my own.

The rest of us are as well off as we deserve to be.—

Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

Helen Thoreau died May 2, 1849. MS., University of Texas Library; previously unpublished.

From TICKNOR & CO.

Boston, Feby. 16 1849

Henry D. Thoreau Esq
Dear Sir,

In reply to your fav. of 10th inst. we beg to say that we will publish for your acc "A Week on the Concord River."

The following general Estimate based upon vol. ½ larger than Emerson's Essays first series (as suggested by you) we present for your consideration—

Say—1000 Cops. 448 pages like Emerson's Essays 1st series printed on good paper @ \$4.00 pr ream will cost in sheets \$381.24. The binding in our style fine cloth.

12¢ pr Copy—or for the Edn	120.00
	<hr/> \$501.24

In the above Estimate we have included for alterations and extractions say \$15.00—It may be more or less—This will depend on yourself. The book can be condensed & of course cost less. Our Estimate is in accordance with sample copy. As you would not perhaps, care to bind more than ½ the Edn at once,—you would need to send \$450.—to print 1000 cops. & bind ½ of the same.

Your very truly,
W. D. Ticknor & Co.

Concord Mass.

Nothing came of this proposal to publish the Week; it went instead to Munroe. MS., Harvard (typescript); previously unpublished.

From HAWTHORNE

Salem, Feb. 19th 1849

My dear Thoreau,

The managers request that you will lecture before the Salem Lyceum on Wednesday evening *after* next—that is to say, on the 28th inst. May we depend on you? Please to answer immediately, if convenient.

Mr. Alcott delighted my wife and me, the other evening, by announcing that you had a book in prep. I rejoice at it, and nothing doubt of such success as will be worth having. Should your manuscripts all be in the

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printer's hands, I suppose you can reclaim one of them, for a single evening's use, to be returned the next morning; or perhaps that Indian lecture, which you mentioned to me, is in a state of forwardness. Either that, or a continuation of the Walden experiment (or, indeed, anything else,) will be acceptable.

We shall expect you at 14 Mall Street.

Very truly yours,
Nathl Hawthorne.

Again Thoreau gladly accepted an invitation to the Salem Lyceum and delivered a second lecture on his Walden experiment there on February 28, 1849. There is no other record of his having an Indian lecture; possibly Hawthorne was referring to the lecture on the Maine Woods delivered in Concord the preceding winter. MS., Morgan.

From BRONSON ALCOTT

12 West Street, Boston, Feb. 20, 1849.

Dear Sir,—

I send you herewith the names of a select company of gentlemen, esteemed as deserving of better acquaintance, and disposed for closer fellowship of Thought and Endeavor, who are hereby invited to assemble at No. 12 West Street, on Tuesday, the 20th of March next, to discuss the advantages of organizing a Club or College for the study and diffusion of the Ideas and Tendencies proper to the nineteenth century; and to concert measures, if deemed desirable, for promoting the ends of good fellowship. The company will meet at 10 a.m. Your presence is respectfully claimed by

Yours truly,
A. Bronson Alcott.

*The New England liberals to whom, according to Sanborn, Alcott sent his circular of invitations were Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, William Henry Channing, Wendell Phillips, Thomas T. Stone, F. Henry Hedge, Samuel G. Howe, J. Freeman Clarke, Edmund Quincy, John W. Browne, J. Elliot Cabot, T. Starr King, Lowell, Samuel G. Ward, John L. Weiss, Edwin P. Whipple, T. Wentworth Higginson, Parker Pillsbury, Thoreau, Henry I. Bowditch, Henry C. Wright, John S. Dwight, Francis Jackson, W. Ellery Channing, William B. Greene, Caleb Stetson, George P. Bradford, Adin Ballou, Jones Very, William F. Channing, Elizur Wright, Stephen S. Foster, Charles C. Shackford, Emanuel Scherb, E. P. Clarke, Samuel D. Robbins, Joshua Melroy, J. T. Fisher, Oliver Johnson, O. B. Frothingham, C. K. Whipple, Samuel Johnson, James N. Buffum, William H. Knapp, Samuel May, Jr., Otis Clapp, J. M. Spear, Charles Spear, W. R. Alger, Edward Bangs, R. F. Walcott, and A. D. Mayo. Out of Alcott's efforts the Town and Country Club was established in July. It had its ups and downs, including an attempt—repelled by Emerson—to admit female intellectuals. It became the ancestor of a much more famous group, the Saturday Club, out of which grew the idea for the Atlantic Monthly. It does not appear that Thoreau ever wanted to be active in either club; in fact, we know that he declined to take part in the Saturday Club. For a full but rambling discussion of the background to this letter see Sanborn's memoir of Alcott in his and William T. Harris's *A. Bronson Alcott: His Life and Philosophy*, II, 459–94; text, p. 461.*

TO GEORGE THATCHER

Concord, March 16, 1849

Dear Cousin:

I shall lecture in Portland next Wednesday. It happens, as I feared it would, that I am now receiving the proof sheets of my book from the printers, so that without great inconvenience I can not make you a visit at present. I trust that I shall be able to ere long. I thank you heartily for your exertions in my behalf with the Bangor Lyceum—but

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unless I should hear that they want *two* lectures to be read in *one* week or nearer together, I shall have to decline coming, this time.

Helen remains about the same.

Yours in haste,
Henry D. Thoreau

Thoreau repeated his Salem lecture in Portland during this month. Maria Thoreau, in a letter to "P" quoted in Canby's Thoreau (p. 248), states: "George wants him to keep on to Bangor they want to have him there, and if their funds hold out they intend to send for him, they give 25 dollars." But apparently the Bangor lecture was never delivered. MS., Miss Charlotte Thatcher; previously unpublished.

TO GEORGE THATCHER

[March 22, 1849]

The first thing I saw on being introduced to the Portland Lyceum last evening was your letter. . . . Mr. Emerson follows me here. I am just in the midst of printing my book, which is likely to turn out much larger than I expected. I shall advertise another, "Walden, or Life in the Woods," in the first which by the way I call "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers."

Text, catalogue of the Haber sale (*Anderson Galleries; December 7–8, 1909*).

To ELIZABETH PEABODY

Concord April 5th 1849

Miss Peabody,

I have so much writing to do at present, with the printers in the rear of me, that I have almost no time left, but for bodily exercise; however, I will send you the article in question before the end of next week. If this will not be soon enough will you please inform me by the next mail.

Yrs respectfully
Henry D. Thoreau

P.S. I offer the paper to your *first volume* only.

Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" (later better known as "Civil Disobedience") appeared in the first and only volume of Elizabeth Peabody's Aesthetic Papers in May 1849. MS., Historical Society of Pennsylvania; previously unpublished.

To H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord Ap. 17th 1849

Dear Sir,

It is my intention to leave Concord for Worcester, via Groton, at 12 o'clock on Friday of this week. Mr Emerson tells me that it will take about two hours to go by this way. At any rate I shall try to [secure] 3 or 4 hours in which to see you & Worcester before the lecture.

Yrs in haste
Henry D. Thoreau

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H. G. O. Blake took a decided interest in Thoreau's lecture career and saw to it that he was offered the opportunity to speak in Worcester at least once almost every winter. This first Worcester lecture was delivered in City Hall April 20, 1849. It was followed by a second on April 27. MS., Berg; copy in Blake's hand; previously unpublished. There is some question whether the month is "Ap." or "Sp.", but the only record of Thoreau's lecturing in Worcester in 1849 is of April. The bracketed word read as "secure" is partly torn from Blake's copy.

To LOUIS AGASSIZ

Concord Mass June 30th -49

Dear Sir,

Being disappointed in not finding you in Boston a week or two since, I requested Dr. [Augustus A.] Gould to make some inquiries of you for me; but now, as I shall not be able to see that gentleman for some time, I have decided to apply to you directly.

Suffice it to say, that one of the directors of the Bangor (Me.) Lyceum has asked me to ascertain simply—and I think this a good Yankee way of doing the business—whether you will read *two* or *three* lectures before that institution early in the next lecture season, and if so, what remuneration you will expect. Of course they would be glad to hear more lectures, but they are afraid that they may not have money enough to pay for them.

You may recognize in your correspondent the individual who forwarded to you through Mr Cabot many firkins of fishes and turtles a few years since and who also had the pleasure of an introduction to you at Marlboro' Chapel.

Will you please to answer this note as soon as convenient?

Yrs. respectfully,
Henry D. Thoreau

It was probably at the request of Thoreau's cousin George Thatcher that Thoreau tried to obtain Agassiz as a speaker for the Bangor Lyceum. MS., Harvard; previously unpublished.

From LOUIS AGASSIZ

Dear Sir,

I remember with much pleasure the time you used to send me specimens from your vicinity and also our short interview in the Marlborough Chapel. I am under too many obligations of your kindness to forget it, and I am very sorry that I missed your visit in Boston, but for 18 months I have now been settled in Cambridge.

It would give me great pleasure to engage for the lectures you ask from me, on behalf of the Bangor Lyceum; but I find it has been last winter such an heavy tax upon my health, that I wish *for the present* to make no engagements, as I have some hopes of making my living this year by other efforts and beyond the necessity of my wants, both domestic and scientific, I am determined not to exert myself, as all the time I can thus secure to myself must be exclusively devoted to science. You see this does not look much like business making; but my only business is my intercourse with nature and could I do without draughtsmen, lithographers &c &c I would live still more retired. This will satisfy you, that whenever you come this way, I shall be delighted to see you, since I have also heard something of your mode of living.

With great regard
Sincerely yours
L R Agassiz

Henry D. Thoreau

Agassiz has moved to Cambridge to take up his new professorship at Harvard. His letter to Thoreau, undated, is postmarked Cambridge, July 5 (no year). It clearly answers Thoreau's of June 30. MS., Morgan.

To ELLEN EMERSON

Concord July 31st 1849

Dear Ellen,

I think that we are pretty well acquainted, though we never had any very long talks. We have had a good many short talks, at any rate. Don't you remember how we used to despatch our breakfast two winters ago, as soon as Eddy could get on his feeding tire, which was not always remembered, before the rest of the household had come down? Don't you remember our wise criticisms on the pictures in the portfolio and the Turkish book with Eddy and Edith looking on,—how almost any pictures answered our purpose, and we went through the Penny Magazine, first from beginning to end, and then from end to beginning, and Eddy stared just as much the second time as the first, and Edith thought that we turned over too soon, and that there were some things which she had not seen—? I can guess pretty well what interests you, and what you think about. Indeed I am interested in pretty much the same things myself. I suppose you think that persons who are as old as your father and myself are always thinking about very grave things, but I know that we are meditating the same old themes that we did when we were ten years old, only we go more gravely about it. You love to write or to read a fairy story and that is what you will always like to do, in some form or other. By and by you will discover that you want what are called the necessaries of life only that you may realize some such dream.

Eddy has got him a fish-pole and line with a pin-hook at the end, which he flourishes over the dry ground and the carpet at the risk of tearing out our eyes; but when I told him that he must have a cork and a sinker, his mother took off the pin and tied on a cork instead; but he doubts whether that will catch fish as well. He tells me that he is five years old. Indeed I was present at the celebration of his birthday lately, and supplied the company with onion and squash pipes, and rhubarb whistles, which is the most I can do on such occasions. Little Sammy Hoar blew them most successfully, and made the loudest noise, though it almost strained his eyes out to do it. Edith is full of spirits. When she comes home from school, she goes hop skip and jump down into the field to pick berries, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, and thimbleberries; if there is one of these that has thoughts of changing its

hue by to-morrow morning, I guess that Edith knows something about it and will consign it to her basket for Grandnana.

Children may now be seen going a-berrying in all directions. The white-lillies are in blossom, and the john'swort and goldenrod are beginning to come out. Old people say that we have not had so warm a summer for thirty years. Several persons have died in consequence of the heat,—Mr [Obadiah] Kendal, perhaps, for one. The Irishmen on the railroad were obliged to leave off their work for several days, and the farmers left their fields and sought the shade. William Brown of the poor house is dead,—the one who used to ask for a cent—"Give me a cent?" I wonder who will have his cents now!

I found a nice penknife on the bank of the river this afternoon, which was probably lost by some villager who went there to bathe lately. Yesterday I found a nice arrowhead, which was lost some time before by an Indian who was hunting there. The knife was a very little rusted; the arrowhead was not rusted at all.

You must see the sun rise out of the ocean before you come home. I think that Long Island will not be in the way, if you climb to the top of the hill—at least, no more than Bolster Island, and Pillow Hill and even the Lowlands of Never-get-up are elsewhere.

Do not think that you must write to me because I have written to you. It does not follow at all. You would not naturally make so long a speech to me here in a month as a letter would be. Yet if sometime it should be perfectly easy, and pleasant to you, I shall be very glad to have a sentence

Your old acquaintance
Henry Thoreau

In June 1849 Emerson's eldest child, then ten, went to Staten Island to visit her cousins for the summer. MS., Raymond Emerson.

To H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord, August 10, 1849

Mr. Blake,—

I write now chiefly to say, before it is too late, that I shall be glad to see you in Concord, and will give you a chamber, etc., in my father's house, and as much of my poor company as you can bear.

I am in too great haste this time to speak to you, or out of my, condition. I might say,—you might say,—comparatively speaking, be not anxious to avoid poverty. In this way the wealth of the universe may be securely invested. What a pity if we do not live this short time according to the laws of the long time,—the eternal laws! Let us see that we stand erect here, and do not lie along by our *whole length* in the dirt. Let our meanness be our footstool, not our cushion. In the midst of this labyrinth let us live a *thread* of life. We must act with so rapid and resistless a purpose in *one* direction, that our vices will necessarily trail behind. The nucleus of a comet is almost a star. Was there ever a genuine dilemma? The laws of earth are for the feet, or inferior man; the laws of heaven are for the head, or superior man; the latter are the former sublimed and expanded, even as radii from the earth's centre go on diverging into space. Happy the man who observes the heavenly and the terrestrial law in just proportion; whose every faculty, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, obeys the law of its level; who neither stoops nor goes on tiptoe, but lives a balanced life, acceptable to nature and to God.

These things I say; other things I do.

I am sorry to hear that you did not receive my book earlier. I addressed it and left it in Munroe's shop to be sent to you immediately, on the twenty-sixth of May, before a copy had been sold.

Will you remember me to Mr. Brown, when you see him next: he is well remembered by

Henry Thoreau.

I still owe you a worthy answer.

This is our first reference to the actual publication of the Week, which fell so far short of adequate recognition. Mr. Brown was Theophilus Brown, an earnest-eyed, bearded Worcester tailor and frequent com-

panion of Blake on his visits to Thoreau. Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 208-9.

From J. A. FROUDE

S. D. Darbshire Esq. Manchester Sept 3 1849

Dear Mr Thoreau

I have long intended to write you, to thank you for that noble expression of yourself you were good enough to send to me. I know not why I have not done so; except from a foolish sense that I should not write till I had thought of something to say which it would be worth your while to read.

What can I say to you except express the honour & the love I feel for you. An honour and a love which Emerson taught me long ago to feel, but which I feel now "not on account of his word, but because I myself have read & know you."

When I think of what you are—of what you have *done* as well as of what you have written, I have a right to tell you that there is no man living upon this earth at present, whose friendship or whose notice I value more than yours; What are these words? Yet I wished to say something—and I must use words though they serve but seldom in these days for much but lies.

In your book and in one other also from your side of the Atlantic "Margaret" I see hope for the coming world. all else which I have found true in any of our thinkers, (or even of yours) is their flat denial of what is false in the modern popular jargon—but for their positive affirming side they do but fling us back upon our human nature, stoically to hold on by that with our own strength—A few *men* here & there may do this as the later Romans did—but *mankind* cannot and I have gone near to despair—I am growing not to despair, and I thank you for a helping hand.

Well I must see you sometime or other. It is not such a great matter with these steam bridges. I wish to shake hands with you, and look a brave honest man in the face. In the mean time I will but congratulate

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you on the age in which your work is cast, the world has never seen one more pregnant.

God bless you
Your friend (if you will let him call you so)
J A Froude

This letter from the English historian, who was also an intimate friend and biographer of Thomas Carlyle, is one of the few evidences Thoreau ever received that he might someday have a wide influence abroad. The "noble expression of yourself" was a copy of the Week inscribed to Froude, now in Berg. Margaret: A Tale of the Real and Ideal was a novel by the minor Transcendentalist Sylvester Judd. MS., Hosmer collection; copy in an unknown hand.

To JARED SPARKS

Concord Mass. Sep 17-'49

Sir,

Will you allow me to trouble you with my affairs?

I wish to get permission to take books from the College library to Concord where I reside. I am encouraged to ask this, not merely because I am an alumnus of Harvard, residing within a moderate distance of her halls, but *because I have chosen letters for my profession*, and so am one of the clergy embraced by the spirit at least of her rule. Moreover, though books are to some extent my stock and tools, I have not the usual means with which to purchase them. I therefore regard myself as one whom especially the library was created to serve. If I should change my pursuit or move further off, I should no longer be entitled to this privilege.—I would fain consider myself an *alumnus* in more than a merely historical sense, and I ask only that the University may help to finish the education, whose foundation she has helped to lay. I was not then ripe for her higher courses, and now that I am riper I trust that I am not too far away to be instructed by her. Indeed I see not how her

children can more properly or effectually keep up a living connexion with their Alma Mater than by continuing to draw from her intellectual nutriment in some such way as this.

If you will interest yourself to obtain the above privilege for me, I shall be truly obliged to you.

Yrs respectfully
Henry D. Thoreau

Perry Miller, in Consciousness in Concord, where this letter was first printed (p. 37), points out that it puts the lie to Emerson's anecdote (in his funeral address for Thoreau) of Thoreau's interview with Sparks, the president of Harvard, to obtain use of the library. Miller also notes that while Sparks simply wrote "one year" in the margin of this letter, Thoreau continued to use the privilege for the rest of his life. How Thoreau managed to borrow volumes from the Harvard Library in 1841 and on September 11, 1849, before this letter was written (as is indicated in Kenneth Cameron's Emerson the Essayist, pp. 194, 195), is not known. MS., Harvard College Library.

To H. C. O. BLAKE

Concord Nov. 20th 1849

Mr Blake,

I have not forgotten that I am your debtor. When I read over your letters, as I have just done, I feel that I am unworthy to have received or to answer them, though they are addressed, as I would have them to the ideal of me. It behoves me, if I would reply, to speak out of the rarest part of myself.

At present I am subsisting on certain wild flowers which Nature wafts to me, which unaccountably sustain me, and make my apparently poor life rich. Within a year my walks have extended themselves, and almost every afternoon, (I read, or write, or make pencils, in the forenoon, and by the last means get a living for my body.) I visit some new

hill or pond or wood many miles distant. I am astonished at the wonderful retirement through which I move, rarely meeting a man in these excursions, never seeing one similarly engaged, unless it be my companion, when I have one. I cannot help feeling that of all the human inhabitants of nature hereabouts, only we two have leisure to admire and enjoy our inheritance.

"Free in this world, as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chains, those who have practiced the *yoga* gather in Brahma the certain fruit of their works."

Depend upon it that rude and careless as I am, I would fain practise the *yoga* faithfully.

"The yogin, absorbed in contemplation, contributes in his degree to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts, as animating original matter."

To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a yogin.

I know little about the affairs of Turkey, but I am sure that I know something about barberries and ches[t]nuts of which I have collected a store this fall. When I go to see my neighbor he will formally communicate to me the latest news from Turkey, which he read in yesterday's Mail—how Turkey by this time looks determined, & Lord Palmerston—Why, I would rather talk of the bran, which, unfortunately, was sifted out of my bread this morning and thrown away. It is a fact which lies nearer to me. The newspaper gossip with which our hosts abuse our ears is as far from a true hospitality as the viands which they set before us. We did not need them to feed our bodies; and the news can be bought for a penny. We want the inevitable news, be it sad or cheering—wherefore and by what means they are extant, this *new* day. If they are well let them whistle and dance; if they are dyspeptic, it is their duty to complain, that so they may in any case be *entertaining*. If words are invented to conceal thought, I think that newspapers are a great improvement on a bad invention. Do not suffer your life to be taken by newspapers.

I thank you for your hearty appreciation of my book. I am glad to have had such a long talk with you, and that you had patience to listen to me to the end. I think that I have the advantage of you, for I chose my own mood, and in one sense your mood too, that is a quiet and attentive reading mood. Such advantage has the writer over the talker.

1850

Life expectancy in Massachusetts was thirty-eight years for the male babies born this year and forty for the female. Nine of the slaveholding states met in convention at Nashville and came out in favor of disunion. A treaty of amity and commerce was signed with Borneo. On the death of President Zachary Taylor, he was succeeded in office by one of the least remembered of American presidents. The decennial census gave the population as 23,191,876—an increase of more than one third over 1840. Only 262 slaves were counted in the North. Flogging was abolished in the Navy and on vessels of commerce, partly through the efforts of Herman Melville, in spite of the fact that several admirals appeared before Congress with the assertion that naval discipline would end the moment the lash was voted away. On March 7 Webster aligned himself with Henry Clay in favor of what is now called the Compromise of 1850; this omnibus bill of concessions to the South kept the Union together for a while longer.

The *Journal* for this year is full, even though eighty-four pages, apparently Thoreau's account of his trip to Canada, are missing. There is little philosophy left, but much naturalizing, with a good deal of lively observation of human nature. Among the best pieces are a sketch of a drunken Dutchman and Thoreau's dry recital of how he had accidentally set fire years earlier to some Concord woods and of the consequences. By now he had become as much of a settled man as he was ever to be. His walking and writing continued, but the writing was seldom superlative. His work as a surveyor took more of his time, and he was not, one would judge, discontent that it did so. Though one or two flibbertigib-