

Concord Mass Feb 24. 1895

My dear Mr Dancer -

I send you copies of some articles on Thoreau, that I happen to have, that may be of use to you - if not, after reading them, consign them to the waste basket.

The Mr Swider mentioned in one is Denton J. Swider of St. Louis - and the conversation was held at the School of Philosophy -

The author of the other two, Horace R. Horner, was well acquainted with Thoreau, being the younger brother of a family of boys that were playmates of Thoreau as a boy, and the article you wrote to me about some time ago was by an older brother Joseph Horner - I find I am unable to buy a copy, but I may borrow one and copy the article for you - as well as for myself -

Have just received a copy of "Selections from Thoreau", edited & with an introduction by Mr. Salt. sent me by the publishers -

McMillan & Co -

The Scribner's for March has a short article on Thoreau, by F. B. Sanborn -

Yours very sincerely  
Alfred W. Horner



From Concord Freeman Aug 19 1880

Mr Alcott on Thoreau.

In one of his lectures, Mr Swider's allusion to Thoreau, as a disordered genius who broke away from the contradictions of life and fled to the woods to reconcile them, brought Mr. Alcott to his feet with fresh facts about his friend Thoreau that are too good to be lost. "Thoreau" said Mr. Alcott, "was an extreme individualist. He was named after old Thor, the Northman, who originated the saying, 'I will find a way or cut one' and never lost the spirit of his great ancestor. He said to himself, 'I will be <sup>as</sup> independent of the human race as possible.' He had prodigious common sense, no one more. He also had a high ideal and rare poetic gifts. He was more in sympathy with nature than with any human being. The animals knew him and selected him as their representative. He was a simple, natural man. In my family, when we had a visit from him, the word passed, 'Mr Thoreau has come, we will all listen.' When he projected the Walden cabin he came to me and said, 'Mr Alcott, lend me an axe' and with this he built the temple of the grand primeval man. Here, with Homer and the Bible, he lived a practical and ideal life. He annexed the universe to Concord." Then, turning to the custodian of Thoreau's papers, Mr. H. G. O. Blake, who was in the room, Mr. Alcott said that Mr. Blake had spoken to him in this wise: "Well, really, the Bible is a good book, but Henry's ideas come so near I sometimes take a text from his writings and think of it all day." Then Mr. Alcott added; "Henry Thoreau was one grand man." All this was said with a glow and flash that thrilled the audience.



From Concord Enterprise Apr 15. 1893

## Reminiscences of Thoreau

More than forty years ago half a dozen boys were on the east bank of the Assabet river taking a sunbath after their swim in the stream. They were talking about the conical heaps of stones in the river, and wishing that they knew what built them. There were about as many theories as they were boys, and no conclusion had been arrived at, when one of the boys said "here comes Henry Thoreau, let us ask him." So when he came near, one of the boys asked him "what made those heaps of stones in the river." I asked a Penobscot Indian that question "said Thoreau," and he said "the musquash did," but I told him I was a better Indian than he, for I knew and he did not, "and with that reply he walked off. John - said, "that is just like him, he never will tell a fellow anything unless it is in his lectures, damn his old lectures about chipmunks and squirrels, I won't go to hear him," and the unanimous opinion of the boys was, that when they got left again, another man would do it. The boys could not understand Thoreau, and he did not understand boys, and both were losers by it.

While looking over Thoreau's "Autumn" lately, the writer was reminded of the time when Thoreau and the writer's father spent some two or three weeks running anew the boundary lines in Sudbury woods. I think it was in 1851, and there were grave disputes, and law suits seemed probable, but after a while these two men were selected to fix the bounds. The real trouble was owing to the variation of the compass, the old lines having been run some two hundred years before; but Thoreau understood his business thoroughly and settled the boundary question so that peace was declared. Thoreau's companion was an old lumberman and woodchopper and a close observer of natural objects; but he said that Thoreau was the best man he had ever known in the woods. He would climb a tree like a squirrel, knew every plant and shrub



and seemed to have been born in the forest. Thoreau asked many questions; one of them was, "Do you know where there is a white grape, which grows on high land, which bears every year and is of superior quality?" "Yes" was the reply. "It is a little north of Deacon Dakin's rye field and when the grapes are ripe if you are not on the windward side your nose will tell you where they are." Thoreau laughed and appeared satisfied.

About this time Thoreau went to a party in Concord, and he says in his journal or diary, that he would rather eat crackers and cheese with his old companion in the woods.

It is a great mistake to suppose that Thoreau was a solitary student in Concord and vicinity at that time. He was better equipped for his work, and could record his observations and discoveries better than his fellow students and this was enough to make him famous in later years.

There was a young man who worked on a farm one year, and saved his money like a miser, to spend it the next year in travel and the study of natural history. This was done for several years, or so long as the writer knew him. Another deliberately chose a hunter's and trapper's life in the wild, northwestern section of our great country, and he had the nerve and determination to stick to his wild, dangerous pursuit. There was a man in Burlington, Mass., 70 years old who would be in the woods and fields as early as 3 o'clock during the summer months, and as soon as he could see in the winter, returning in time to do a full day's work at the shoe bench.

He was a most enthusiastic student, but he was a good business man as well. He supplied the city stables with skunk's oil at \$2.00 per quart, sold woodcocks and partridges in their season, and by his skillful administration of strychnine cleared the country of foxes and other pests, and put many dollars in his pocket. On Sundays he would let his birds and squirrels out of their cages, call in the dog and cat, and a pet lamb, and then as the boys said, "father was in heaven". This man's sons solved the problem which had never been solved before; namely, "Where is the other end of a squirrel's hole?" and the name of Skelton is forever



more associated with that problem which had vexed the rustic mind for centuries. I was much pleased with the reply which a Lynn shoemaker made me when I asked him if he read Thoreau's books. He replied that he only read them during the winter months, when he could not go out and look for himself, and that they were a good substitute for his ~~winter~~<sup>outdoor</sup> rambles.

These unknown men are, and have been the branch lines, the feeders of the Grand Trunk naturalists, and they have not lived in vain.

There was a great intermediate class between Emerson and the Canadian woodchoppers who would have gladly aided Thoreau if he had been a little more human in his dealings with them. The modest, unpretending Concord farmers who cultivated their fields, educated their children, paid their taxes for the support of schools, churches, and their chosen form of government, whose sons gave their lives for their country in its years of peril, are not to be sneered at and despised by men whose occupations and opinions differed from theirs. In the language of Ruskin "let us think less of peculiarity of employment and more of excellence of achievement"

Crayon -  
(Horace R. Hoarner)  
of Acton -



From Concord Enterprise Apr 22. 1893

Reminiscences of Thoreau II.

Thoreau often visited the west part of Concord, passing along the east bank of the Assabet river from Derby's bridge up the stream, along the high banks which overlook the river to the land formerly owned by Timothy Sheehan, and from there to the Ministerial Swamp and vicinity where he first found the climbing fern. The writer saw him the day he found the rare plant, while returning home with his prize. I never saw such a pleased, happy look on his face as he had that day. He took off his hat, in the crown of which the fern was coiled up, and showed me the daintily, graceful glory of the swamp. He said it had never been seen before in the New England States, outside the Botanical Gardens in Cambridge, and he volunteered the information that it grew in a swamp between the place we were on and Sudbury.

Soon after, perhaps two weeks, two men who said they came from Cambridge came to me and asked where the climbing fern grew. I did not tell them for many reasons, perhaps the best one was which Thoreau gave while speaking of the pink lilies which grew on the Cape. In reply to my question if he had seen the pink lilies which grew in Hayward's pond in Nuttall, he said he had never seen them there or on the Concord rivers, but there was a place on the Cape, a sort of creek, where they had grown unnoticed by the inhabitants until Theodore Parker saw them one summer and gathered them, and "after that," said Thoreau, "the bumpkins grubbed them up root and branch and almost exterminated them."

While passing over the route mentioned at the beginning of this article, Thoreau was only a gleaner after his father and mother, who together had been seen there more than once by the writer, years before Henry D. followed in their footsteps.

Let the young men and women of Concord who have a love for the study of botany and natural history not be afraid to glean after Thoreau, for he said "that he had much to report on this subject."

Crayon