

1859

Gold was discovered in Colorado, gold and silver (the Comstock Lode) in Nevada. A treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation was signed with Paraguay. At Vicksburg a commercial convention recommended that all laws prohibiting the African slave trade be repealed. John Wise started from St. Louis in a balloon and reached Henderson, New York, 802 miles away, in twenty hours. Emile Gravelet ("M. Blondin") crossed the Niagara River below the Falls on a tightrope. The first Pullman made its initial trip from Bloomington to Chicago. J. B. Clark introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives to the effect that a proposal to circulate H. R. Helper's book *The Impending Crisis* was incipient treason. The first oil well was drilled near Titusville, Pennsylvania. With the assistance of Colonel Robert E. Lee and a company of marines the local militia captured John Brown and his followers at the Harpers Ferry arsenal. On December 2 Brown was hanged at Charlestown, [West] Virginia.

Thoreau's father died in February. He had been a quiet man, interested in Concord town rather than Concord country. Added responsibilities came to Thoreau, for now he had to take over the running of the profitable graphite business. He also received his most extensive surveying contract. Because the Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet Rivers were backing up and flooding the adjoining hay meadows, the owners of these lands hired him to measure the water depths and write the history of the bridges and their abutments. Thoreau believed that he could rightly call himself a civil engineer, and he signed himself so. His health was not of the best. He found time to write a good deal in the *Journal*. Here are the subjects for the last month of the year: a ride with an insane man; a glaze on the trees; John Brown as a preacher;

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Brown's translation; a lichen day; Walden in a mist; tansy; Brown's greatness; Brown and public opinion; present, past, and future; a warm, soft sky; Dr. Ripley's firewood; an Irish woodchopper; faery visitors; watching the clouds; snowballs made by the wind; from the first Georgic; a classification of snowstorms; the "philosophy" of wood; Gerard's Herbal; seeds as food for birds; the squirrels' winter food; the divinity of youth; a lodging snow; the snow wrinkled with age; a reminiscence of summer; fisherman's luck; a large blueberry bush; fishes in a newly dug pond; a flock of snow buntings; liatris in winter; a blueberry grove; a golden-crested wren; the artillery of the frozen pond; the life of the pickerel fisher; headgear of men and women; women and boot-heels; a brute with a gun; muskrat houses and muskrat food; scientific nomenclature; open places in the river; the breath of the river; remarkable clouds; a shrike; the musquash in winter; winter fog; our system of education; and thoughts and the man. Probably the most important item, mentioned four times in the printed headings in the *Journal*, was John Brown.

TO H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord, January 1, 1859.

Mr. Blake,—

It may interest you to hear that Cholmondeley has been this way again, *via* Montreal and Lake Huron, going to the West Indies, or rather to Weiss-nicht-wo, whither he urges me to accompany him. He is rather more demonstrative than before, and, on the whole, what would be called “a good fellow,”—is a man of principle, and quite reliable, but very peculiar. I have been to New Bedford with him, to show him a whaling town and Ricketson. I was glad to hear that you had called on R. How did you like him? I suspect that you did not see one another fairly.

I have lately got back to that glorious society called Solitude, where we meet our friends continually, and can imagine the outside world also to be peopled. Yet some of my acquaintance would fain hustle me into the almshouse for *the sake of society*, as if I were pining for that diet, when I seem to myself a most befriended man, and find constant employment. However, they do not believe a word I say. They have got a club, the handle of which is in the Parker House at Boston, and with this they beat me from time to time, expecting to make me tender or minced meat, so fit for a club to dine off.

“Hercules with his club
The Dragon did drub;
But More of More Hall,
With nothing at all,
He slew the Dragon of Wantley.”

Ah! that More of More Hall knew what fair play was. Channing, who wrote to me about it once, brandishing the club vigorously (being set on by another, probably), says *now*, seriously, that he is sorry to find by my letters that I am “absorbed in politics,” and adds, begging my

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pardon for his plainness, “Beware of an extraneous life!” and so he does his duty, and washes his hands of me. I tell him that it is as if he should say to the sloth, that fellow that creeps so slowly along a tree, and cries *ai* from time to time, “Beware of dancing!”

The doctors are all agreed that I am suffering from want of society. Was never a case like it. First, I did not know that I was suffering at all. Secondly, as an Irishman might say, I had thought it was indigestion of the society I got. [It is indispensable that I should take a dose of Lowell & Agassiz & Woodman.]

As for the Parker House, I went there once, when the Club was away, but I found it hard to see through the cigar smoke, and men were deposited about in chairs over the marble floor, as thick as legs of bacon in a smoke-house. It was all smoke, and no salt, Attic or other. The only room in Boston which I visit with alacrity is the Gentlemen’s Room at the Fitchburg Depot, where I wait for the cars, sometimes for two hours, in order to get out of town. It is a paradise to the Parker House, for no smoking is allowed, and there is far more retirement. A large and respectable club of us hire it (Town and Country Club), and I am pretty sure to find some one there whose face is set the same way as my own.

My last essay, on which I am still engaged, is called Autumnal Tints. I do not know how readable (*i. e.*, by me to others) it will be.

I met Mr. [Henry] James the other night at Emerson’s, at an Alcottian conversation, at which, however, Alcott did not talk much, being disturbed by James’s opposition. The latter is a hearty man enough, with whom you can differ very satisfactorily, on account of both his doctrines and his good temper. He utters *quasi* philanthropic dogmas in a metaphysic dress; but they are for all practical purposes very crude. He charges society with all the crime committed, and praises the criminal for committing it. But I think that all the remedies he suggests out of his head—for he goes no farther, hearty as he is—would leave us about where we are now. For, of course, it is not by a gift of turkeys on Thanksgiving Day that he proposes to convert the criminal, but by a true sympathy with each one,—with him, among the rest, who lyingly tells the world from the gallows that he has never been treated kindly by a single mortal since he was born. But it is not so easy a thing to sympathize with another, though you may have the best disposition to do it. There is Dobson over the hill. Have not you and I and all the world been trying, ever since he was born, to sympathize with him? (as doubt-

less he with us), and yet we have got no farther than to send him to the House of Correction once at least; and he, on the other hand, as I hear, has sent us to another place several times. This is the real state of things, as I understand it, at least so far as James's remedies go. We are now, alas! exercising what charity we actually have, and new laws would not give us any more. But, perchance, we might make some improvements in the House of Correction. You and I are Dobson; what will James do for us?

Have you found at last in your wanderings a place where the solitude is sweet?

What mountain are you camping on nowadays? Though I had a good time at the mountains, I confess that the journey did not bear any fruit that I know of. I did not expect it would. The mode of it was not simple and adventurous enough. You must first have made an infinite demand, and not unreasonably, but after a corresponding outlay, have an all-absorbing purpose, and at the same time that your feet bear you hither and thither, travel much more in imagination.

To let the mountains slide, —live at home like a traveler. It should not be in vain that these things are shown us from day to day. Is not each withered leaf that I see in my walks something which I have traveled to find?—traveled, who can tell how far? What a fool he must be who thinks that his El Dorado is anywhere but where he lives!

We are always, methinks, in some kind of ravine, though our bodies may walk the smooth streets of Worcester. Our souls (I use this word for want of a better) are ever perched on its rocky sides, overlooking that lowland. (What a more than Tuckerman's Ravine is the body itself, in which the "soul" is encamped, when you come to look into it! However, eagles always have chosen such places for their eyries.)

Thus is it ever with your fair cities of the plain. Their streets may be paved with silver and gold, and six carriages roll abreast in them, but the real *homes* of the citizens are in the Tuckerman's Ravines which ray out from that centre into the mountains round about, one for each man, woman, and child. The masters of life have so ordered it. That is their *beau-ideal* of a country seat. There is no danger of being *tuckered* out before you get to it.

So we live in Worcester and in Concord, each man taking his exercise regularly in his ravine, like a lion in his cage, and sometimes spraining his ankle there. We have very few clear days, and a great many small plagues which keep us busy. Sometimes, I suppose, you hear a neigh-

bor halloo (Brown, may be) and think it is a bear. Nevertheless, on the whole, we think it very grand and exhilarating, this ravine life. It is a capital advantage withal, living so high, the excellent drainage of that city of God. Routine is but a shallow and insignificant sort of ravine, such as the ruts are, the conduits of puddles. But these ravines are the source of mighty streams, precipitous, icy, savage, as they are, haunted by bears and loup-cerviers; there are born not only Sacos and Amazons, but prophets who will redeem the world. The at last smooth and fertilizing water at which nations drink and navies supply themselves begins with melted glaciers, and burst thunder-spouts. Let us pray that, if we are not flowing through some Mississippi valley which we fertilize, —and it is not likely we are,—we may know ourselves shut in between grim and mighty mountain walls amid the clouds, falling a thousand feet in a mile, through dwarfed fir and spruce, over the rocky insteps of slides, being exercised in our minds, and so developed.

The Saturday Club met the last Saturday of each month at the Parker House. Among the members were Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, and other men of letters, as well as such semiliterary figures as Louis Agassiz and young Horatio Woodman. Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 399–405. The manuscript was sold by Charles F. Libbie & Co. at the Hathaway-Richardson sale of May 9–10, 1911; the sale catalogue quotes the sentence bracketed.

From HENRY WALKER FROST?

Boston Jan 7th 1859

Mr. H. D. Thoreau.

Dear Sir,

Will you do me the favor of meeting me at the Probate Court in East Cambridge on Tuesday next (11th inst) at ten o'clock A.M. in order to prove my father's will to which [page torn] sness. My mother [page torn]

"Three years ago," Thoreau remarked to Ricketson in a letter dated February 12, "I was called with my father to be a witness to the signing of our neighbor Mr Frost's will. . . . I was lately required to go to Cambridge to testify to the genuineness of the will." Barzillai Frost died December 8, 1858. The note given above is probably from his elder son. Young Frost, a member of the Harvard class of 1858, was living in Boston, reading law and attending the lectures of the Harvard Law School. MS., Morgan; previously unpublished. The remainder of the manuscript is torn away.

TO H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord, January 19, 1859.

Mr. Blake,—

If I could have given a favorable report as to the skating, I should have answered you earlier. About a week before you wrote there was good skating; there is now none. As for the lecture, I shall be glad to come. I cannot now say when, but I will let you know, I think within a week or ten days at most, and will then leave you a week clear to make the arrangements in. I will bring something else than "What shall it profit a Man?" My father is very sick, and has been for a long time, so that there is the more need of me at home. This occurs to me, even when contemplating so short an excursion as to Worcester.

I want very much to see or hear your account of your adventures in the Ravine [Tuckerman's], and I trust I shall do so when I come to Worcester. Cholmondeley has been here again, returning from Virginia (for he went no farther south) to Canada; and will go thence to Europe, he thinks, in the spring, and never ramble any more. (January 29). I am expecting daily that my father will die, therefore I cannot leave home at present. I will write you again within ten days.

Thoreau's father died February 3. Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 405-6.

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From THOMAS G. CARY AND HENRY G. DENNY

Boston, January 21st, 1859.

Sir,

In behalf of the library committee of the Association of the Alumni of Harvard College, we send you herewith copies of the circular which you have kindly undertaken to distribute among your class; together with copies of the report on the state of the library, which was presented to the association at their last annual meeting, to be forwarded to those who have not yet received it.

The committee would suggest that a personal interview with each one who is applied to for a subscription is highly important, and should be had when practicable; it being likely to command more attention than a written communication, and to afford a better opportunity for a full explanation of the subject. They hope also, that, in every case where a personal application cannot be made, a letter will be forwarded with the circular, advancing such special arguments as may occur to the writer as likely to be effective, from his knowledge of the disposition, habits, or taste of the person addressed.

It seems to the committee desirable that no graduate should be passed over in the distribution of the circulars, on account of any supposed inability or indisposition to contribute, as instances have come to their knowledge where interest in this movement has been expressed, and aid has been readily given, when there had seemed good reason to doubt the utility of any application for it.

Information concerning the library and of the progress of the subscription can be had at the office of the secretary of the committee, 42, Court Street, where additional copies of the circular and of the pamphlet containing the report, together with the addresses of the graduates so far as known, can be obtained if needed.

You are requested to make a return of the subscriptions procured by you, to the chairman of the committee or to the secretary, as often as once in three or four weeks, and to give immediate notice of any unusually large sum which may be subscribed, in order that accounts may

from time to time be published for the information and encouragement of those engaged in this work.

We are, Sir, respectfully yours,

Thomas G. Cary, *Chairman.*
Henry G. Denny, *Secretary.*

We hereby agree to contribute the sums set against our respective names towards a fund to be permanently invested, the income of which shall be applied to the purchase of books for the public library of Harvard College.

A form letter sent out, according to Kenneth Cameron, to all members of the alumni. The italicized last paragraph was returned by Thoreau in his letter of reply, p. 545. MS. facsimile, Kenneth Cameron, The Transcendentalists and Minerva, p. 487.

TO H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord Feb. 7th 1859

Mr. Blake,

I will come and read you an extract from "Autumnal Tints," on Tuesday the 15th, of this month, if that is agreeable to you,—leaving here probably at noon. Perhaps you had better acknowledge the receipt of this.

H. D. T.

Apparently the lecture was postponed until February 22, for Sallie Holley, in A Life for Liberty (p. 167), tells of hearing a lecture on "Autumnal Tints" in Worcester on that date. MS., Berg, copy in Blake's hand; previously unpublished.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, 9 Feb. 1859.

My dear Friend,—

I received last evening a Boston newspaper with your super-
scription, containing the record of the decease of your father. It had
previously been published in the New Bedford Mercury, perhaps by
Channing.

You must all feel his loss very much, particularly your mother. I have
rarely, if ever, met a man who inspired me with more respect. He ap-
peared to me to be a real embodiment of honest virtue, as well as a
true gentleman of the old school. I also recognized in him a fund of
good fellowship, or what would perhaps better and more respectfully
express it, kindly friendship. I remember with pleasure, a ramble I
took with him about Concord some two or three years ago, at a time
when you were away from home, on which occasion I was much im-
pressed with his good sense, his fine social nature, and genuine hos-
pitality. He reminded me much of my own father, in fact, I never saw
a man more like him even in his personal appearance and manners—
both bore upon their countenances the impress of care and sorrow, a
revelation of the experience of life, written in the most legible charac-
ters, and one which always awakens my deepest sympathy and rever-
ence.

I doubt not but that he was a good man, and however we may be un-
able to peer beyond this sphere of experience, may we not trust that
some good angel, perhaps that of his mother (was her name Jeanie
Burns?), has already welcomed him to the spirit land? At any rate, if
there be any award for virtue and well doing I think it is for such as
he. Veiled as the future is in mystery profound, I think we may fully
rely upon Divine Wisdom who has seen it proper not only to conceal
from us knowledge beyond this life, but has also wrapped us in so much
obscurity even here. But let us go on trustfully in Him—the sun yet
shines, the birds sing, the flowers bloom, and Nature is still as exhaust-
less as ever in her charms and riches for those who love her.

I trust that your mother and sister will find that consolation which
they so much need. They as well as you have my warmest sympathy,
and it is a pleasurable sorrow for me to bear my poor tribute to the
memory and worth of him from whom you have so lately parted.

It seems to me that Nature—and by this I always mean the out-o'-door life in woods and fields, by streams and lakes, etc.—affords the best balm for our wounded spirits. One of the best things written by Francis Jeffrey, and which I have tacked upon my Shanty wall, is, "If it were not for my love of beautiful nature and poetry, my heart would have died within me long ago."

Would not a little run from home soon, if you can be spared, be well for you? Can you not catch the early spring a little in advance? We are probably a week or two before you in her maiden steps. Soon shall we see the catkins upon the willows, and hear the bluebird and song-sparrow again—how full of hope and cheer! Even this morning (a soft, drizzling one) I have heard the sweet, mellow, long-drawn pipe of the meadow lark. I have also seen robins occasionally during the winter, and a flock of quails several times, besides numerous partridges and rabbits.

I see nothing of Channing of late.

With my best regards to your mother and sister, believe me

Very truly your friend,
D. Ricketson

Please write me.

P.S. Your letter indicates health of mind and good pluck. In fact, Dr. Pluck is a capital physician. Glory in whortle and blackberries; eat them like an Indian, abundantly and from the bushes and vines. When you can, smell of sweet fern, bayberry, sassafras, yellow birch, and rejoice in the songs of crickets and harvest flies.

Io Paeon

Text, Ricketson, pp. 89-92.

To H. G. DENNY

Henry G. Denny, Esq.

Dear Sir,

Inclosed please find five dollars, for the object above described. I would gladly give more, but this exceeds my income from all sources together for the last four months.

Yrs respectfully,
Henry D. Thoreau.

Text, catalogue of the Denny sale (*Charles F. Libbie & Co., January 30 ff., 1906*).

From HENRY G. DENNY

42, Court St., Boston February 11th, 1859

Henry D. Thoreau, Esq.,

Dear Sir,

I am happy to acknowledge the receipt of five dollars from you, as a contribution to the fund for the public library of Harvard College.

Respectfully yours,
Henry G. Denny, Sec'y Library Committee

MS., Goodspeed's Book Shop, Boston (*typescript*); *previously unpublished*.

To DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord Feb 12 1859

Friend Ricketson,

I thank you for your kind letter. I sent you the notice of my Father's death as much because you knew him, as because you know me. I can hardly realize that he is dead. He had been sick about two years, and at last declined rather rapidly though steadily. Till within a week or ten days before he died, he was hoping to see another spring; but he then discovered that this was a vain expectation, and thinking that he was dying he took his leave of us several times within a week before his departure. Once or twice he expressed a slight impatience at the delay. He was quite conscious to the last, and his death was so easy, that though we had all been sitting around the bed for an hour or more, expecting that event, as we had sat before, he was gone at last almost before we were aware of it.

I am glad to read what you say about his social nature. I think I may say that he was wholly unpretending; and there was this peculiarity in his aim, that, though he had pecuniary difficulties to contend with the greater part of his life, he always studied merely how to make a *good* article, pencil or other, (for he practised various arts) and was never satisfied with what he had produced,—nor was he ever in the least disposed to put off a *poor* one for the sake of pecuniary gain;—as if he labored for a higher end.

Though he was not very old, and was not a native of Concord, I think that he was, on the whole, more identified with Concord street than any man now alive, having come here when he was about twelve years old, and set up for himself as a merchant here at the age of 21, fifty years ago.

As I sat in a circle the other evening with my mother and sister, my mother's two sisters & my Father's two sisters, it occurred to me that my Father, though 71 belonged to the youngest four of the eight who recently composed our family.

How swiftly, at last, but unnoticed, a generation passes away! Three years ago I was called with my Father to be a witness to the signing of our neighbor Mr Frost's will. Mr Samuel Hoar, who was there writing it, also signed it. I was lately required to go to Cambridge to testify to

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the genuineness of the will, being the only one of the four who could be there; and now I am the only one alive.

My Mother & Sister thank you heartily for your sympathy. The latter in particular agrees with you in thinking, that it is communion with still living & healthy nature alone which can restore to sane and cheerful views.

I thank you for your invitation to New Bedford—but I feel somewhat confined here for the present. I did not know but we should see you the day after [William R.?] Alger was here. It is not too late for a winter walk in Concord.

It does me good to hear of spring birds, and singing ones too, for spring seems far away from Concord yet.

I am going to Worcester to read a parlor lecture on the 22nd, and shall see Blake & Brown. What if you were to meet me there! or go with me from here! You would see *them* to good advantage.

Cholmondeley has been here again, after going as far south as Virginia, and left for Canada about three weeks ago. He is a good soul, and I am afraid that I did not sufficiently recognize him.

Please remember me to Mrs Ricketson, and to the rest of your family.

Yrs

Henry D. Thoreau

MS., Huntington.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Sunday a. m., 6 March, 1859.

Respected Friend,—

This fine spring morning with its cheering influences brings you to my mind; for I always associate you with the most genial aspects of our beloved Nature, with the woods, the fields, lakes and rivers, with the birds and flowers. As I write, the meadow lark is piping sweetly in

the meadows near by, and lo! at this instant, the very first I have heard this season, a bluebird has warbled on a tree near the Shanty. What salutation could be more welcome or more in unison with my subject? Yesterday, my son Walton saw and heard the red-winged Blackbird, and this morning robins are flying about. The song-sparrow (*F. melodia*) now singing, has also been in tune since the 23d of February. Truly may we say, "Spring is come!"

At my present writing, the thermometer at my north window indicates 44 degrees and is rising; yesterday p.m. 50 degrees, wind W. S. W. It seems to me quite time to stop the abuse of our climate. In my boyhood and even until after my marriage (1834), I do not remember it ever occurred to me but that our climate was a very good one. And had I never heard it complained of by others, should hardly have ever suspected it otherwise. A climate that has sustained such men as R. W. E., A. B. A., H. D. T., and other kindred natures, can't be a very bad one, and may be the very best.

March is to me *the month of hope*. I always look forward to its coming with pleasure, and welcome its arrival. Others may speak of it in terms of reproach, but to me it has much to recommend itself. The backbone of winter, according to the homely adage, is now broken. Every day brings us nearer to the vernal influences, to the return of the birds and the appearance of wild flowers. Mingled with storms are many warm sunny days. I am no longer in haste for finer weather, so near at hand. Each day has something to interest me, and even in a severe snow or rainstorm, accompanied with cold weather, I know that the glorious sun, when once he shines again, will dispel all gloom and soften the temperature. Although it is my custom to walk in the woods, fields, and by-places at all seasons of the year and in all weathers, the spring (and in this I include March as fairly belonging) is my most favorite time. Nature, ever attractive to me, is at this season particularly inviting, the kind solace and hope of my days. Although I am but an indifferent versifier, yet I fancy but few poets have experienced richer or happier emotions than myself from her benign spirit.

I am most happy to record, at this time, that I have, I trust, recovered my good spirits, such as blessed me in my earlier years of manhood. I shall endeavor by a life of purity and retirement to keep them as the choicest of blessings. My desires, I believe, are moderate, and not beyond my reach. So far as the false luxuries of life are concerned, I

have but little taste for them, and I would willingly dispense with almost every unnecessary article in the economy of living, for the sake of being the master of my own time, and the leisure to pursue the simple occupations and enjoyments of rural life. I do not covet wealth, I certainly do not wish it. With the intelligent and worthy poor, I feel far greater sympathy and affinity, than with a large portion of the rich and falsely great. I would give more for one day with the poet-peasant, Robert Burns, or Shakespeare, than for unnumbered years of entertainment at the tables of proud and rich men.

"Behind the plough Burns sang his wood-notes wild,
And richest Shakespeare was a poor man's child."

So sung Ebenezer Elliot, the Corn-law rhymmer, himself a true poet and friend of the "virtuous and struggling poor."

I copy the foregoing, suggested by the season, from my Daily Journal, on the entrance of March. You may, therefore, read it as a soliloquy, by which it may savor less of egotism and bombast, to which objections it might otherwise be open.

During my walk, yesterday p.m., in a sunny spot, I found the "pussy willows" (*S. eriocephala*) and enclose one of the "catkins" or "woolly aments" in testimony thereof. I also enclose a pansy from the south side of the Shanty. How should I rejoice to have you as the companion of my walks!

I suppose you have some time since returned from your literary *exploit* into Worcester, and trust that you had a good time with your disciples, Blake, and Brown. They must be *thoreaully* brown by this time. "Arcades ambo" under your pupilage—though, I think, the classic term applies better to you and R. W. E. or W. E. C[hanning]. May I not also claim as a birthright to rank in your fraternity, as a disciple, at least? Please not reject me. Failing in you I shall be bankrupt, indeed. Shall echo respond, to my complaint, "Is there none for me in the wide world,—no kindred spirit?" "None"?

Don't be alarmed, "Amicus Mihi," you shall be as free as air for aught me.

During the past winter I have been reviewing somewhat my law studies, and what will not a little surprise you, have received and accepted a commission as justice of the peace. I have collected the relic of my law library, and ranged them in formidable array upon a shelf

in the Shanty. I find myself much better able to grasp and cope with these legal worthies than when a young man.

I don't suppose I shall do much in the way of my profession, but may assist occasionally the injured in the recovery of their rights. I have not done this hastily, as you may suppose. I intend to be free from all trammels, and believing, as I do, that law, or rather government, was made for the weal of all concerned, and particularly for the protection of the weak against the strong, and that, according to Blackstone, "What is not reason is not law," I shall act accordingly if I act at all.

I may make use of the elective franchise, but of this am as yet undetermined. It seems to me as though a crisis was approaching in the affairs of our government, when the use of every means that "God and nature affords" will be required to oppose tyranny. I trust that I shall have your sympathy in this matter.

I shall seek no opportunity for the exercise of my opposition, but "bide my time."

A visit from you would be very welcome. With kind regards to your household and my Concord friends, one and all, I remain,

Yours truly,
D. R.

Yours of 12th Feb. came duly to hand.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 94-98.

From MARY BROWN

tleboro sometime before long—Father and Mother send kind regards.

Hoping the May flowers will be fresh when they reach you:

yours truly
Mary H. Brown

Mary Brown sent mayflowers to Thoreau at least twice, in April 1858 and in May 1859. We prefer the latter date for her letter because the fragment quoted above fits very well with Thoreau's answer of May 19. Our dating is arbitrary, however; Mary Brown's note might equally well have accompanied the large box of flowers he received on April 23, 1858 and noted in his Journal for that day. MS., Huntington; previously unpublished. This is the lower part of a sheet of small stationery that Thoreau tore off to use for a paragraph in Cape Cod.

TO MARY BROWN

Concord May 19th 1859

Miss Mary H. Brown,

Excuse me for not acknowledging before the receipt of your beautiful gift of may-flowers. The delay may prove that I did not fear I should forget it, though very busily engaged in surveying. The flowers were somewhat detained on the road, but they were not the less fragrant, and were very superior to any that we can show.

It chanced that on the very day they arrived, while surveying in the next town, I found more of these flowers than I have ever seen hereabouts, and I have accordingly named a certain path "May-flower Path" on my plan. But a botanist's experience is full of coincidences. If you think much about some flower which you never saw, you will be pretty sure to find it some day actually growing near by you. In the long run, we find what we expect. We shall be fortunate then if we expect great things.

Please remember me to your Father & Mother.

Yours truly
Henry D. Thoreau

For an account of Mary Brown's youthful acquaintance with Thoreau see Mrs. Elizabeth B. Davenport, "Thoreau in Vermont in 1856," Vermont Botanical Club Bulletin No. 3 (April 1908), 36-38. MS., Abernethy (typescript).

To DAVID (?) HEARD

Concord July 8 1859

Mr Heard

Dear Sir,

You did not give me any data concerning the Town or Causeway Bridge—that is the old wooden one—whether it was longer than the present one—&c By the vote of the Committee I am requested "To learn, if possible, the time of erection of each bridge, and if any abutments have been extended since the building of any bridge, & when." I think you told me that the stone one was built about 10 years ago.

I have done with your map, and, if you so direct, will leave it with Dr. Reynolds.

Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

Thoreau was hired to survey the river, its depth, its bridges and dams because river haying land suffered from flooding with water backed up by various obstructions. His water survey papers are now in the Concord Public Library. In his Journal for June 24, 1859 he notes that he has been surveying the bridges and river from Heard's Bridge to the Billerica dam on the 22d, 23d, and 24th. Thoreau adds: "Colonel David Heard, who accompanied me . . . has worked at clearing out the river (I think about 1820)." David Heard, 1793-1881 according to Concord records, had a son, David, born in 1820, and in the same Journal passage Thoreau mentions a Deacon Richard Heard. The evidence leans to the senior David Heard as the recipient of Thoreau's letter. MS., Abernethy (typescript).

From LUCAS, BROTHERS

Balt. July 26, 1859

Mr Henry D. Thoreau

D Sir

We enclose Ten dollars, Rockland Bank, in settlement of your bill of 21st inst

Please acknowledge & oblige

Yours Respy
Lucas, Bros

The bill, in all probability, was for black lead, graphite, or plumbago. MS., Harvard; previously unpublished.

To WILLIAM A. WILSON

Concord, Mass. July 30th 1859

Mr. Wm. A. Wilson

Dear Sir,

I send you by the same mail with this a copy of A Week on the Concord & Merrimack Rivers. The price is \$1.25. The change can be sent in postage stamps. I have no copies of "Walden" to spare; and I learn that it is out of print

Yours respectfully
Henry D. Thoreau

P. S. These are the only books I have published.

MS., Robert Miller (typescript); previously unpublished.

From THO. H. MUMFORD

Philad. Augs. 12th/ 59

Dear Sir

Please send us ten pounds of Plumbago for Electrotyping purposes, such as we got last from you—as it is some risk to send the money by mail, we would prefer paying the Express agent on delivery of the box—I suppose this arrangement will be satisfactory to you but if not please let us know at once as we have but a very little on hand.

Respectfully Yours &
Tho. H. Mumford

This note and similar ones suggest how much time Thoreau was having to spend on the family business since his father's death. MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

From WELCH, BIGELOW & CO.

Cambridge Aug 18

Mr Thoreau
Dear Sir

Inclosed please find \$15 00 for which send us 10 lbs Blacklead by return of express—directed as usual

Yours truly
Welch, Bigelow, & Co

Aug 18.

The date on this order does not include the year, but the manuscript is with other correspondence for 1859 among Thoreau's "Notes on Fruits." MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

From HOBART & ROBBINS

Boston Augt. 22d 1859

Mr Henry D. Thoreaux Concord, Mass.

Please send by return Express 6 lbs best Black Lead & Enclosed please find Nine Dollars to pay for the same--

Send a receipt.

Yrs Resp'y &
Hobart & Robbins

One 5.00 bill	The Freemans Bank, No. 9
One 3.00 " "	" " " " 864
One 1.00 " "	" " " " 1146
	<u>\$9.00</u>

MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

To GEORGE THATCHER

Concord Aug 25th '59

Dear Cousin,

Mother unites with me in assuring Charles Benjamin & Caleb, that we shall be happy to see them, & trust that they will not be in a hurry to go hence to Peterboro, but will first exhaust at their leisure whatever entertainment the dull town may afford. Accommodations will be provided for them at any rate, and such visitors as come later must take their chance. The prospect is that Concord will not be herself that week. I fear it will be more like Discord. Thank fortune, the camp will be nearly 2 miles west of us; yet the *scamps* will be "all over the lot." The very anticipation of this muster has greatly increased the amount of travel past our house, for a month; & now, at last, whole houses have

begun to roll that way. I fear that we shall have no melons to speak of for either friends or foes, unless perchance the present rain may revive them, for we are in the midst of a severe drought. Sophia is on a short visit to Miss Swift in Roxbury. Please let aunts know that their letter to her reached us yesterday, & that we shall expect them muster [indecipherable word]. We hope that Aunt Jane will be able to travel without inconvenience. I believe that the soldiers will come over the road on Tuesday; & I hear that cars will be run between Boston & Concord at very short intervals on the days of the muster.

I should think that you might have a very pleasant journey to New Brunswick, & for my own part, I would rather go to where men will be mustered less thickly than they will be hereabouts next month.

Edward Hoar, with wife & sister, leave Liverpool for home the 27 inst.

I know the fatigue of much concentrating, especially of drawing accurate plans. It is the hardest work I can do. While following it, I need to go to Moosehead every afternoon, & camp out every night.

Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

This letter was probably to George Thatcher of Bangor; he had accompanied Thoreau on visits to the Maine woods and would have known Edward Hoar of Concord, who accompanied Thoreau in 1857. A state muster was held in Concord September 7-9. MS., Historical Society of Pennsylvania; previously unpublished.

[1859]

To E. G. DUDLEY

Concord Sep 5 1859

E. G. Dudley Esq.
Dear Sir

I will read a lecture to your company on the 9th of October, for the compensation named. I should prefer, however, to bring one which I call "Life Misspent," instead of "Autumnal Tints."

Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

MS., Lownes; *previously unpublished.*

To H. C. O. BLAKE

Concord, September 26, 1859.

Mr. Blake,—

I am not sure that I am in a fit mood to write to you, for I feel and think rather too much like a business man, having some very irksome affairs to attend to these months and years on account of my family. This is the way I am serving King Admetus, confound him! If it were not for my relations, I would let the wolves prey on his flocks to their bellies' content. Such fellows you have to deal with! herdsmen of some other king, or of the same, who tell no tale, but in the sense of counting their flocks, and then lie drunk under a hedge. How is your grist ground? Not by some murmuring stream, while you lie dreaming on the bank; but, it seems, you must take hold with your hands, and shove the wheel round. You can't depend on streams, poor feeble things! You can't depend on worlds, left to themselves; but you've got to oil them and goad them along. In short, you've got to carry on two farms at once,—the farm on the earth and the farm in your mind. Those

Crimean and Italian battles were mere boys' play,—they are the scrapes into which truants get. But what a battle a man must fight everywhere to maintain his standing army of thoughts, and march with them in orderly array through the always hostile country! How many enemies there are to sane thinking! Every soldier has succumbed to them before he enlists for those other battles. Men may sit in chambers, seemingly safe and sound, and yet despair, and turn out at last only hollowness and dust within, like a Dead Sea apple. A standing army of numerous, brave, and well-disciplined thoughts, and you at the head of them, marching straight to your goal,—how to bring this about is the problem, and Scott's Tactics will not help you to it. Think of a poor fellow begirt only with a sword-belt, and no such staff of athletic thoughts! his brains rattling as he walks and *talks!* These are your prætorian guard. It is easy enough to maintain a family, or a state, but it is hard to maintain these children of your brain (or say, rather, these guests that trust to enjoy your hospitality), they make such great demands; and yet, he who does only the former, and loses the power to *think* originally, or as only he ever can, fails miserably. Keep up the fires of thought, and all will go well.

Zouaves?—pish! How you can overrun a country, climb any rampart, and carry any fortress, with an army of *alert* thoughts!—thoughts that send their bullets home to heaven's door,—with which you can *take* the whole world, without paying for it, or robbing anybody. See, the conquering hero comes! You *fail* in your thoughts, or you *prevail* in your thoughts only. Provided you *think* well, the heavens falling, or the earth gaping, will be music for you to march by. No foe can ever see you, or you him; you cannot so much as *think* of him. Swords have no edges, bullets no penetration, for such a contest. In your mind must be a liquor which will dissolve the world whenever it is dropt in it. There is no universal solvent but this, and all things together cannot saturate it. It will hold the universe in solution, and yet be as translucent as ever. The vast machine may indeed roll over our toes, and we not know it, but it would rebound and be staved to pieces like an empty barrel, if it should strike fair and square on the smallest and least angular of a man's thoughts.

You seem not to have taken Cape Cod the right way. I think that you should have persevered in walking on the beach and on the bank, even to the land's end, however soft, and so, by long knocking at Ocean's gate, have gained admittance at last,—better, if separately, and

in a storm, not knowing where you would sleep by night, or eat by day. Then you should have given a day to the sand behind Provincetown, and ascended the hills there, and been blown on considerably. I hope that you like to remember the journey better than you did to make it.

I have been confined at home all this year, but I am not aware that I have grown any rustier than was to be expected. One while I explored the bottom of the river pretty extensively. I have engaged to read a lecture to [Theodore] Parker's society on the 9th of October next.

I am off—a barberrying.

Text, Familiar Letters of Thoreau, pp. 409–13; manuscript listed in Stephen H. Wakeman Collection sale catalogue as Item 1014, with these additional sentences: "Emerson has been seriously lame for 2 or three months past—Sprained his foot and does not yet get better. It has been a bad business for him."

From EDWARD BANGS

Boston Oct 5 59

Mr. Henry Thoreau Concord

Dear Sir

Your aunts wish you to come by the next train to the Superior Court 1st Session to testify that the family tradition is that they & you are descended from the Orrocks which is necessary to be proved in this case vs. Miss Palleis [Pallies.]

Very truly yours
Edward Bangs.

The case of Maria Thoreau and others vs. Eliza Pallies was in court because Miss Pallies, a remarkably aggressive woman, had entered Aunt Maria's yard, thrown down the fence enclosing it, and then put

up a spite fence within a foot and a half of the door and windows of Maria's house. Miss Pallies' only legal basis had been a right of way through the yard. She lost the case and was ordered to pay the court costs plus damages of one dollar (Allen, Cases . . . in the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, 1861, I, 425). Edward Bangs was Maria's lawyer. MS., Abernethy (typescript); previously unpublished.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Oct. 14, 1859.

Friend Thoreau,—

Shall I break our long silence, silence so much more instructive than any words I may utter? Yet should my rashness procure a response from you, I, at least, may be the wiser. Solemn though the undertaking be, I would fain venture.

Well, *imprimis*, you have been talking, as I learn from various sources, in Boston. I hope you were understood, in some small measure, at least, though I fear not; but this is not your business—to find understanding for your audience. I respect your benevolence in thus doing, for I esteem it one of the most gracious and philanthropic deeds, for a wise, thoughtful man, a philosopher, to attempt, at least, to awaken his fellow men from their drunken somnoicence, perhaps to elevate them.

“But unimproved, Heaven's noblest brows are vain,
No sun with plenty crowns the uncultured vale;
Where green lakes languish on the silent plain,
Death rides the billows of the western gale.”

What are we to think of a world that has had a Socrates, a Plato, a Christ for its teachers, and yet remaining in such outer darkness?

It appears to me it is only, age after age, the working over of the old original compound—man. We appear to gain nothing. A few noble, wise ones, mark the lustrums of the past—a few also will mark what we call the present. The things men rate so highly in modern times do not appear to me to be of very great value after all. What is it for a ship

to cross the ocean by steam if its passengers have no godlike errand to perform? We have enough to wonder at in Nature already, why seek new wonders?

I have passed some peaceful hours of late, sawing wood by moonlight, in the field near the lane to our cow-pastures—the work does not interfere with, but rather favors meditation, and I have found some solace in the companionship of the woods near by, and the concert of their wind harps.

During my evening walks I hear the flight of passenger birds overhead, probably those of nocturnal habits, as I suppose others rest at this season (Night).

A small flock, only ten wild geese, passed over a few days ago. The *Sylvicola coronata* [Myrtle Warbler] have arrived from the north, and will remain until driven away by the severe cold. I have often seen them in the company of snow buntings about the house and during snowstorms, but they suffer and often die at such times if the storm be severe. Quails are gradually increasing, though still scarce. Last winter I saw a covey of some twelve or more near here, and occasionally have heard their whistle during the early part of the past summer.

I made the acquaintance of your friends, Blake and Brown, very favorably at the Middleborough ponds, last June, on their way to Cape Cod. I had, however, seen Mr. Blake once before.

I should be happy to have a visit from you. Can you not come soon?

I have passed through some deep experiences since I last saw you. We are getting nearer. Is there not such a fact as human companionship? I need not add how much I owe you, and that I remain, faithfully your friend,

D. R.

Bluebirds are still here, and meadow-larks are tuneful.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 99–101.

From THEOPHILUS BROWN

Worcester Oct 19

Friend Thoreau,

The book came duly to hand, and as it was not for me, I *intend* to send you the money for it in this note—

Blake must speak for himself and not for me when speaking of that mountain walk of ours. I enjoyed it well enough, and ought to be ashamed of myself that I did, perhaps, since it yielded me so little.

Our Cape Cod walk salts down better with me, & yet there wasn't much salt in that,—enough to save it perhaps, but not enough of the sea & sand & sky. The good things I got in it were rather incidental—did not belong to the sea. But I did get some glimpses of the sea. I remember a smoke we had on a little barren knoll where we heard the plover, in North Dennis, in the twilight after a long & hot days walk. We heard the pounding of the surf against a shore twenty miles off (so said the man at whose house we passed the night,—) and we were expecting to arrive there the next day.

I have been in the habit of thinking our journey culminated in that smoke, if it didn't *end* there, for, though we arrived at the beach the next day according to programme & found the thirty miles stretch of it, with its accompaniments too large to complain of, yet—our anticipations were immense. But now in thinking of it the actual sea & sky loom up larger, while our smoke & dreams—hold their own pretty well—

Your friend
Theo Brown

Although the name of Theo Brown, a Worcester man and partner in a tailoring establishment, appears often in Thoreau's correspondence, this is the first extant letter from him. He was a very close friend of H. G. O. Blake, the connecting link between him and Thoreau. Brown and Blake were with Thoreau during the excursion into the White Mountains early in July 1858. Thoreau notes in his Journal for July 8, 1858 that he "went up the stream to meet Blake and Brown, wet, ragged, and bloody with

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black flies"; Brown is probably on the defensive in writing, "I enjoyed it well enough." Brown omits the year, but it is obviously 1859. MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

To H. G. O. BLAKE

Concord, Oct. 31st ['59.]

Mr. Blake,

I spoke to my townsmen last evening on "The character of Capt. Brown, now in the clutches of the slaveholder." I should like to speak to any company in Worcester who may wish to hear me, & will come, if only my expenses are paid. I think that we should express ourselves at once, while Brown is alive. The sooner the better. Perhaps [T. W.] Higginson may like to have a meeting.

Wednesday evening would be a good time.

The people here are deeply interested in the matter.

Let me have an answer as soon as may be.

Henry D. Thoreau.

[The following was written in pencil.]

P. S. I may be engaged toward the end of the week.

Thoreau's address in Concord on John Brown was probably the most successful of his life. He repeated it in Boston on November 1 and again in Worcester on November 3. MS., Berg; copy in Blake's hand; the second and last bracketed insertions are his.

From CHARLES W. SLACK

American Telegraph Company Boston Oct 31 1859

To Henry D. Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson. Concord.

Thoreau must lecture for Fraternity Tuesday Evening—Douglas fails
—Letter mailed

Charles W. Slack

11 Bs 28

The success of Thoreau's lecture of October 9 is evident in this telegraphed invitation for him to fill in as a last-minute substitute for Frederick Douglass. This second lecture in the Fraternity Course sponsored by Theodore Parker's congregation was given November 1. It was "A Plea for Captain John Brown." MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

From MONCURE CONWAY

Cin. Novr. 19, 1859.

My dear Mr. Thoreau,

I trust that you also, with Emerson, will be moved by old and high memories to help us in starting out here a new incarnation of the old Dial. It certainly will prove worthy to be so called if we can obtain help from R. W. E. yourself and others. We will not be able at once to pay contributors, and the Editor expects to lose; but in due time we shall reap if we faint not. Will you not give the babe a birth-present? One of those fresh wood-zephyrs that fan our fevered hearts and bring health to *blasé* cheeks! You are the man, the only man, who can make green grass and flowers grow upon the pages of our *Dial*.

What is my chief wish of you? It is to have you interested in us: willing to send us a love-gift of thought: noting, now and then on paper, the form and [?] of some pearls, which I know you are constantly

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finding in that Oriental Sea of yours upstairs. So now Mr. Pearl-Diver, I await your word of cheer! May I say that I shall be assisted by H. D. Thoreau of Concord? Pray let me hear at once.

Your friend,
M. D. Conway.

Conway was an active young liberal when he wrote Thoreau. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School in 1854, he had gone to Cincinnati as minister of the First Congregational Church when he was twenty-four. There he aroused a good deal of controversy by advocating unorthodox causes. "The papers teemed with controversial letters," he explained in his Autobiography, "and a magazine became inevitable." Conway, who had once lived in Concord, wrote to several other Transcendentalist acquaintances about contributions. The new Dial appeared in January 1860 and ended in December. MS., University of Rochester Library

(1859)

To MONCURE CONWAY

Concord Nov 23 '59

Mr. Conway

Let me thank you for your earthy and [word] of Capt. Brown. As for your new Dial I do not think of any Thing which I have available for your purpose & other engagements prevent my preparing it. While I wish you success I know at [word] your assistance knowing myself so well—

I can only say that if I [word] [word] on any & the [word] I will remember your magazine

To follow out your simile I find in my sea some mother o' pearl—it may be but very few pearls as yet—may I now good wishes & more [word] and [word] [word?] ment—

But this will not be worth an advertisement.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THOREAU

Crossed out were (1) "perhaps" after "it may be" and (2) the first three letters of "offer" after "may I now." Apparently Thoreau never found any material for Conway's Dial, for none was ever printed there. MS., University of Rochester Library (typescript); it is Thoreau's draft on the back of Conway's letter of November 19; previously unpublished.

To CALVIN GREENE

Concord Nov. 24. '59

Dear Sir,

The lectures which you refer to were reported in the newspapers, *after a fashion*, the last one in some half dozen of them, and if I possessed one, or all, of those reports I would send them to you, bad as they are. The best, or at least longest one of the Brown Lecture was in the Boston "Atlas & Bee" of Nov 2nd. Maybe half the whole. There were others in the Traveller—the Journal &c of the same date.

I am glad to know that you are interested to see my things. & I wish that I had them in a printed form to send to you. I exerted myself considerably to get the last discourse printed & sold for the benefit of Brown's family—but the publishers are afraid of pamphlets & it is now too late.

I return the stamps which I have not used.

I shall be glad to see you if I ever come your way

Yours truly
Henry D. Thoreau

MS., Princeton University Library.