Leonard Mann July 14, 1890

My dear Sir Dance,

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

The Mr. Braden mentioned in one in Danton J. Button of St. Louis, and the conversation was held at the School of Philosophy.

The author of the other two, Horace R. Torner, 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, loaned by an older brother Joseph Torner. I find I am unable to buy a copy, but I may borrow one and copy the article for you—also for myself.

I have just received a copy of "Selections from Thoreau," edited with an introduction by Mr. Taft, sent me by the publishers.

Mr. William Thee.

The Scrubbers for March have a short article on Thoreau, by F. B. Sanborn.

Yours very sincerely,

Alfred W. Torner
In one of his lectures, Mr. Alcott alluded to Thoreau, as a
divided genius. He broke away from the contradictions of life and fled to the
world to reconcile them. "Thoreau," said Mr. Alcott, "was an
extreme individualist. He was named after the Norseman who
originates the saying, 'I will find a way out of the world and
never lose the spirit of the great ancestor.' He said to himself, 'I will
be independent of the human race as possible.' He had prodigious
Common sense in me more. He also had a high idea and rare poetic
iscriminations, none were. He was more in sympathy with nature than with any human
being. The animals knew him and selected him as their representative.

Thoreau 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.' Then
he proceeded to the Walden cabin he came to me and said, 'Mr. Alcott, lend
me your pen, and with this I will build the temple of the grand prinical
man, me, with Thoreau and the Bible, he lived a practical and ideal life. He
commenced the universe to Thoreau.' Then, turning to the custodian of Thoreau's
desk, Mr. H.G. Blake, who was in the room, Mr. Alcott said to Mr. Blake:
And spoken to him in this wise: 'Well, really, the Bible is a good book,
but Henry's ideas come as 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.
More than forty years ago, half a dozen boys were on the east
bank of the Assabet River taking a sambath after their devine 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
stones as they were boys, and no conclusion had been arrived at, when one of
the boys said "Here comes Henry Thoreau, let him ask him." To whom he came near, one
of the boys asked him, "What made those heaps of stones in the river?" I asked a
recent Indian that question, said "Thoreau," and he said the "knee-squash did," but
I told him he was a better Indian than I, for I knew and he did not, and with
that reply he walked off. Thoreau said, "That is just like him, he never will
tell a fellow anything unless it is in the lectures, when his old lectures
about chipmunks and snakes, I don't go 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
across the boundary lines in scouting 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 boundary. The real trouble was owing to the variation
of the compass, the old lines having been run some two hundred years ago, 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 about
and seemed to have been born in the woods. 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 Beacon. Dakota's eye field and when the
grapes are ripe if you are not at the sandbank 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 the days in his
journal or diary, that he would rather eat crackers and cheese with his
cousin's 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, and as long as the writer knew
him. Another deliberately chose a hunter's and trapper's life in the wild
northeastern section of our great country, and the fear and
determination to stick to his wild dangerous profession. There was
a man in Burlington, Vt., 70 years old, who would be in the woods and
field as early as 5 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 shop bench.

He was a most enthusiastic student, but he was a good business
man as well. He supplied the city stable with smoked oil at 300
a quart, sold woodcock and partridge in their season, and by the helpful
administration of strychnine cleared the country of fowls and other pests, and
sold many dollars in his pocket. On Sundays he would let the birds
and squirrels out of their cages call in the dog and cat, and a few
lamb, and then as the boy said, "father was in heaven." This man's son
solved the problem which had never been solved before, namely, "Where is
the other end of a squirrel's hole?" and the name of Shelton is forever
more associated with the problem which had vexed the racist mind for centuries. I was much pleased with the reply which a totem shamaniste
made me when I asked him if he read Thorstein's book. 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 studies.
These unknown men are, and have been the breach lines, the
fathers of the Grand Trunk naturalists, and they have not lived in vain.
There was a great intermediate class between Emerson and
the Canadian wood-gatherer who would have gladly aided Thorstein if he
had been a little more human in his dealings with them. The model,
unquestioned Concord farmers who cultivate their fields, educate 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 me think less of pecuniary employment and more of
excellence of achievement."

Crayon

(Horace R. Flannery)

9 October
Reminiscence of Thoreau

Thoreau often visited the west part of Concord, passing along the east bank of the Assabet river from Depot's bridge up the stream along the high banks which over look the river to the land formerly owned by Timothy Sheehan, and on thru to the Minuteman's burying and vicinity where he first found the climbing fern. The writer saw him the day he found the same plant, while returning home with his prize. Thoreau saw such a pleased, happy look on his face as he had that day. He took off his hat, in the corner of which the fern was curled up, and showed me the dainty, graceful glory of the ferns. 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 crevice 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. He replied to my question if he had seen the pink lilies which grew in Wayward Pond in Harvard. He said he had never seen them there on the Concord river, 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 and gathered them, and "after that," said Thoreau, "the botanist 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 of the fruits and flowers which together had been seen the more than once by the writer, years before Thoreau, 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 their subject."