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Mayor Fernando Wood of New York proposed to his City Council that in the event of disunion New York should constitute itself a free city and trade with both the North and the South. Throughout the South federal arsenals and army posts were seized by local forces. The Confederate Provisional Congress met in Montgomery, adopted a constitution, and elected Jefferson Davis president of the Confederate States and Alexander Stephens vice-president. William Seward, now Lincoln's Secretary of State, suggested to the President that a foreign war be declared in order to take the people's minds off disunion and unite them again. On April 13 Fort Sumter fell. The Northern states and the Confederacy responded to the call for troops. Lee accepted command of the Confederate Army and was made a full general on June 14. In November General George McClellan was appointed commander of the United States Army. The battle lines were drawn swiftly throughout the nation. Both armies swelled in strength. The skirmishes and bloodless victories ended; the pitched battles began, with the Union forces losing most of them.

Thoreau started the year by concentrating on nature. His *Journal* entries are reasonably full for the first few months, but by spring they dwindle into jottings, and by fall they are finished. On the chance that better health might be found through travel, he and young Horace Mann, Jr. took a trip to Minnesota from May to July. Good health for Thoreau was not to be discovered there, however. Even the Indian council failed to stir him deeply, although he had for many years been filling notebooks with information about Indians. By late fall he was gravely ill.

From JOS. STUBBS

Office of The Adams Express Company 164 Baltimore Street

Baltimore, Jan'y 31 1861

Mr Hy. D. Thoreau Concord

Your *Pcl* and *Bill* for Collection, \$10 00 on H. A. Lucas Balto has been presented and *Payment Refused*

Please advise us at once what disposition we shall make of the Goods, as they are held subject to your order, and at your RISK AGAINST FIRE, AND OTHER DANGERS.

Answer on THIS SHEET.

Respectfully yours,
For the Company
Jos. Stubbs

This is a form letter with all but the italicized words printed. MS., Berg; previously unpublished.

From FREDERIC TUDOR

Boston February 12th 1861

Mr. Henry D. Thoreau Concord Mass.

Dear Sir

I have to acknowledge receipt of your favor of 11th instant enclosing a Check by the Concord Bank on the Suffolk Bank of this City

for *Forty three & 03/100 Dollars* to my order being in full for amount of Bill of 2 Bbls Black Lead forwarded you on the 10th inst per your order & I remain

Yr. Ob. St.
Frederic Tudor
Per Benj. F. Field

\$43.03

MS., Berg; *previously unpublished.*

From DANIEL RICKETSON

Wednesday, 9 a.m., 27th Feb., 1861.

Dear Thoreau,—

"The bluebird has come, now let us rejoice!
This morning I heard his melodious voice."

But a more certain herald of spring, the pigeon woodpecker, a few of which remain with us during the winter, has commenced his refreshing call. While I sit writing with my Shanty door open I hear, too, the sweet notes of the meadow-lark, which also winters here, and regales us with his song nearly every fine morning. I have seen and heard the black-bird flying over, not his song, but crackle; the redwing, I doubt not he is quite garrulous in the warmer nooks of low and open woodlands and bushy pastures. There goes the woodpecker, rattling away on his "penny trumpet!"

It is one of those exquisitely still mornings when all nature, without and within, seems at peace. Sing away, dear bluebird! My soul swells with gratitude to the great Giver of all good and beautiful things. As I go to my Shanty door to dry my ink in the sun, I see swarms of little flies in the air near by. The crows are cawing from the more distant

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pine-woods, where you and I and my other dear poetic friends have walked together. Now I hear the lonely whistle of the black-cap, followed by his strange counterpart in song, the "chickadee" chorus.

2 p.m. Wind S. W. Thermometer 52 deg. in shade. I suppose that you are also enjoying somewhat of this spring influence, if not as fully as we. The winter has passed away thus far quite comfortably with us, and though not severe, with a few occasional exceptions, yet we have had a good deal of good skating, which has been well improved by both sexes, old and young. My sons and I again made a circuit of the Middleborough ponds on the 17th December, at which we should have liked very much your company. Our river has also been frozen strong enough, and we have had several afternoons' skating there, visiting our friends below on the Fairhaven side. It was really a cheerful sight to see the large number—sometimes a thousand or more—enjoying the pastime and recreation. Many of our young women skate well, and among them our Emma. Walton makes his own skates, and really elegant affairs are they, and he is also very agile upon them. We have a large ship building a little below us, but far enough off not to interfere with the inland quiet of my rambles along shore, which I sometimes take in foggy weather, when I suppose I am [a] little more of a Hollander than usual.

As my object was principally to announce the bluebird, which may have reached you by the time this letter shall, I will soon close. March is close at hand again, and may be here by the time you read this. It is "a welcome month to me." I call it the month of hope, and can patiently wait for the spring flowers and the songs of birds so near by. Soon the willow will put forth its catkins, and your friends the piping or peeping frogs set up their vernal choir, so gentle and soothing to the wounded spirit, where there is also a poetic ear to listen to it.

4 p.m. I fear, after all, that this will prove rather a disjointed letter, for I have been interrupted several times in its progress. During the intervals I have been to town—helped load a hay-wagon with hay, and am just returned from a short drive with my wife and daughters. The only objects of particular attraction were the pussies or catkins on the willows along the lower part of the Nash road, and the aments of the alder, the latter not much advanced.

Now that spring is so near at hand may I not expect to see you here once more? Truly pleasant would it be to ramble about with you, or

sit and chat in the Shanty or with the family around our common hearthstone.

I send you this day's Mercury with a letter and editorial (I suppose) of Channing's.

Hoping to hear from you soon, or, what is better, to see you here, I remain,

Yours truly,
Dan'l Ricketson.

H. D. Thoreau.

Your welcome letter of Nov. 4th last was duly received. I regret that mine which prompted it should have proved mystical to you. We must "bear and forbear" with each other.

Text, Ricketson, *pp.* 108-11.

From L. JOHNSON & CO.

[Philadelphia] March 22d 1861

Mr. Henry D. Thoreau Concord, Mass.

Dear Sir—

Enclosed find \$2. Note on Bank of Kenduskeag to replace the one returned. Of course we were not aware that there was any thing wrong with the one you returned.

Truly Yours
L. Johnson & Co

MS., Berg; *previously unpublished.*

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To DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord Mar 22d 1861

Friend Ricketson,

The bluebirds were here the 26 of Feb. at least, which is one day earlier than your date; but I have not heard of larks nor pigeon woodpeckers.

To tell the truth, I am not on the alert for the signs of Spring, not having had any winter yet. I took a severe cold about the 3 of Dec. which at length resulted in a kind of bronchitis, so that I have been confined to the house ever since, excepting a very few experimental trips as far as the P. O. in some particularly mild noons. My health otherwise has not been affected in the least, nor my spirits. I have simply been imprisoned for so long; & it has not prevented my doing a good deal of reading & the like.

Channing has looked after me very faithfully—says he has made a study of my case, & knows me better than I know myself &c &c. Of course, if I knew how it began, I should know better how it would end. I trust that when warm weather comes I shall begin to pick up my crumbs. I thank you for your invitation to come to New Bedford, and will bear it in mind, but at present my health will not permit my leaving home.

The day I received your letter Blake & Brown arrived here, having walked from Worcester in two days, though Alcott who happened in soon after could not understand what pleasure they found in walking across the country at this season when the ways were so unsettled. I had a solid talk with them for a day & a half—though my pipes were not in good order—and they went their way again.

You may be interested to hear that Alcott is at present perhaps the most successful man in the town. He had his 2d annual exhibition of all the schools in the town at the Town Hall last Saturday—at which all the masters & misses did themselves great credit, as I hear, & of course reflected some on their teachers & parents. They were making their little speeches from 1 till 6 o'clock *pm*, to a large audience which patiently listened to the end. In the meanwhile the children made Mr A. an unexpected present, of a fine edition of Pilgrim's Progress & Herberts Poems—which, of course, overcame all parties. I inclose our order of exercises.

We had, last night, an old fashioned N. E. snow storm, far worse than any in the winter, & the drifts are now very high above the fences. The inhabitants are pretty much confined to their houses, as I was already. All houses are one color white with the snow plastered over them, & you cannot tell whether they have blinds or not. Our pump has another pump, its ghost, as thick as itself, sticking to one side of it. The town has sent out teams of 8 oxen each to break out the roads & the train due from Boston at 8½ am has not arrived yet (4 pm) All the passing has been a train from above at 12 m—which also was due at 8½ am. Where are the bluebirds now think you? I suppose that you have not so much snow at New Bedford, if any.

Yrs Henry D. Thoreau

Alcott was now superintendent of Concord schools. MS., Huntington.

From PARKER PILLSBURY

A friend of mine away in New York, wishes very much a copy of each of your "Memoirs"—"In the Woods" and On the Rivers." . . . Can you & will you cause a copy of each to meet me at the Anti-Slavery Office. . . .

Pillsbury, one of the outstanding antislavery orators, had long been a friend of the Thoreau family. The tenor of Thoreau's letter of April 10 makes it clear that Pillsbury had said something to Thoreau about potential readers distracted by the onset of the Civil War. Text, catalogue of the Abbott-Sprague sale (Charles F. Libbie & Co., February 25-26, 1909), which also mentions that Pillsbury "Refers to 'Old Abe.'"

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To PARKER PILLSBURY

Concord Ap. 10th 1861

Friend Pillsbury,

I am sorry to say that I have not a copy of "Walden" which I can spare, and know of none, unless possibly, Ticknor & Fields have one. I send, nevertheless a copy of the "Week," the price of which is \$1.25 which you can pay at your convenience.

As for my prospective reader, I hope that he *ignores* Fort Sumpter, & Old Abe, & all that, for that is just the most fatal and indeed the only fatal, weapon you can direct against evil ever; for as long as you *know of* it, you are *particeps criminis*. What business have you, if you are "an angel of light," to be pondering over the deeds of darkness, reading the New York Herald, & the like? I do not so much regret the present condition of things in this country (provided I regret it at all) as I do that I ever heard of it. I know one or 2 who have this year, for the first time, read a president's message; but they do not see that this implies a fall in themselves, rather than a rise in the president. Blessed were the days before you read a president's message. Blessed are the young for they do not read the president's message.

Blessed are they who never read a newspaper, for they shall see Nature, and through her, God.

But alas I have heard of Sumpter, & Pickens, & even of Buchanan, (though I did not read his message).

I also read the New York Tribune, but then I am reading Herodotus & Strabo, & Blodget's Climatology, and Six Years in the Deserts of North America, as hard as I can, to counterbalance it.

By the way, Alcott is at present our most popular & successful man, and has just published a volume on "vice," in the shape of the annual school report, which, I presume, he has sent to you.

Yours, for remembering all good things,

Henry D. Thoreau

Two days after Thoreau answered Pillsbury's request for Walden the attack on Sumter began. In the last paragraph "vice" is probably a

glancing reference to the scandal caused by Alcott's earlier publication of the reports on his work at the Temple School in Boston. MS., Boston Public Library.

From THOMAS CHOLMONDELEY

Shrewsbury April 23, 1861

My dear Thoreau—

It is now some time since I wrote to you or heard from you but do not suppose that I have forgotten you or shall ever cease to cherish in my mind those days at dear old Concord. The last I heard about you all was from Morton who was in England about a year ago; & I hope that he has got over his difficulties & is now in his own country again. I think he has seen rather more of English country life than most Yankee tourists; & appeared to find it *curious*, though I fear he was dulled by our ways, for he was too full of ceremony & compliments & bows, which is a mistake here; though very well in Spain. I am afraid he was rather on pins & needles; but he made a splendid speech at a volunteer supper, & indeed the *very best*, some said, ever heard in this part of the country.

We are here in a state of alarm & apprehension the world being so troubled in East & West & everywhere. Last year the harvest was bad & scanty. This year, our trade is beginning to feel the events in America. In reply to the northern tariff, of course we are going to smuggle as much as we can. The supply of cotton being such a necessity to us—we must work up India & South Africa a little better.

There is war even in old New Zealand but not in the same island where my people are! Besides we are certainly on the eve of a continental blaze. So *we are making merry & living while we can*: not being sure where we shall be this time year.

Give my affectionate regards to your father mother & sister & to Mr Emerson & his family, & to Channing Sanborn Ricketson Blake & Morton & Alcott & Parker. A thought arises in my mind whether I may not be enumerating some dead men! Perhaps Parker is! These rumors of wars make me wish that we had got done with this brutal stupidity of war

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altogether; & I believe, Thoreau, that the human race will at last get rid of it, though perhaps not in a creditable way—but such *powers* will be brought to bear that it will become monstrous even to the French.

Dundonald declared to the last that he possessed secrets which from their tremendous character would make war impossible. So peace may be begotten from the machinations of evil.

Have you heard of any good books lately? I think "*Burnt Njal*" good & believe it to be genuine. "Hast thou not heard (says Steinrora to Thangbrand how Thor challenged Christ to single combat & how he did not dare to fight with Thor" When Gunnar brandishes his sword three swords are seen in air. The account of Ospah & Brodir & Brians battle is the only historical account of that engagement which the Irish talk so much of; for I place little trust in OHallorans authority though the outline is the same in *both*.

Darwin's origin of species may be fanciful but it is a move in the right direction.

Emersons Conduct of Life has done *me* good; but it will not go down in England for a generation or so.

But *these* are some of them already a year or two old. The book of the season is DeChaillu's Central Africa with accounts of the *Gorilla*, of which you are aware that you have had a skeleton at Boston for many years. There is also one in the British Museum; but they have now several stuffed specimens at the Geographical Societys rooms in Town.

I suppose you will have seen Sir Emerson Tennent's Ceylon, which is perhaps as *complete* a book as ever was published; & a better monument to a governors-residence in a great province was never made.

We have been lately astonished by a foreign *Hamlet*, a supposed impossibility; but Mr Fechter does real wonders. No doubt he will visit America & then you may see the best actor in the world. He has carried out Goethes idea of Hamlet as given in the Wilhelm Meister showing him forth as a fair hair'd & fat man. I suppose you are not yet fat yet!

Yrs ever truly
Thos Cholomondeley

Sanborn identifies Morton as Edwin Morton of Plymouth, Massachusetts, a friend of John Brown who went to England to avoid testifying against him. MS., Berg.

From MRS. HORACE MANN

Dear Mr. Thoreau,

Mrs. Josiah Quincy, a lady who reads & admires your books very much, is passing a few days with me. Will you come in and dine with us to-day—It will give her much pleasure to see you, & when you are tired of talking with ladies, Horace will be glad to have his promised visit & you shall release yourself when you please.

With much regard,
Mary Mann.

We dine at once.

The widow of the noted educator was now living in Concord with her children, among them her son Horace, who, though only in his teens, was already an interested naturalist; Thoreau's Journal for April mentions him four times. Mary Mann's guest was presumably the daughter-in-law of the same Josiah Quincy who had been president of Harvard and had helped Thoreau in his job seeking. She was also a friend of Emerson's, and her husband, Josiah Quincy, Jr., had been Emerson's classmate at Harvard. MS., Huntington; the heading is torn away, but the Huntington chronology supplies the date April 1861, which Sanborn believed probable.

TO H. C. O. BLAKE

Concord May 3d 1861

Mr Blake,

I am still as much an invalid as when you & Brown were here, if not more of one, and at this rate there is danger that the cold weather may come again, before I get over my bronchitis. The Doctor accordingly tells me that I must "clear out," to the West Indies, or elsewhere, he does not seem to care much where. But I decide against the West Indies, on account of their muggy heat in the summer, & the S. of Europe, on ac of the expense of time & money, and have at last concluded that it will be most expedient for me to try the air of Minnesota, say somewhere about St Paul. I am only waiting to be well enough to start—hope to get off within a week or 10 days.

The inland air may help me at once, or it may not. At any rate I am so much of an invalid that I shall have to study my comfort in traveling to a remarkable degree—stopping to rest &c &c if need be. I think to get a through ticket to Chicago—with liberty to stop frequently on the way, making my first stop of consequence at Niagara Falls—several days or a week, at a private boarding house—then a night or day at Detroit—& as much at Chicago, as my health may require.

At Chicago I can decide at what point (Fulton, Dunleith or another) to strike the Mississippi & take a boat to St. Paul.

I trust to find a private boarding house in one or various agreeable places in that region, & spend my time there.

I expect, and shall be prepared to be gone 3 months—& I would like to return by a different route—perhaps Mackinaw & Montreal.

I have thought of finding a companion, of course, yet not seriously, because I had no right to offer myself as a companion to anybody—having such a peculiarly private & all absorbing but miserable business as *my* health, & not altogether *his*, to attend to—causing me to stop here & go there &c &c unaccountably.

Nevertheless, I have just now decided to let you know of my intentions, thinking it barely possible that you might like to make a part or the whole of this journey, at the same time, & that perhaps your own health may be such as to be benefitted by it.

Pray let me know, if such a statement offers any temptations to you. I write in great haste for the mail & must omit all the moral.

H. D Thoreau

Thoreau did not find it easy to secure a companion. Blake evidently declined; and when Thoreau did go he took along the talented young naturalist Horace Mann, Jr. MS., New York Historical Society.

From EMERSON

Concord, Mass., 11 May, 1861.

My dear Thoreau,

I give you a little list of names of good men whom you may chance to see on your road. If you come into the neighborhood of any of them, I pray you to hand this note to them, by way of introduction, praying them, from me, not to let you pass by, without salutation, and any aid and comfort they can administer to an invalid traveler, one so dear and valued by me and all good Americans.

Yours faithfully,
R. W. Emerson

Henry D. Thoreau.

MS., Concord Antiquarian Society (typescript); previously unpublished. The list of names does not accompany the manuscript.

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From ROBERT COLLYER

Mr. Thoreau

Dear Sir

You will find herein the thing you wanted to know. Mr. Whitfield is very well posted about the country and what he says is reliable. I hope you will have a pleasant time get heartily well and write a book about the great West that will be to us what your other books are. A friend, I want you to stop in Chicago as you come back if it can be possible, and be my guest a few days. I should be very much pleased to have you take a rest and feel at home with us, and if you do please write in time so that I shall be sure to be at home.

I am very truly

Robert Collyer

Chicago May 22d.

Collyer was a Unitarian minister in Chicago. MS., Concord Antiquarian Society (typescript); previously unpublished. Although the year is not given, it is obviously that of Thoreau's 1861 excursion to the West.

To SOPHIA THOREAU

I last evening called on Mr. Thatcher. He is much worse in consequence of having been recently thrown from a carriage,—so as to have had watchers within a few nights past. He was, however, able to give me a letter to a Dr. Anderson of Minneapolis, just over the river. You may as well direct to Mr. Thatcher's care still; for I cannot see where I may be a fortnight hence.

Samuel Thatcher, Jr., born in Warren, Maine, was probably the person Thoreau visited. He lived in St. Anthony, Minnesota when Thoreau

saw him and died there August 31. Dr. Anderson was Charles L. Anderson, the state botanist. Text, First and Last Journeys of Thoreau, II, 44.

Robert L. Straker in "Thoreau's Journey to Minnesota," *New England Quarterly*, XIV (September 1941), 553, quotes letters of June 9 and 14 from Mary Mann to Horace. The first states: "Mr. Thoreau wrote his sister that you were having a nice time in Natural History. I was amused to hear from Miss Thoreau that the last war news Mr. T. had heard was of the killing of seven hundred men at Leavall's Point, because that was a hoax and a fortnight old." (The passage referred to may have been part of this letter of May 27.) The second letter adds:

"Mrs. Thoreau called this morning to say she had heard from Mr. T. again. It was delightful to his mother to hear that Mr. T. has been swimming. He tells her that he does not pay any attention to his health, though he feels weak. . . . He tells his mother that you and he are having a fine time."

TO F. B. SANBORN

Redwing Minnesota June 25th 1861

Mr. Sanborn,
Dear Sir,

I was very glad to find awaiting me, on my arrival here on Sunday afternoon, a letter from you. I have performed this journey in a very dead and alive manner, but nothing has come so near waking me up as the receipt of letters from Concord. I read yours, and one from my sister (and Horace Mann, his four) near the top of a remarkable isolated bluff here, called Barn Bluff or the Grange, or Redwing Bluff, some 450 feet high and half a mile long—a bit of the main bluff or bank standing alone. The top, as you know, rises to the general level of the surrounding country, the river having eaten out so much. Yet the valley just above & below this (we are at the head of Lake Pepin) must be 3 or 4 miles wide.

I am not even so well informed as to the progress of the war as you

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suppose. I have seen but one eastern paper (that, by the way, *was* the Tribune) for 5 weeks. I have not taken much pains to get them; but, necessarily, I have not seen any paper at all for more than a week at a time. The people of Minnesota have *seemed* to me more cold—to feel less implicated in this war, than the people of Massachusetts. It is apparent that Massachusetts, for one state at least, is doing much more than her share, in carrying it on. However, I have dealt partly with those of southern birth, & have seen but little way beneath the surface. I was glad to be told yesterday that there was a good deal of weeping here at Redwing the other day, when the volunteers stationed at Fort Snelling followed the regulars to the seat of the war. They do not weep when their children go *up* the river to occupy the deserted forts, though they *may* have to fight the Indians there.

I do not even know what the attitude of England is at present.

The grand feature hereabouts is, of course, the Mississippi River. Too much can hardly be said of its grandeur, & of the beauty of this portion of it—(from Dunleith, and prob. from Rock Island to this place.) St. Paul is a dozen miles below the Falls of St. Anthony, or near the head of uninterrupted navigation on the main stream about 2000 miles from its mouth. There is not a "rip" below that, & the river is almost as wide in the upper as the lower part of its course. Steamers go up to the Sauk Rapids, above the Falls, near a hundred miles farther, & then you are fairly in the pine woods and lumbering country. Thus it flows from the pine to the palm.

The lumber, as you know, is sawed chiefly at the Falls of St. Anthony (what is not rafted in the log to ports far below) having given rise to the towns of St. Anthony, Minneapolis, &c &c In coming up the river from Dunleith you meet with great rafts of sawed lumber and of logs—20 rods or more in length, by 5 or 6 wide, floating down, all from the pine region above the Falls. An old Maine lumberer, who has followed the same business here, tells me that the sources of the Mississippi were comparatively free from rocks and rapids, making easy work for them, but he thought that the timber was more knotty here than in Maine.

It has chanced that about half the men whom I have spoken with in Minnesota, whether travelers or settlers, were from Massachusetts.

After spending some three weeks in and about St. Paul, St. Anthony, and Minneapolis, we made an excursion in a steamer some 300 or more miles up the Minnesota (St. Peter's) River, to Redwood, or the Lower Sioux Agency, in order to see the plains & the Sioux, who were to receive

their annual payment there. This is eminently *the* river of Minnesota, for she shares the Mississippi with Wisconsin, and it is of incalculable value to her. It flows through a very fertile country, destined to be famous for its wheat; but it is a remarkably winding stream, so that Redwood is only half as far from its mouth by land as by water. There was not a straight reach a mile in length as far as we went,—generally you could not see a quarter of a mile of water, & the boat was steadily turning this way or that. At the greater bends, as the Traverse des Sioux, some of the passengers were landed & walked across to be taken in on the other side. Two or three times you could have thrown a stone across the neck of the isthmus while it was from one to three miles around it. It was a very novel kind of navigation to me. The boat was perhaps the largest that had been up so high, & the water was rather low (it had been about 15 feet higher). In making a short turn, we repeatedly and designedly ran square into the steep and soft bank, taking in a cart-load of earth, this being more effectual than the rudder to fetch us about again; or the deeper water was so narrow & close to the shore, that we were obliged to run into & break down at least 50 trees which overhung the water, when we did not cut them off, repeatedly losing a part of our outworks, though the most exposed had been taken in. I could pluck almost any plant on the bank from the boat. We very frequently got aground and then drew ourselves along with a windlass & a cable fastened to a tree, or we swung round in the current, and completely blocked up & blockaded the river, one end of the boat resting on each shore. And yet we would haul ourselves round again with the windlass & cable in an hour or 2, though the boat was about 160 feet long & drew some 3 feet of water, or, often, water and sand. It was one consolation to know that in such a case we were all the while damming the river & so raising it. We once ran fairly on to a concealed rock, with a shock that aroused all the passengers, & rested there, & the mate went below with a lamp expecting to find a hole, but he did not. Snags & sawyers were so common that I forgot to mention them. The sound of the boat rumbling over one was the ordinary music. However, as long as the boiler did not burst, we knew that no serious accident was likely to happen. Yet this was a singularly navigable river, more so than the Mississippi above the Falls, & it is owing to its very crookedness. Ditch it straight, & it would not only be very swift, but soon run out. It was from 10 to 15 rods wide near the mouth & from 8 to 10 or 12 at Redwood. Though the current was swift, I did not see a “rip” on it, & only 3 or 4 rocks. For 3

months in the year I am told that it can be navigated by small steamers about twice as far as we went, or to its source in Big Stone Lake, & a former Indian agent told me that at high water it was thought that such a steamer might pass into the Red River.

In short this river proved so very *long* and navigable, that I was reminded of the last letter or two in the *Voyages of the Baron la Hontan* (written near the end of the 17 century, I think) in which he states that after reaching the Mississippi (by the Illinois or Wisconsin), the limit of previous exploration westward, he voyaged up it with his Indians, & at length turned up a great river coming in from the west which he called “*La Riviere Longue*” & he relates various improbable things about the country & its inhabitants, so that this letter has been regarded as pure fiction—or more properly speaking a lie. But I am somewhat inclined now to reconsider the matter.

The Governor of Minnesota, (Ramsay)—the superintendent of Ind. Affairs in this quarter,—& the newly appointed Ind. agent were on board; also a German band from St. Paul, a small cannon for salutes, & the money for the Indians (aye and the gamblers, it was said, who were to bring it back in another boat). There were about 100 passengers chiefly from St. Paul, and more or less recently from the N. Eastern states; also half a dozen young educated Englishmen. Chancing to speak with one who sat next to me, when the voyage was nearly half over, I found that he was a son of the Rev. Samuel [No; Joseph] May, & a classmate of yours, & had been looking for us at St. Anthony.

The last of the little settlements on the river, was New Ulm, about 100 miles this side of Redwood. It consists wholly of Germans. We left them 100 barrels of salt, which will be worth something more when the water is lowest, than at present.

Redwood is a mere locality, scarcely an Indian village—where there is a store & some houses have been built for them. We were now fairly on the great plains, and looking south, and after walking that way 3 miles, could see no tree in that horizon. The buffalo was said to be feeding within 25 or 30 miles—

A regular council was held with the Indians, who had come in on their ponies, and speeches were made on both sides thro’ an interpreter, quite in the described mode; the Indians, as usual, having the advantage in point of truth and earnestness, and therefore of eloquence. The most prominent chief was named Little Crow. They were quite dissatisfied with the white man’s treatment of them & probably have reason to be so.

This council was to be continued for 2 or 3 days—the payment to be made the 2d day—and another payment to other bands a little higher up on the Yellow Medicine (a tributary of the Minnesota) a few days thereafter.

In the afternoon the half naked Indians performed a dance, at the request of the Governor, for our amusement & their own benefit & then we took leave of them & of the officials who had come to treat with them.

Excuse these pencil marks but my ink stand is *unscrewable* & I can only direct my letter at the bar. I could tell you more & perhaps more interesting things, if I had time. I am considerably better than when I left home, but still far from well.

Our faces are already set toward home. Will you please let my sister know that we shall *probably* start for Milwaukee & Mackinaw in a day or 2 (or as soon as we hear from home) *via Prairie du Chien* & not La Crosse.

I am glad to hear that you have written to Cholmondeley, as it relieves me of some *responsibility*.

Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

Sanborn, in his Life of Henry David Thoreau (p. 401), apparently adds the following paragraph to the letter:

"Fort Snelling is built of limestone (tawny or butterish) ten feet high, at an angle of the two rivers, St Peter's and the Mississippi. I overlook the broad valley of the St. Peter's River, bounded on the south, as I look, by a long range of low hills. The government buildings are handsome; there was a mill here before the settlement. Steamers go up to the Sauk Rapids, above the Falls of St. Anthony, near a hundred miles farther, and then you are fairly in the pine woods and the lumbering country. The St. Paul Mission to the Indians was not far south of the Fort." MS., Abernethy (typescript).

TO A WORCESTER MINISTER

Concord, July 15, 1861.

Dear Sir:—

For such an excursion as you propose I would recommend you to carry as food for one for six days:

2 or 3 lbs. of boiled corned beef (I and my companions have preferred it to tongue).

2 lbs. of sugar.

$\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of tea (or $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of coffee).

2 lbs. of hard bread, and a half a large loaf of home-made bread, (ready buttered if you like it), consuming the last first; or $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of hard bread alone.

Also a little *moist* and *rich* plum cake, of which you can take a pinch from time to time.

2 or 3 lemons will not come amiss to flavor poor water with.

If you multiply this amount by 8, the number of your party, subtract from 5 to 10 per cent.

Carry these different articles in separate cotton or linen bags labelled, and a small portion of the sugar in a box by itself for immediate use. (The same of salt, if you expect to get game or fish.)

As for clothing and other articles, I will state exactly what I should take in such a case (besides what I wore and what were already in my pockets), my clothes and shoes being old, but thick and stout.

1 shirt.

1 pair socks.

2 pocket-handkerchiefs.

1 thick waist-coat.

1 flannel "

India rubber coat.

6 bosoms (or dickies).

Towel and soap.

Pins, needles, and thread.

A blanket.

A thick night cap (unless your day cap is soft and close fitting.)

A map of the route, and a compass.

(Such other articles as your peculiar taste and pursuits require.)

A hatchet, (for a party of half a dozen a light but long handled axe),

for you will wish to make a great fire, however warm, and to cut large logs.

Paper and stamps.

Jack knife.

Matches; some of these in a water-tight vial in your vest pocket.

A fish line and hooks, a piece of salt pork for bait, and a little salt always in your pocket, so as to be armed in case you should be lost in the woods.

Waste paper and twine.

An iron spoon and a pint tin dipper for each man, in which last it will be well to insert a wire handle, whose curve will coincide with that of the dipper's edge, and then you can use it as a kettle, if you like, and not put out the fire.

A four quart tin pail will serve very well for your common kettle.

An umbrella.

For shelter, either a tent or a strong sheet large enough to cover all. If a sheet, the tent will be built shed-fashion, open to the fair weather side; two saplings, either as they stand or else stuck in the ground, serving for main posts, a third being placed horizontally in the forks of these, 6 or 7 feet from the ground, and two or three others slanted backward from it. This makes the frame on which to stretch your sheet, which must come quite down to the ground on the sides and the back.

You will lie, of course, on the usual twigged bed, with your feet to the front.

When the National Baptist printed this letter it explained:

"In 1861, eight ministers residing in Worcester, Mass. and the immediate vicinity, who had long been united in very intimate and friendly ties, planned a foot excursion into the mountain region of New Hampshire, to occupy the period between two Sabbaths.

"One of the number wrote to that king of all woodcraft, the late Henry D. Thoreau, the author of 'Walden,' and other books redolent of the woods and the streams, asking him for information as to the preparation needed for the tramp. Mr. T. most kindly replied, in a letter which we publish, both because it is his, and also because of the valuable practical information it will afford to many who may be contemplating such a trip." Text, The National Baptist, July 20, 1876.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord Aug. 15th '61

Friend Ricketson,

When your last letter was written I was away in the far North-West, in search of health. My cold turned to bronchitis which made me a close prisoner almost up to the moment of my starting on that journey, early in May. As I had an incessant cough, my doctor told me that I must "clear out"—to the West Indies or elsewhere, so I selected Minnesota. I returned a few weeks ago, after a good deal of steady travelling, considerably, yet not essentially better, my cough still continuing. If I do not mend very quickly I shall be obliged to go to another climate again very soon.

My ordinary pursuits, both indoor and out, have been for the most part omitted, or seriously interrupted—walking, boating, scribbling, &c. Indeed I have been sick so long that I have almost forgotten what it is to be well, yet I feel that it all respects only my envelope.

Channing & Emerson are as well as usual, but Alcott, I am sorry to say, has for some time been more or less confined by a lameness, perhaps of a neuralgic character, occasioned by carrying too great a weight on his back while gardening.

On returning home, I found various letters awaiting me, among others one from Cholmondeley & one from yourself.

Of course I am sufficiently surprised to hear of your conversion, yet I scarcely know what to say about it, unless that judging by your account, it appears to me a change which concerns yourself peculiarly, and will not make you more valuable to mankind. However, perhaps, I must see you before I can judge.

Remembering your numerous invitations, I write this short note now chiefly to say that, if you are to be at home, and it will be quite agreeable to you, I will pay you a visit next week, & take such rides or sauntering walks with you as an invalid may.

Yrs
Henry D. Thoreau

Ricketson's conversion was (according to Familiar Letters of Thoreau, p. 456) "a return to religious Quakerism, of which [Ricketson] had written enthusiastically." News of it evidently formed part of the letter written while Thoreau was in the "far Northwest." MS., Huntington.

From DANIEL RICKETSON

New Bedford, Sept. 1, 1861.

Dear Thoreau,—

Dr. Denniston, to whom I recommended you to go, has kindly consented on his way from New Bedford to Northampton, to go to Concord to see you. He has had much experience and success in the treatment of bronchitis, and I hope his visit to you will result in your placing yourself under his care, which I much desire.

Should the Doctor have the time, and you feel able, please show him a little of the Concord worthies and much oblige,

Yours truly,
D. Ricketson.

It is possible that this letter was never mailed, for Ricketson records in his journal (September 2) that he went to Concord with Denniston (Ricketson, p. 320). Dr. Edward E. Denniston was a "water-cure" physician and Thoreau would not submit to his treatment. Text, Ricketson, p. 319.

[1861]

From DANIEL RICKETSON

The Shanty, Tuesday 6-h. 20-m. a.m., 17 Sept., '61.

Dear Friend,—

I am desirous to hear how you are getting along, although I have an impression that you are improving. I would not put you to the trouble to write me, could I fairly call upon any one else.

I look back with pleasure upon my late visit to Concord. The particularly bright spots are my walks with you to Farmer Hosmer's and to Walden Pond, as well as our visit to friend Alcott.

I should like to have you make us a good long visit before cold weather sets in, and should this meet your approval please inform me when you answer this.

I expect to be absent from home for a few days the last of this month, but after that time I shall be at home for some time.

Our Indian Summer weather is very charming, and probably the air softer than more inland if a season so delightful has any difference in this section of New England.

I suppose you have hardly needed a fresh doctor since the bountiful supply I brought you. I was much pleased at the unceremonious way in which you described him. I hope the dread of another holocaust of the same kind will keep you in good heart for some time, for, assuredly, as soon as you begin to complain, which is hardly possible, after so great a feast as you have had of late, a bigger victim will be forthcoming upon whom the eagle-eye of some friend of yours is already fixed.

You will pardon my seeming levity, and attribute it to the fresh morning air and increasing health and spirits. I have tasted no sugar-plums of any kind since I left you. I thank you for the friendly caution. I need more. Come then, and be my kind Mentor still further.

With kind regards to all your family and to Mr. Alcott, Channing, Hosmer, &c.

Yours truly,
D. Ricketson.

P. S. Mrs Ricketson and our daughters join in regards and invitation to visit us soon. You will be welcome at any time. This is a good time to

ride out to the ponds, &c. We are having beautiful weather here, calm and mild.

Please ask Channing if he received a book I sent him in care of Dr. W. Channing, Boston.

Text, Ricketson, pp. 115-16.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord Oct 14th '61

Friend Ricketson

I think that, on the whole, my health is better than when you were here; & my faith in the doctors has not increased.

I thank you all for your invitation to come to New Bedford, but I suspect that it must still be warmer here than there, that, indeed, New Bedford is warmer than Concord only in the winter, & so I abide by Concord.

September was pleasanter & much better for me than August, and October thus far has been quite tolerable. Instead of riding on horseback, I take a ride in a wagon about every other day. My neighbor, Mr [E. R.] Hoar, has two horses, & he being away for the most part this fall has generously offered me the use of one of them, and, as I notice, the dog throws himself in, and does scouting duty.

I am glad to hear that you no longer chew, but eschew, sugar plums. One of the worst effects of sickness even is that it may get one into the *habit* of taking a little something, his bitters or sweets, as if for his bodily good, from time to time, when he does not need it. However, there is no danger of this if you do not dose even when you are sick.

I met with a Mr Rodman, a young man of your town, here the other day—or week, looking at farms for sale, and rumor says that he is inclined to buy a particular one.

[1861]

C[hanning] says that he received his book, but has not got any of yours.

It is easy to talk, but hard to write.

From the worst of all correspondents

Henry D. Thoreau

This is Thoreau's last letter to Ricketson, though Ricketson himself wrote several more. MS., Huntington.

TO W. & C. H. SMITH

Concord Nov. 13 61

Messrs W & C H Smith

I received on the 8th inst your draft in payment for plumbago sent to you Oct 23d I forgot to deduct the interest, but when I remarked it supposed that you would correct the mistake before I could—for I had agreed to make the deduction.

But the case is now altered for if I have to pay for the draft (which in any other conditions are not to be sent without cost) I think that you should not expect me to make any further deduction for interest

Yours truly
Henry D. Thoreau

A letter may have accompanied the draft of November 8; we have no positive evidence. MS., Abernethy, in pencil (typescript); previously unpublished.

To GEORGE THATCHER

Concord Nov 15 1861

Dear Cousin,

We are glad to hear that you are in the neighborhood, and shall be much disappointed if we do not see you & Caleb.

Come up any day that is most convenient to you—or, if you stay so long, perhaps you will spend Thanksgiving (the 21st) with us.

Yrs, in haste,
Henry D. Thoreau.

This note was presumably to Thatcher; all the other Thoreau letters addressed "Dear Cousin" that we have are to him. Caleb was probably Caleb Billings, a Bangor stablekeeper who had married Nancy Thoreau. MS., Frank Jewett Mather; previously unpublished.

From L. JOHNSON & CO.

Philadelphia, Dec. 6th 1861

Mr. Henry D. Thoreau Concord Mass.

Dear Sir,—Enclosed find Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) in eastern funds in settlement of your bill of 28th. ulto. Please acknowledge receipt to

Yours Truly
L. Johnson & Co

MS., Huntington; previously unpublished.