FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS

TO R. W. EMERSON (AT CONCORD).

FIRE ISLAND BEACH,
Thursday morning, July 25, 1850.

DEAR FRIEND,—I am writing this at the house of Smith Oakes, within one mile of the wreck. He is the one who rendered most assistance. William H. Channing came down with me, but I have not seen Arthur Fuller, nor Greeley, nor Marcus Spring. Spring and Charles Sumner were here yesterday, but left soon. Mr. Oakes and wife tell me (all the survivors came, or were brought, directly to their house) that the ship struck at ten minutes after four A. M., and all hands, being mostly in their nightclothes, made haste to the forecastle, the water coming in at once. There they remained; the passengers in the forecastle, the crew above it, doing what they could. Every wave lifted the forecastle roof and washed over those within. The first man got ashore at nine; many from nine to noon. At flood-tide, about half past three o’clock, when the ship

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1 It will readily be seen that this letter relates to the shipwreck on Fire Island, near New York, in which Margaret Fuller, Countess Ossoli, with her husband and child, was lost. A letter with no date of the year, but probably written February 15, 1840, from Emerson to Thoreau, represents them both as taking much trouble about a house in Concord for Mrs. Fuller, the mother of Margaret, who had just sold her Groton house, and wished to live with her daughter near Emerson.
broke up entirely, they came out of the forecastle, and Margaret sat with her back to the forecastle, with her hands on her knees, her husband and child already drowned. A great wave came and washed her aft. The steward (?) had just before taken her child and started for shore. Both were drowned.

The broken desk, in a bag, containing no very valuable papers; a large black leather trunk, with an upper and under compartment, the upper holding books and papers; a carpetbag, probably Ossoli’s, and one of his shoes (?) are all the Ossoli effects known to have been found. Four bodies remain to be found: the two Ossolis, Horace Sumner, and a sailor. I have visited the child’s grave. Its body will probably be taken away to-day. The wreck is to be sold at auction, excepting the hull, to-day.

The mortar would not go off. Mrs. Hasty, the captain’s wife, told Mrs. Oakes that she and Margaret divided their money, and tied up the halves in handkerchiefs around their persons; that Margaret took sixty or seventy dollars. Mrs. Hasty, who can tell all about Margaret up to eleven o’clock on Friday, is said to be going to Portland, New England, to-day. She and Mrs. Fuller must, and probably will, come together. The cook, the last to leave, and the steward (?) will know the rest. I shall try to see them. In the meanwhile I shall do what I can to recover property and obtain particulars hereabouts. William H. Channing — did I write it? — has come with me. Arthur Fuller

1 Rev. A. B. Fuller, then of Manchester, N. H., afterward of Boston; a brother of Margaret, who died a chaplain in the Civil War.

has this moment reached the house. He reached the beach last night. We got here yesterday noon. A good part of the wreck still holds together where she struck, and something may come ashore with her fragments. The last body was found on Tuesday, three miles west. Mrs. Oakes dried the papers which were in the trunk, and she says they appeared to be of various kinds. “Would they cover that table?” (a small round one). “They would if spread out. Some were tied up.” There were twenty or thirty books “in the same half of the trunk. Another smaller trunk, empty, came ashore, but there was no mark on it.” She speaks of Paulina as if she might have been a sort of nurse to the child. I expect to go to Patchogue, whence the pilferers must have chiefly come, and advertise, etc.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (IN MILTON).

CONCORD August 9, 1850.

MR. BLAKE, — I received your letter just as I was rushing to Fire Island beach to recover what remained of Margaret Fuller, and read it on the way. That event and its train, as much as anything, have prevented my answering it before. It is wisest to speak when you are spoken to. I will now endeavor to reply, at the risk of having nothing to say.

I find that actual events, notwithstanding the singular prominence which we all allow them, are far less real than the creations of my imagination. They are truly visionary and insignificant, — all that we commonly call life and death, — and affect me less than my dreams. This petty stream which from time to time swells and
carries away the mills and bridges of our habitual life, and that mightier stream or ocean on which we securely float, — what makes the difference between them? I have in my pocket a button which I ripped off the coat of the Marquis of Ossoli, on the seashore, the other day. Held up, it intercepts the light, — an actual button, — and yet all the life it is connected with is less substantial to me, and interests me less, than my faintest dream. Our thoughts are the epochs in our lives: all else is but as a journal of the winds that blew while we were here.

I say to myself, Do a little more of that work which you have confessed to be good. You are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with yourself, without reason. Have you not a thinking faculty of inestimable value? If there is an experiment which you would like to try, try it. Do not entertain doubts if they are not agreeable to you. Remember that you need not eat unless you are hungry. Do not read the newspapers. Improve every opportunity to be melancholy. As for health, consider yourself well. Do not engage to find things as you think they are. Do what nobody else can do for you. Omit to do anything else. It is not easy to make our lives respectable by any course of activity. We must repeatedly withdraw into our shells of thought, like the tortoise, somewhat helplessly: yet there is more than philosophy in that.

Do not waste any reverence on my attitude. I merely manage to sit up where I have dropped. I am sure that my acquaintances mistake me. They ask my advice on high matters, but they do not know even how poorly
for friendship. As for conforming outwardly, and living your own life inwardly, I do not think much of that. Let not your right hand know what your left hand does in that line of business. It will prove a failure. Just as successfully can you walk against a sharp steel edge which divides you cleanly right and left. Do you wish to try your ability to resist distension? It is a greater strain than any soul can long endure. When you get God to pulling one way, and the devil the other, each having his feet well braced, — to say nothing of the conscience sawing transversely, — almost any timber will give way.

I do not dare invite you earnestly to come to Concord, because I know too well that the berries are not thick in my fields, and we should have to take it out in viewing the landscape. But come, on every account, and we will see — one another.

No letters of the year 1851 have been found by me. On the 27th of December, 1850, Mr. Cabot wrote to say that the Boston Society of Natural History, of which he was secretary, had elected Thoreau a corresponding member, “with all the honores, privilegia, etc., ad gradum tuum pertinentia, without the formality of paying any entrance fee, or annual subscription. Your duties in return are to advance the interests of the Society by communications or otherwise, as shall seem good.” This is believed to be the only learned body which honored itself by electing Thoreau. The immediate occasion of this election was the present, by Thoreau, to the Society, of a fine specimen of the American gos-

TO T. W. HIGGINSON (AT BOSTON).

Concord, April 3-4, 1852.

Dear Sir, — I do not see that I can refuse to read another lecture, but what makes me hesitate is the fear that I have not another available which will entertain a large audience, though I have thoughts to offer which I think will be quite as worthy of their attention. However, I will try; for the prospect of earning a few dollars is alluring. As far as I can foresee, my subject would be “Reality” rather transcendentally treated. It lies still in “Walden, or Life in the Woods.” Since you are kind enough to undertake the arrangements, I will leave it to you to name an evening of next week, decide on the most suitable room, and advertise, — if this is not taking you too literally at your word.

If you still think it worth the while to attend to this, will you let me know as soon as may be what evening will be most convenient? I certainly do not feel prepared to offer myself as a lecturer to the Boston public, and hardly know whether more to dread a small
audience or a large one. Nevertheless, I will repress this squeamishness, and propose no alteration in your arrangements. I shall be glad to accept your invitation to tea.

This lecture was given, says Colonel Higginson, “at the Mechanics’ Apprentices Library in Boston, with the snow outside, and the young boys rustling their newspapers among the Alcotts and Blakes.” Or, possibly, this remark may apply to a former lecture in the same year, which was that in which Thoreau first lectured habitually away from Concord. He commenced by accepting an invitation to speak at Leyden Hall, in Plymouth, where his friends the Watsons had organized Sunday services, that the Transcendentalists and Abolitionists might have a chance to be heard at a time when they were generally excluded from the popular “Lyceum courses” throughout New England. Mr. B. M. Watson says:—

“I have found two letters from Thoreau in answer to my invitation in 1852 to address our congregation at Leyden Hall on Sunday mornings,—an enterprise I undertook about that time. I find among the distinguished men who addressed us the names of Thoreau, Emerson, Ellery Channing, Alcott, Higginson, Remond, S. Johnson, F. J. Appleton, Edmund Quincy, Garrison, Phillips, J. P. Lesley, Shackford, W. F. Channing, N. H. Whiting, Adin Ballou, Abby K. Foster and her husband, J. T. Sargent, T. T. Stone, Jones Very, Wasson, Hurlbut, F. W. Holland, and Scherb; so you may depend we had some fun.”

These letters were mere notes. The first, dated February 17, 1852, says: “I have not yet seen Mr. Channing, though I believe he is in town,—having decided to come to Plymouth myself,—but I will let him know that he is expected. Mr. Daniel Foster wishes me to say that he accepts your invitation, and that he would like to come Sunday after next. I will take the Saturday afternoon train. I shall be glad to get a winter view of Plymouth Harbor, and see where your garden lies under the snow.”

The second letter follows:—

TO MARSTON WATSON (AT PLYMOUTH).

Concord, December 31, 1852.

Mr. Watson,—I would be glad to visit Plymouth again, but at present I have nothing to read which is not severely heathenish, or at least secular,—which the dictionary defines as “relating to affairs of the present world, not holy,”—though not necessarily unholy; nor have I any leisure to prepare it. My writing at present is profane, yet in a good sense, and, as it were, sacredly, I may say; for, finding the air of the temple too close, I sat outside. Don’t think I say this to get off; no, no! It will not do to read such things to hungry ears. “If they ask for bread, will you give them a stone?” When I have something of the right kind, depend upon it I will let you know.

Up to 1848, when he was invited to lecture before the Salem Lyceum by Nathaniel Hawthorne, then its secretary, Thoreau seems to have spoken publicly very
little except in Concord; nor did he extend the circuit of his lectures much until his two books had made him known as a thinker. There was little to attract a popular audience in his manner or his matter; but it was the era of lectures, and if one could once gain admission to the circle of "lyceum lecturers," it did not so much matter what he said; a lecture was a lecture, as a sermon was a sermon, good, bad, or indifferent. But it was common to exclude the antislavery speakers from the lyceums, even those of more eloquence than Thoreau; this led to invitations from the small band of reformers scattered about New England and New York, so that the most unlikely of platform speakers (Ellery Channing, for example) sometimes gave lectures at Plymouth, Greenfield, Newburyport, or elsewhere. The present fashion of parlor lectures had not come in; yet at Worcester Thoreau's friends early organized for him something of that kind, as his letters to Mr. Blake show. In default of an audience of numbers, Thoreau fell into the habit of lecturing in his letters to this friend; the most marked instance being the thoughtful essay on Love and Chastity which makes the bulk of his epistle dated September, 1852. Like most of his serious writing, this was made up from his daily journal, and hardly comes under the head of "familiar letters;" the didactic purpose is rather too apparent. Yet it cannot be spared from any collection of his epistles,—none of which flowed more directly from the quickened moral nature of the man.

TO SOPHIA THOREAU (AT BANGOR).

Concord, July 13, 1852.

DEAR SOPHIA,—I am a miserable letter-writer, but perhaps if I should say this at length and with sufficient emphasis and regret it would make a letter. I am sorry that nothing transpires here of much moment; or, I should rather say, that I am so slackened and rusty, like the telegraph wire this season, that no wind that blows can extract music from me.

I am not on the trail of any elephants or mastodons, but have succeeded in trapping only a few ridiculous mice, which cannot feed my imagination. I have become sadly scientific. I would rather come upon the vast valley-like "spoor" only of some celestial beast which this world's woods can no longer sustain, than spring my net over a bushel of moles. You must do better in those woods where you are. You must have some adventures to relate and repeat for years to come, which will eclipse even mother's voyage to Goldsborough and Sissiboo.

They say that Mr. Pierce, the presidential candidate, was in town last 5th of July, visiting Hawthorne, whose college chum he was; and that Hawthorne is writing a life of him, for electioneering purposes.

Concord is just as idiotic as ever in relation to the spirits and their knockings. Most people here believe in a spiritual world which no respectable junk bottle, which had not met with a slip, would condescend to contain even a portion of for a moment,—whose atmosphere would extinguish a candle let down into it, like
a well that wants airing; in spirits which the very bullfrogs in our meadows would blackball. Their evil genius is seeing how low it can degrade them. The hooting of owls, the croaking of frogs, is celestial wisdom in comparison. If I could be brought to believe in the things which they believe, I should make haste to get rid of my certificate of stock in this and the next world’s enterprises, and buy a share in the first Immediate Annihilation Company that offered. I would exchange my immortality for a glass of small beer this hot weather. Where are the heathen? Was there ever any superstition before? And yet I suppose there may be a vessel this very moment setting sail from the coast of North America to that of Africa with a missionary on board! Consider the dawn and the sunrise,—the rainbow and the evening,—the words of Christ and the aspiration of all the saints! Hear music! see, smell, taste, feel, hear,—anything,—and then hear these idiots, inspired by the cracking of a restless board, humbly asking, “Please, Spirit, if you cannot answer by knocks, answer by tips of the table.” ! ! ! ! ! ! !

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, July 21, 1852.

MR. BLAKE,—I am too stupidly well these days to write to you. My life is almost altogether outward,—all shell and no tender kernel; so that I fear the report of it would be only a nut for you to crack, with no meat in it for you to eat. Moreover, you have not cornered me up, and I enjoy such large liberty in writing to you, that I feel as vague as the air. However, I rejoice to hear that you have attended so patiently to anything which I have said heretofore, and have detected any truth in it. It encourages me to say more,—not in this letter, I fear, but in some book which I may write one day. I am glad to know that I am as much to any mortal as a persistent and consistent scarecrow is to a farmer,—such a bundle of straw in a man’s clothing as I am, with a few bits of tin to sparkle in the sun dangling about me, as if I were hard at work there in the field. However, if this kind of life saves any man’s corn,—why, he is the gainer. I am not afraid that you will flatter me as long as you know what I am, as well as what I think, or aim to be, and distinguish between these two, for then it will commonly happen that if you praise the last you will condemn the first.

I remember that walk to Asnebumskit very well,—a fit place to go to on a Sunday; one of the true temples of the earth. A temple, you know, was anciently “an open place without a roof,” whose walls served merely to shut out the world and direct the mind toward heaven; but a modern meeting-house shuts out the heavens, while it crowds the world into still closer quarters. Best of all is it when, as on a mountain-top, you have for all walls your own elevation and deeps of surrounding ether. The partridge-berries, watered with mountain dews which are gathered there, are more memorable to me than the words which I last heard from the pulpit at least; and for my part, I would rather look toward Rutland than Jerusalem. Rutland,—modern town,—land of ruts,—trivial and worn,—
not too sacred, — with no holy sepulchre, but profane green fields and dusty roads, and opportunity to live as holy a life as you can, — where the sacredness, if there is any, is all in yourself and not in the place.

I fear that your Worcester people do not often enough go to the hilltops, though, as I am told, the springs lie nearer to the surface on your hills than in your valleys. They have the reputation of being Free-Soilers. Do they insist on a free atmosphere, too, that is, on freedom for the head or brain as well as the feet? If I were consciously to join any party, it would be that which is the most free to entertain thought.

All the world complain nowadays of a press of trivial duties and engagements, which prevents their employing themselves on some higher ground they know of; but, undoubtedly, if they were made of the right stuff to work on that higher ground, provided they were released from all those engagements, they would now at once fulfill the superior engagement, and neglect all the rest, as naturally as they breathe. They would never be caught saying that they had no time for this, when the dullest man knows that this is all that he has time for. No man who acts from a sense of duty ever puts the lesser duty above the greater. No man has the desire and the ability to work on high things, but he has also the ability to build himself a high staging.

As for passing through any great and glorious experience, and rising above it, as an eagle might fly athwart the evening sky to rise into still brighter and fairer regions of the heavens, I cannot say that I ever sailed so

1 The name of a political party, afterwards called “Republicans.”

To Harrison Blake (At Worcester).

September, 1852.

Mr. Blake,—Here come the sentences which I promised you. You may keep them, if you will regard and use them as the disconnected fragments of what I may find to be a completer essay, on looking over my journal, at last, and may claim again.

I send you the thoughts on Chastity and Sensuality
with diffidence and shame, not knowing how far I speak to the condition of men generally, or how far I betray my peculiar defects. Pray enlighten me on this point if you can.

LOVE.

What the essential difference between man and woman is, that they should be thus attracted to one another, no one has satisfactorily answered. Perhaps we must acknowledge the justness of the distinction which assigns to man the sphere of wisdom, and to woman that of love, though neither belongs exclusively to either. Man is continually saying to woman, Why will you not be more wise? Woman is continually saying to man, Why will you not be more loving? It is not in their wills to be wise or to be loving; but, unless each is both wise and loving, there can be neither wisdom nor love.

All transcendent goodness is one, though appreciated in different ways, or by different senses. In beauty we see it, in music we hear it, in fragrance we scent it, in the palatable the pure palate tastes it, and in rare health the whole body feels it. The variety is in the surface or manifestation; but the radical identity we fail to express. The lover sees in the glance of his beloved the same beauty that in the sunset paints the western skies. It is the same daimon, here lurking under a human eyelid, and there under the closing eyelids of the day. Here, in small compass, is the ancient and natural beauty of evening and morning. What loving astronomer has ever fathomed the ethereal depths of the eye?

The maiden conceals a fairer flower and sweeter fruit than any calyx in the field; and, if she goes with averted face, confiding in her purity and high resolves, she will make the heavens retrospective, and all nature humbly confess its queen.

Under the influence of this sentiment, man is a string of an aeolian harp, which vibrates with the zephyrs of the eternal morning.

There is at first thought something trivial in the commonness of love. So many Indian youths and maidens along these banks have in ages past yielded to the influence of this great civilizer. Nevertheless, this generation is not disgusted nor discouraged, for love is no individual's experience; and though we are imperfect mediums, it does not partake of our imperfection; though we are finite, it is infinite and eternal; and the same divine influence broods over these banks, whatever race may inhabit them, and perchance still would, even if the human race did not dwell here.

Perhaps an instinct survives through the intensest actual love, which prevents entire abandonment and devotion, and makes the most ardent lover a little reserved. It is the anticipation of change. For the most ardent lover is not the less practically wise, and seeks a love which will last forever.

Considering how few poetical friendships there are, it is remarkable that so many are married. It would seem as if men yielded too easy an obedience to nature without consulting their genius. One may be drunk with love without being any nearer to finding his mate. There is more of good nature than of good sense at
the bottom of most marriages. But the good nature must have the counsel of the good spirit or Intelligence. If common sense had been consulted, how many marriages would never have taken place; if uncommon or divine sense, how few marriages such as we witness would ever have taken place!

Our love may be ascending or descending. What is its character, if it may be said of it, —

"We must respect the souls above,
But only those below we love."

Love is a severe critic. Hate can pardon more than love. They who aspire to love worthily, subject themselves to an ordeal more rigid than any other.

Is your friend such a one that an increase of worth on your part will surely make her more your friend? Is she retained — is she attracted by more nobleness in you, — by more of that virtue which is peculiarly yours; or is she indifferent and blind to that? Is she to be flattered and won by your meeting her on any other than the ascending path? Then duty requires that you separate from her.

Love must be as much a light as a flame.

Where there is not discernment, the behavior even of the purest soul may in effect amount to coarseness.

A man of fine perceptions is more truly feminine than a merely sentimental woman. The heart is blind; but love is not blind. None of the gods is so discriminating.

In love and friendship the imagination is as much exercised as the heart; and if either is outraged the other will be estranged. It is commonly the imagina-

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tion which is wounded first, rather than the heart, — it is so much the more sensitive.

Comparatively, we can excuse any offense against the heart, but not against the imagination. The imagination knows — nothing escapes its glance from out its cry — and it controls the breast. My heart may still yearn toward the valley, but my imagination will not permit me to jump off the precipice that debarrs me from it, for it is wounded, its wings are clipt, and it cannot fly, even descendingly. Our "blundering hearts!" some poet says. The imagination never forgets; it is a re-membering. It is not foundationless, but most reasonable, and it alone uses all the knowledge of the intellect.

Love is the profoundest of secrets. Divulged, even to the beloved, it is no longer Love. As if it were merely I that loved you. When love ceases, then it is divulged.

In our intercourse with one we love, we wish to have answered those questions at the end of which we do not raise our voice; against which we put no interrogation-mark, — answered with the same unfailing, universal aim toward every point of the compass.

I require that thou knowest everything without being told anything. I parted from my beloved because there was one thing which I had to tell her. She questioned me. She should have known all by sympathy. That I had to tell it her was the difference between us, — the misunderstanding.

A lover never hears anything that he is told, for that is commonly either false or stale; but he hears things
taking place, as the sentinels heard Trenck\(^1\) mining
in the ground, and thought it was moles.

The relation may be profaned in many ways. The
parties may not regard it with equal sacredness. What
if the lover should learn that his beloved dealt in
incantations and philters! What if he should hear that
she consulted a clairvoyant! The spell would be in-
stantly broken.

If to chaffer and higgle are bad in trade, they are
much worse in Love. It demands directness as of an
arrow.

There is danger that we lose sight of what our friend
is absolutely, while considering what she is to us alone.
The lover wants no partiality. He says, Be so kind
as to be just.

\begin{verbatim}
Canst thou love with thy mind,
    And reason with thy heart?
Canst thou be kind,
    And from thy darling part?

Canst thou range earth, sea, and air,
And so meet me everywhere?
Through all events I will pursue thee,
Through all persons I will woo thee.

I need thy hate as much as thy love. Thou wilt not
repel me entirely when thou repeltest what is evil
in me.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
Indeed, indeed, I cannot tell,
Though I ponder on it well,
Which were easier to state,
All my love or all my hate.
Surely, surely, thou wilt trust me
When I say thou doth disgust me.
\end{verbatim}

\(^1\) Baron Trenck, the famous prisoner.

\textit{O, I hate thee with a hate
That would fain annihilate;
Yet, sometimes, against my will,
My dear Friend, I love thee still.
It were treason to our love,
And a sin to God above,
One iota to abate
Of a pure, impartial hate.}

It is not enough that we are truthful; we must cher-
ish and carry out high purposes to be truthful about.

It must be rare, indeed, that we meet with one to
whom we are prepared to be quite ideally related, as
she to us. We should have no reserve; we should give
the whole of ourselves to that society; we should have
no duty aside from that. One who could bear to be so
wonderfully and beautifully exaggerated every day. I
would take my friend out of her low self and set her
higher, infinitely higher, and \textit{there} know her. But,
commonly, men are as much afraid of love as of hate.
They have lower engagements. They have near ends
to serve. They have not imagination enough to be thus
employed about a human being, but must be coopering
a barrel, forsooth.

What a difference, whether, in all your walks, you
meet only strangers, or in one house is one who knows
you, and whom you know. To have a brother or a
sister! To have a gold mine on your farm! To find
diamonds in the gravel heaps before your door! How
rare these things are! To share the day with you, — to
people the earth. Whether to have a god or a goddess
for companion in your walks, or to walk alone with
hinds and villains and carles. Would not a friend en-
hance the beauty of the landscape as much as a deer or hare? Everything would acknowledge and serve such a relation; the corn in the field, and the cranberries in the meadow. The flowers would bloom, and the birds sing, with a new impulse. There would be more fair days in the year.

The object of love expands and grows before us to eternity, until it includes all that is lovely, and we become all that can love.

CHASTITY AND SENSUALITY.

The subject of sex is a remarkable one, since, though its phenomena concern us so much, both directly and indirectly, and, sooner or later, it occupies the thoughts of all, yet all mankind, as it were, agree to be silent about it, at least the sexes commonly one to another. One of the most interesting of all human facts is veiled more completely than any mystery. It is treated with such secrecy and awe as surely do not go to any religion. I believe that it is unusual even for the most intimate friends to communicate the pleasures and anxieties connected with this fact, — much as the external affair of love, its comings and goings, are bruited. The Shakers do not exaggerate it so much by their manner of speaking of it as all mankind by their manner of keeping silence about it. Not that men should speak on this or any subject without having anything worthy to say: but it is plain that the education of man has hardly commenced, — there is so little genuine intercommunication.

In a pure society, the subject of marriage would not be so often avoided, — from shame and not from reverence, winked out of sight, and hinted at only; but treated naturally and simply, — perhaps simply avoided, like the kindred mysteries. If it cannot be spoken of for shame, how can it be acted of? But, doubtless, there is far more purity, as well as more impurity, than is apparent.

Men commonly couple with their idea of marriage a slight degree at least of sensuality; but every lover, the world over, believes in its inconceivable purity.

If it is the result of a pure love, there can be nothing sensual in marriage. Chastity is something positive, not negative. It is the virtue of the married especially. All lusts or base pleasures must give place to loftier delights. They who meet as superior beings cannot perform the deeds of inferior ones. The deeds of love are less questionable than any action of an individual can be, for, it being founded on the rarest mutual respect, the parties incessantly stimulate each other to a loftier and purer life, and the act in which they are associated must be pure and noble indeed, for innocence and purity can have no equal. In this relation we deal with one whom we respect more religiously even than we respect our better selves, and we shall necessarily conduct as in the presence of God. What presence can be more awful to the lover than the presence of his beloved?

If you seek the warmth even of affection from a similar motive to that from which cats and dogs and slothful persons hug the fire, — because your temperature is low through sloth, — you are on the downward
road, and it is but to plunge yet deeper into sloth. Better the cold affection of the sun, reflected from fields of ice and snow, or his warmth in some still, wintry dell. The warmth of celestial love does not relax, but nerves and braces its enjoyer. Warm your body by healthful exercise, not by covering over a stove. Warm your spirit by performing independently noble deeds, not by ignobly seeking the sympathy of your fellows who are no better than yourself. A man’s social and spiritual discipline must answer to his corporal. He must lean on a friend who has a hard breast, as he would lie on a hard bed. He must drink cold water for his only beverage. So he must not hear sweetened and colored words, but pure and refreshing truths. He must daily bathe in truth cold as spring water, not warmed by the sympathy of friends.

Can love be in aught allied to dissipation? Let us love by refusing, not accepting one another. Love and lust are far asunder. The one is good, the other bad. When the affectionate sympathize by their higher natures, there is love; but there is danger that they will sympathize by their lower natures, and then there is lust. It is not necessary that this be deliberate, hardly even conscious; but, in the close contact of affection, there is danger that we may stain and pollute one another; for we cannot embrace but with an entire embrace.

We must love our friend so much that she shall be associated with our purest and holiest thoughts alone. When there is impurity, we have “descended to meet,” though we knew it not.
himself calls the calyx the *thalamus*, or bridal chamber; and the corolla the *aulacus*, or tapestry of it, and proceeds to explain thus every part of the flower.

Who knows but evil spirits might corrupt the flowers themselves, rob them of their fragrance and their fair hues, and turn their marriage into a secret shame and defilement? Already they are of various qualities, and there is one whose nuptials fill the lowlands in June with the odor of carrion.

The intercourse of the sexes, I have dreamed, is incredibly beautiful, too fair to be remembered. I have had thoughts about it, but they are among the most fleeting and irrecoverable in my experience. It is strange that men will talk of miracles, revelation, inspiration, and the like, as things past, while love remains.

A true marriage will differ in no wise from illumination. In all perception of the truth there is a divine ecstasy, an inexpressible delirium of joy, as when a youth embraces his betrothed virgin. The ultimate delights of a true marriage are one with this.

No wonder that, out of such a union, not as end, but as accompaniment, comes the undying race of man. The womb is a most fertile soil.

Some have asked if the stock of men could not be improved,—if they could not be bred as cattle. Let Love be purified, and all the rest will follow. A pure love is thus, indeed, the panacea for all the ills of the world.

The only excuse for reproduction is improvement. Nature abhors repetition. Beasts merely propagate their kind; but the offspring of noble men and women will be superior to themselves, as their aspirations are. By their fruits ye shall know them.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, February 27, 1853.

Mr. Blake,—I have not answered your letter before, because I have been almost constantly in the fields surveying of late. It is long since I have spent many days so profitably in a pecuniary sense; so unprofitably, it seems to me, in a more important sense. I have earned just a dollar a day for seventy-six days past; for, though I charge at a higher rate for the days which are seen to be spent, yet so many more are spent than appears. This is instead of lecturing, which has not offered, to pay for that book which I printed.¹ I have not only cheap hours, but cheap weeks and months; that is, weeks which are bought at the rate I have named. Not that they are quite lost to me, or make me very melancholy, alas! for I too often take a cheap satisfaction in so spending them,—weeks of pasturing and browsing, like beees and deer,—which give me animal health, it may be, but create a tough skin over the soul and intellectual part. Yet, if men should offer my body a maintenance for the work of my head alone, I feel that it would be a dangerous temptation.

As to whether what you speak of as the "world's way" (which for the most part is my way), or that which is shown me, is the better, the former is imposture, the latter is truth. I have the coldest confidence

¹ The Week.
in the last. There is only such hesitation as the appetites feel in following the aspirations. The clod hesitates because it is inert, wants animation. The one is the way of death, the other of life everlasting. My hours are not "cheap in such a way that I doubt whether the world's way would have not been better," but cheap in such a way that I doubt whether the world's way, which I have adopted for the time, could be worse. The whole enterprise of this nation, which is not an upward, but a westward one, toward Oregon, California, Japan, etc., is totally devoid of interest to me, whether performed on foot, or by a Pacific railroad. It is not illustrated by a thought; it is not warmed by a sentiment; there is nothing in it which one should lay down his life for, nor even his gloves,—hardly which one should take up a newspaper for. It is perfectly heathenish,—a filibustering toward heaven by the great western route. No; they may go their way to their manifest destiny, which I trust is not mine. May my seventy-six dollars, whenever I get them, help to carry me in the other direction! I see them on their winding way, but no music is wafted from their host,—only the rattling of change in their pockets. I would rather be a captive knight, and let them all pass by, than be free only to go whither they are bound. What end do they propose to themselves beyond Japan? What aims more lofty have they than the prairie dogs?

As it respects these things, I have not changed an opinion one iota from the first. As the stars looked to me when I was a shepherd in Assyria, they look to me now, a New-Englander. The higher the mountain on which you stand, the less change in the prospect from year to year, from age to age. Above a certain height there is no change. I am a Switzer on the edge of the glacier, with his advantages and disadvantages, goitre, or what not. (You may suspect it to be some kind of swelling at any rate.) I have had but one spiritual birth (excuse the word), and now whether it rains or snows, whether I laugh or cry, fall farther below or approach nearer to my standard; whether Pierce or Scott is selected,—not a new scintillation of light flashes on me, but ever and anon, though with longer intervals, the same surprising and everlastingly new light dawns to me, with only such variations as in the coming of the natural day, with which, indeed, it is often coincident.

As to how to preserve potatoes from rotting, your opinion may change from year to year; but as to how to preserve your soul from rotting, I have nothing to learn, but something to practice.

Thus I declaim against them; but I in my folly am the world I condemn.

I very rarely, indeed, if ever, "feel any itching to be what is called useful to my fellow-men." Sometimes—it may be when my thoughts for want of employment fall into a beaten path or humdrum—I have dreamed idly of stopping a man's horse that was running away; but, perchance, I wished that he might run, in order that I might stop him;—or of putting out a fire; but then, of course, it must have got well a-going. Now, to tell the truth, I do not dream much of acting upon horses before they run, or of preventing fires which are not yet kindled. What a foul subject is this of doing good!
instead of minding one's life, which should be his business: doing good as a dead carcass, which is only fit for manure, instead of as a living man,—instead of taking care to flourish, and smell and taste sweet, and refresh all mankind to the extent of our capacity and quality. People will sometimes try to persuade you that you have done something from that motive, as if you did not already know enough about it. If I ever did a man any good, in their sense, of course it was something exceptional and insignificant compared with the good or evil which I am constantly doing by being what I am. As if you were to preach to ice to shape itself into burning-glasses, which are sometimes useful, and so the peculiar properties of ice be lost. Ice that merely performs the office of a burning-glass does not do its duty.

The problem of life becomes, one cannot say by how many degrees, more complicated as our material wealth is increased,—whether that needle they told of was a gateway or not,—since the problem is not merely nor mainly to get life for our bodies, but by this or a similar discipline to get life for our souls; by cultivating the lowland farm on right principles, that is, with this view, to turn it into an upland farm. You have so many more talents to account for. If I accomplish as much more in spiritual work as I am richer in worldly goods, then I am just as worthy, or worth just as much, as I was before, and no more. I see that, in my own case, money might be of great service to me, but probably it would not be; for the difficulty now is, that I do not improve my opportunities, and therefore I am not prepared to have my opportunities increased. Now, I warn you, if it be as you say, you have got to put on the pack of an upland farmer in good earnest the coming spring, the lowland farm being cared for; ay, you must be selecting your seeds forthwith, and doing what winter work you can; and, while others are raising potatoes and Baldwin apples for you, you must be raising apples of the Hesperides for them. (Only hear how he preaches!) No man can suspect that he is the proprietor of an upland farm,—upland in the sense that it will produce nobler crops, and better repay cultivation in the long run,—but he will be perfectly sure that he ought to cultivate it.

Though we are desirous to earn our bread, we need not be anxious to satisfy men for it,—though we shall take care to pay them,—but God, who alone gave it to us. Men may in effect put us in the debtors' jail for that matter, simply for paying our whole debt to God, which includes our debt to them, and though we have His receipt for it,—for His paper is dishonored. The cashier will tell you that He has no stock in his bank.

How prompt we are to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our bodies; how slow to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls! Indeed, we would-be practical folks cannot use this word without blushing because of our infidelity, having starved this substance almost to a shadow. We feel it to be as absurd as if a man were to break forth into a eulogy on his dog, who has n't any. An ordinary man will work every day for a year at shoveling dirt to support his body, or a family of bodies; but he is an extraordinary man who will
work a whole day in a year for the support of his soul. Even the priests, the men of God, so called, for the most part confess that they work for the support of the body. But he alone is the truly enterprising and practical man who succeeds in maintaining his soul here. Have not we our everlasting life to get? and is not that the only excuse at last for eating, drinking, sleeping, or even carrying an umbrella when it rains? A man might as well devote himself to raising pork as to fattening the bodies, or temporal part merely, of the whole human family. If we made the true distinction we should almost all of us be seen to be in the almshouse for souls.

I am much indebted to you because you look so steadily at the better side, or rather the true centre of me (for our true centre may, and perhaps oftener does, lie entirely aside from us, and we are in fact eccentric), and, as I have elsewhere said, “give me an opportunity to live.” You speak as if the image or idea which I see were reflected from me to you; and I see it again reflected from you to me, because we stand at the right angle to one another; and so it goes zigzag to what successive reflecting surfaces, before it is all dissipated or absorbed by the more unreflecting, or differently reflecting,—who knows? Or, perhaps, what you see directly, you refer to me. What a little shelf is required, by which we may impinge upon another, and build there our cry in the clouds, and all the heavens we see above us we refer to the crags around and beneath us. Some piece of mica, as it were, in the face or eyes of one, as on the Delectable Mountains, slanted at the right angle, reflects the heavens to us. But, in the slow geological upheavals and depressions, these mutual angles are disturbed, these suns set, and new ones rise to us. That ideal which I worshiped was a greater stranger to the mica than to me. It was not the hero I admired, but the reflection from his epaulet or helmet. It is nothing (for us) permanently inherent in another, but his attitude or relation to what we prize, that we admire. The meanest man may glitter with micacious particles to his fellow’s eye. These are the spangles that adorn a man. The highest union,—the only un-ion (don’t laugh), or central oneness, is the coincidence of visual rays. Our club-room was an apartment in a constellation where our visual rays met (and there was no debate about the restaurant). The way between us is over the mount.

Your words make me think of a man of my acquaintance whom I occasionally meet, whom you, too, appear to have met, one Myself, as he is called. Yet, why not call him Yourself? If you have met with him and know him, it is all I have done; and surely, where there is a mutual acquaintance, the my and thy make a distinction without a difference.

I do not wonder that you do not like my Canada story. It concerns me but little, and probably is not worth the time it took to tell it. Yet I had absolutely no design whatever in my mind, but simply to report what I saw. I have inserted all of myself that was implicated, or made the excursion. It has come to an end, at any rate; they will print no more, but return me my MS. when it is but little more than half done, as well
as another I had sent them, because the editor requires the liberty to omit the heresies without consulting me, — a privilege California is not rich enough to bid for.

I thank you again and again for attending to me; that is to say, I am glad that you hear me and that you also are glad. Hold fast to your most indefinite, waking dream. The very green dust on the walls is an organized vegetable; the atmosphere has its fauna and flora floating in it; and shall we think that dreams are but dust and ashes, are always disintegrated and crumbling thoughts, and not dust-like thoughts trooping to their standard with music, — systems beginning to be organized? These expectations, — these are roots, these are nuts, which even the poorest man has in his bin, and roasts or cracks them occasionally in winter evenings, — which even the poor debtor retains with his bed and his pig, i. e., his idleness and sensuality. Men go to the opera because they hear there a faint expression in sound of this news which is never quite distinctly proclaimed. Suppose a man were to sell the hue, the least amount of coloring matter in the superficies of his thought, for a farm, — were to exchange an absolute and infinite value for a relative and finite one, — to gain the whole world and lose his own soul!

Do not wait as long as I have before you write. If you will look at another star, I will try to supply my side of the triangle.

Tell Mr. Brown that I remember him, and trust that he remembers me.

P. S. — Excuse this rather flippant preaching, which

1 Of Putnam's Magazine.

TO HARRISON BLAKE

Concord, April 10, 1853.

Mr. Blake, — Another singular kind of spiritual football, — really nameless, handleless, homeless, like myself, — a mere arena for thoughts and feelings; definite enough outwardly, indefinite more than enough inwardly. But I do not know why we should be styled "misters" or "masters:" we come so near to being anything or nothing, and seeing that we are mastered, and not wholly sorry to be mastered, by the least phenomenon. It seems to me that we are the mere creatures of thought, — one of the lowest forms of intellectual life, we men, — as the sunfish is of animal life. As yet our thoughts have acquired no definiteness nor solidity; they are purely molluscosus, not vertebrate; and the height of our existence is to float upward in an ocean where the sun shines, — appearing only like a vast soup or chowder to the eyes of the immortal navigators. It is wonderful that I can be here, and you there, and that we can correspond, and do many other things, when, in fact, there is so little of us, either or both, anywhere. In a few minutes, I expect, this slight film or dash of vapor that I am will be what is called asleep, — resting! forsooth from what? Hard work? and thought? The hard work of the dandelion down, which floats over the meadow all day; the hard work of a pismire that labors to raise a hillock all day,
and even by moonlight. Suddenly I can come forward into the utmost apparent distinctness, and speak with a sort of emphasis to you; and the next moment I am so faint an entity, and make so slight an impression, that nobody can find the traces of me. I try to hunt myself up, and find the little of me that is discoverable is falling asleep, and then I assist and tuck it up. It is getting late. How can I starve or feed? Can I be said to sleep? There is not enough of me even for that. If you hear a noise,—'t ain't I,—'t ain't 1,—as the dog says with a tin kettle tied to his tail. I read of something happening to another the other day: how happens it that nothing ever happens to me? A dandelion down that never alights,—settles,—blown off by a boy to see if his mother wanted him,—some divine boy in the upper pastures.

Well, if there really is another such a meteor sojourning in these spaces, I would like to ask you if you know whose estate this is that we are on? For my part I enjoy it well enough, what with the wild apples and the scenery; but I should n't wonder if the owner set his dog on me next. I could remember something not much to the purpose, probably; but if I stick to what I do know, then —

It is worth the while to live respectably unto ourselves. We can possibly get along with a neighbor, even with a bedfellow, whom we respect but very little; but as soon as it comes to this, that we do not respect ourselves, then we do not get along at all, no matter how much money we are paid for halting. There are old heads in the world who cannot help me by their ex-

ample or advice to live worthily and satisfactorily to myself; but I believe that it is in my power to elevate myself this very hour above the common level of my life. It is better to have your head in the clouds, and know where you are, if indeed you cannot get it above them, than to breathe the clearer atmosphere below them, and think that you are in paradise.

Once you were in Milton 1 doubting what to do. To live a better life,—this surely can be done. Dot and carry one. Wait not for a clear sight, for that you are to get. What you see clearly you may omit to do. Milton and Worcester? It is all Blake, Blake. Never mind the rats in the wall; the cat will take care of them. All that men have said or are is a very faint rumor, and it is not worth the while to remember or refer to that. If you are to meet God, will you refer to anybody out of that court? How shall men know how I succeed, unless they are in at the life? I did not see the Times reporter there.

Is it not delightful to provide one's self with the necessaries of life,—to collect dry wood for the fire when the weather grows cool, or fruits when we grow hungry?—not till then. And then we have all the time left for thought!

Of what use were it, pray, to get a little wood to burn, to warm your body this cold weather, if there were not a divine fire kindled at the same time to warm your spirit?

"Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man!"

1 A town near Boston.
I cuddle up by my stove, and there I get up another fire which warms fire itself. Life is so short that it is not wise to take roundabout ways, nor can we spend much time in waiting. Is it absolutely necessary, then, that we should do as we are doing? Are we chiefly under obligations to the devil, like Tom Walker? Though it is late to leave off this wrong way, it will seem early the moment we begin in the right way; instead of mid-afternoon, it will be early morning with us. We have not got half-way to dawn yet.

As for the lectures, I feel that I have something to say, especially on Traveling, Vagueness, and Poverty; but I cannot come now. I will wait till I am fuller, and have fewer engagements. Your suggestions will help me much to write them when I am ready. I am going to Haverhill to-morrow, surveying, for a week or more. You met me on my last errand thither.

I trust that you realize what an exaggerator I am,—that I lay myself out to exaggerate whenever I have an opportunity,—pile Pelion upon Ossa, to reach heaven so. Expect no trivial truth from me, unless I am on the witness-stand. I will come as near to lying as you can drive a coach and four. If it is n't thus and so with me, it is with something. I am not particular whether I get the shells or meat, in view of the latter's worth.

I see that I have not at all answered your letter, but there is time enough for that.

A Massachusetts town, the birthplace of Whittier.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, December 19, 1853.

Mr. Blake,—My debt has accumulated so that I should have answered your last letter at once, if I had not been the subject of what is called a press of engagements, having a lecture to write for last Wednesday, and surveying more than usual besides. It has been a kind of running fight with me,—the enemy not always behind me I trust.

True, a man cannot lift himself by his own waist-bands, because he cannot get out of himself; but he can expand himself (which is better, there being no up nor down in nature), and so split his waistbands, being already within himself.

You speak of doing and being, and the vanity, real or apparent, of much doing. The suckers— I think it is they—make nests in our river in the spring of more than a cart-load of small stones, amid which to deposit their ova. The other day I opened a muskrat's house. It was made of weeds, five feet broad at base, and three feet high, and far and low within it was a little cavity, only a foot in diameter, where the rat dwelt. It may seem trivial, this piling up of weeds, but so the race of muskrats is preserved. We must heap up a great pile of doing, for a small diameter of being. Is it not imperative on us that we do something, if we only work in a treadmill? And, indeed, some sort of revolving is necessary to produce a centre and nucleus of being. What exercise is to the body, employment is to the mind and morals. Consider what an amount of
drudgery must be performed,—how much humdrum and prosaic labor goes to any work of the least value. There are so many layers of mere white lime in every shell to that thin inner one so beautifully tinted. Let not the shellfish think to build his house of that alone; and pray, what are its tints to him? Is it not his smooth, close-fitting shirt merely, whose tints are not to him, being in the dark, but only when he is gone or dead, and his shell is heaved up to light, a wreck upon the beach, do they appear. With him, too, it is a Song of the Shirt, "Work,—work,—work!" And the work is not merely a police in the gross sense, but in the higher sense a discipline. If it is surely the means to the highest end we know, can any work be humble or disgusting? Will it not rather be elevating as a ladder, the means by which we are translated?

How admirably the artist is made to accomplish his self-culture by devotion to his art! The wood-sawyer, through his effort to do his work well, becomes not merely a better wood-sawyer, but measurably a better man. Few are the men that can work on their navels,—only some Brahmins that I have heard of. To the painter is given some paint and canvas instead; to the Irishman a hog, typical of himself. In a thousand apparently humble ways men busy themselves to make some right take the place of some wrong,—if it is only to make a better paste blacking,—and they are themselves so much the better morally for it.

You say that you do not succeed much. Does it concern you enough that you do not? Do you work hard enough at it? Do you get the benefit of discipline out of it? If so, persevere. Is it a more serious thing than to walk a thousand miles in a thousand successive hours? Do you get any corns by it? Do you ever think of hanging yourself on account of failure?

If you are going into that line,—going to besiege the city of God,—you must not only be strong in engines, but prepared with provisions to starve out the garrison. An Irishman came to see me to-day, who is endeavoring to get his family out to this New World. He rises at half past four, milks twenty-eight cows (which has swollen the joints of his fingers), and eats his breakfast, without any milk in his tea or coffee, before six; and so on, day after day, for six and a half dollars a month; and thus he keeps his virtue in him, if he does not add to it; and he regards me as a gentleman able to assist him; but if I ever get to be a gentleman, it will be by working after my fashion harder than he does. If my joints are not swollen, it must be because I deal with the teats of celestial cows before breakfast (and the milker in this case is always allowed some of the milk for his breakfast), to say nothing of the flocks and herds of Admetus afterward.

It is the art of mankind to polish the world, and every one who works is scrubbing in some part.

If the work is high and far,

You must not only aim aright,
But draw the bow with all your might.

You must qualify yourself to use a bow which no humbler archer can bend.

"Work,—work,—work!"
Who shall know it for a bow? It is not of yew tree. It is straighter than a ray of light; flexibility is not known for one of its qualities.

December 22.

So far I had got when I was called off to survey. Pray read the life of Haydon the painter, if you have not. It is a small revelation for these latter days; a great satisfaction to know that he has lived, though he is now dead. Have you met with the letter of a Turkish cadi at the end of Layard's "Ancient Babylon"? That also is refreshing, and a capital comment on the whole book which precedes it,—the Oriental genius speaking through him.

Those Brahmins "put it through." They come off, or rather stand still, conquerors, with some withered arms or legs at least to show; and they are said to have cultivated the faculty of abstraction to a degree unknown to Europeans. If we cannot sing of faith and triumph, we will sing our despair. We will be that kind of bird. There are day owls, and there are night owls, and each is beautiful and even musical while about its business.

Might you not find some positive work to do with your back to Church and State, letting your back do all the rejection of them? Can you not go upon your pilgrimage, Peter, along the winding mountain path whither you face? A step more will make those funereal church bells over your shoulder sound far and sweet as a natural sound.

"Work,—work,—work!"

Why not make a very large mud pie and bake it in the sun? Only put no Church nor State into it, nor upset any other pepper-box that way. Dig out a woodchuck,—for that has nothing to do with rotting institutions. Go ahead.

Whether a man spends his day in an ecstasy or despondency, he must do some work to show for it, even as there are flesh and bones to show for him. We are superior to the joy we experience.

Your last two letters, methinks, have more nerve and will in them than usual, as if you had erected yourself more. Why are not they good work, if you only had a hundred correspondents to tax you?

Make your failure tragical by the earnestness and steadfastness of your endeavor, and then it will not differ from success. Prove it to be the inevitable fate of mortals,—of one mortal,—if you can.

You said that you were writing on Immortality. I wish you would communicate to me what you know about that. You are sure to live while that is your theme.

Thus I write on some text which a sentence of your letters may have furnished.

I think of coming to see you as soon as I get a new coat, if I have money enough left. I will write to you again about it.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, January 21, 1854.

Mr. Blake,—My coat is at last done, and my mother and sister allow that I am so far in a condition
to go abroad. I feel as if I had gone abroad the moment I put it on. It is, as usual, a production strange to me, the wearer. — invented by some Count D'Orsay; and the maker of it was not acquainted with any of my real depressions or elevations. He only measured a peg to hang it on, and might have made the loop big enough to go over my head. It requires a not quite innocent indifference, not to say insolence, to wear it. Ah! the process by which we get our coats is not what it should be. Though the Church declares it righteous, and its priest pardons me, my own good genius tells me that it is hasty, and coarse, and false. I expect a time when, or rather an integrity by which, a man will get his coat as honestly and as perfectly fitting as a tree its bark. Now our garments are typical of our conformity to the ways of the world, i. e., of the devil, and to some extent react on us and poison us, like that shirt which Hercules put on.

I think to come and see you next week, on Monday, if nothing hinders. I have just returned from court at Cambridge, whither I was called as a witness, having surveyed a water-privilege, about which there is a dispute, since you were here.

Ah! what foreign countries there are, greater in extent than the United States or Russia, and with no more souls to a square mile, stretching away on every side from every human being with whom you have no sympathy. Their humanity affects me as simply monstrous. Rocks, earth, brute beasts, comparatively are not so strange to me. When I sit in the parlors and kitchens of some with whom my business brings me — I was going

— An American seaman, wrecked on the coast of Arabia, — once a popular book.
deception or lies; it is sleazy and frays out; it is not close-woven like cloth; but its meshes are a coarse network. A man can afford to lie only at the intersection of the threads; but truth puts in the filling, and makes a consistent stuff.

I mean merely to suggest how much the station affects the demeanor and self-respectability of the parties, and that the difference between the judge's coat of cloth and the criminal's is insignificant compared with, or only partially significant of, the difference between the coats which their respective stations permit them to wear. What airs the judge may put on over his coat which the criminal may not! The judge's opinion (sententia) of the criminal sentences him, and is read by the clerk of the court, and published to the world, and executed by the sheriff; but the criminal's opinion of the judge has the weight of a sentence, and is published and executed only in the supreme court of the universe,—a court not of common pleas. How much juster is the one than the other? Men are continually sentencing each other; but, whether we be judges or criminals, the sentence is ineffectual unless we continue ourselves.

I am glad to hear that I do not always limit your vision when you look this way; that you sometimes see the light through me; that I am here and there windows, and not all dead wall. Might not the community sometimes petition a man to remove himself as a nuisance, a darkener of the day, a too large mote?

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, August 8, 1854.

Mr. Blake,—Methinks I have spent a rather unprofitable summer thus far. I have been too much with the world, as the poet might say.¹ The completest performance of the highest duties it imposes would yield me but little satisfaction. Better the neglect of all such, because your life passed on a level where it was impossible to recognize them. Latterly, I have heard the very flies buzz too distinctly, and have accused myself because I did not still this superficial din. We must not be too easily distracted by the crying of children or of dynasties. The Irishman erects his sty, and gets drunk, and jabbers more and more under my eaves, and I am responsible for all that filth and folly. I find it, as ever, very unprofitable to have much to do with men. It is sowing the wind, but not reaping even the whirlwind; only reaping an unprofitable calm and stagnation. Our conversation is a smooth, and civil, and never-ending speculation merely. I take up the thread of it again in the morning, with very much such courage as the invalid takes his prescribed Seidlitz powders. Shall I help you to some of the mackerel? It would be more respectable if men, as has been said before, instead of being such pigmy desperates, were Giant Despairs. Emerson says that his life is so unprofitable and shabby for the most part, that he is driven to all sorts of resources, and, among the rest, to men. I tell him that we differ only in our resources. Mine is

¹ “The world is too much with us.” — Wordsworth.
to get away from men. They very rarely affect me as grand or beautiful; but I know that there is a sunrise and a sunset every day. In the summer, this world is a mere watering-place,—a Saratoga,—drinking so many tumblers of Congress water; and in the winter, is it any better, with its oratorios? I have seen more men than usual, lately; and, well as I was acquainted with one, I am surprised to find what vulgar fellows they are. They do a little business commonly each day, in order to pay their board, and then they congregate in sitting-rooms and feebly fabulate and paddle in the social slush; and when I think that they have sufficiently relaxed, and am prepared to see them steal away to their shrines, they go unashamed to their beds, and take on a new layer of sloth. They may be single, or have families in their vicinity. I do not meet men who can have nothing to do with me because they have so much to do with themselves. However, I trust that a very few cherish purposes which they never declare.

Only think, for a moment, of a man about his affairs! How we should respect him! How glorious he would appear! Not working for any corporation, its agent, or president, but fulfilling the end of his being! A man about his business would be the cynosure of all eyes.

The other evening I was determined that I would silence this shallow din; that I would walk in various directions and see if there was not to be found any depth of silence around. As Bonaparte sent out his horsemen in the Red Sea on all sides to find shallow water, so I sent forth my mounted thoughts to find deep water. I left the village and paddled up the river to Fair Haven Pond. As the sun went down, I saw a solitary boatman disporting on the smooth lake. The falling dews seemed to strain and purify the air, and I was smoothed with an infinite stillness. I got the world, as it were, by the nape of the neck, and held it under in the tide of its own events, till it was drowned, and then I let it go down-stream like a dead dog. Vast hollow chambers of silence stretched away on every side, and my being expanded in proportion, and filled them. Then first could I appreciate sound, and find it musical. ¹

But now for your news. Tell us of the year. Have you fought the good fight? What is the state of your crops? Will your harvest answer well to the seed-time, and are you cheered by the prospect of stretching cornfields? Is there any blight on your fields, any murrain in your herds? Have you tried the size and quality of your seeds?

¹ A lady who made such a night voyage with Thoreau, years before, says: “How wise he was to ask the elderly lady with a younger one for a row on the Concord River one moonlit night! The river that night was as deep as the heavens above; serene stars shone from its depths, as far off as the stars above. Deep answered unto deep in our souls, as the boat glided swiftly along, past low-lying fields, under overhanging trees. A neighbor’s cow waded into the cool water,—she became at once a Behemoth, a river-horse, hippopotamus, or river-god. A dog barked,—he was Diana’s hound, he waked Endymion. Suddenly we were landed on a little isle; our boatman, our boat glided far off in the flood. We were left alone, in the power of the river-god; like two white birds we stood on this bit of ground, the river flowing about us; only the eternal powers of nature around us. Time for a prayer, perchance,—and back came the boat and oarsman; we were ferried to our homes,—no question asked or answered. We had drank of the cup of the night,—had left the silence and the stars.”
your potatoes? It does one good to see their balls dangling in the lowlands. Have you got your meadow hay before the fall rains shall have set in? Is there enough in your barns to keep your cattle over? Are you killing weeds nowadays? or have you earned leisure to go a-fishing? Did you plant any Giant Regrets last spring, such as I saw advertised? It is not a new species, but the result of cultivation and a fertile soil. They are excellent for sauce. How is it with your marrow squashes for winter use? Is there likely to be a sufficiency of fall feed in your neighborhood? What is the state of the springs? I read that in your county there is more water on the hills than in the valleys. Do you find it easy to get all the help you require? Work early and late, and let your men and teams rest at noon. Be careful not to drink too much sweetened water, while at your hoeing, this hot weather. You can bear the heat much better for it.

TO MARSTON WATSON (AT PLYMOUTH).
CONCORD, September 19, 1854.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad to hear from you and the Plymouth men again. The world still holds together between Concord and Plymouth, it seems. I should like to be with you while Mr. Alcott is there, but I cannot come next Sunday. I will come Sunday after next, that is, October 1st, if that will do; and look out for you at the depot. I do not like to promise more than one discourse. Is there a good precedent for two?

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).
CONCORD, September 21, 1854.

BLAKE,—I have just read your letter, but do not mean now to answer it, solely for want of time to say what I wish. I directed a copy of "Walden" to you at Ticknor's, on the day of its publication, and it should have reached you before. I am encouraged to know that it interests you as it now stands,—a printed book,—for you apply a very severe test to it,—you make the highest demand on me. As for the excursion you speak of, I should like it right well,—indeed I thought of proposing the same thing to you and Brown, some months ago. Perhaps it would have been better if I had done so then; for in that case I should have been able to enter into it with that infinite margin to my views,—spotless of all engagements,—which I think so necessary. As it is, I have agreed to go a-lecturing to Plymouth, Sunday after next (October 1) and
to Philadelphia in November, and thereafter to the West, if they shall want me; and, as I have prepared nothing in that shape, I feel as if my hours were spoken for. However, I think that, after having been to Plymouth, I may take a day or two—if that date will suit you and Brown. At any rate I will write to you then.

Concord, October 5, 1854.

After I wrote to you, Mr. Watson postponed my going to Plymouth one week, i.e., till next Sunday; and now he wishes me to carry my instruments and survey his grounds, to which he has been adding. Since I want a little money, though I contemplate but a short excursion, I do not feel at liberty to decline this work. I do not know exactly how long it will detain me,—but there is plenty of time yet, and I will write to you again.—perhaps from Plymouth.

There is a Mr. Thomas Cholmondeley (pronounced Chumly), a young English author, staying at our house at present, who asks me to teach him botany—i.e., anything which I know; and also to make an excursion to some mountain with him. He is a well-behaved person, and possibly I may propose his taking that run to Wachusett with us—if it will be agreeable to you. Nay, if I do not hear any objection from you, I will consider myself at liberty to invite him.

Concord, Saturday P. M., October 14, 1854.

I have just returned from Plymouth, where I have been detained surveying much longer than I expected. What do you say to visiting Wachusett next Thursday?
(December, 1893), show how sincere was the attachment of this ideal friend to the Concord recluse, and how well he read that character which the rest of England, and a good part of America, have been so slow to recognize for what it really was.

Thomas Cholmondeley was the eldest son of Rev. Charles Cowper Cholmondeley, rector of Overleigh, Cheshire, and of a sister to Reginald Heber, the celebrated bishop of Calcutta. He was born in 1823, and brought up at Hodnet, in Shropshire, where his father, a cousin of Lord Delamere, had succeeded his brother-in-law as rector, on the departure of Bishop Heber for India, in 1823. The son was educated at Oriel College, Oxford,—a friend, and perhaps pupil of Arthur Hugh Clough, who gave him letters to Emerson in 1854. Years before, after leaving Oxford, he had gone with some relatives to New Zealand, and before coming to New England he had published a book, "Ultima Thule," describing that Australasian colony of England, where he lived for part of a year. He had previously studied in Germany, and traveled on the Continent. He landed in America the first time in August, 1854, and soon after went to Concord, where, at the suggestion of Emerson, he became an inmate of Mrs. Thoreau's family. This made him intimate with Henry Thoreau for a month or two, and also brought him into acquaintance with Ellery Channing, then living across the main street of Concord, in the west end of the village, and furnishing to Thoreau a landing-place for his boat under the willows at the foot of Channing's small garden. Alcott was not then in Concord, but Cholmondeley made his acquaintance in Boston, and admired his character and manners.1

With Channing and Thoreau the young Englishman visited their nearest mountain, Wachusett, and in some of their walks the artist Rowse, who had made the first portrait of Thoreau, joined, for he was then in Concord, late in 1854, engraving the fine head of Daniel Webster from a painting by Ames, and this engraving he gave both to Thoreau and to Cholmondeley. In December the Englishman, whose patriotism was roused by the delays and calamities of England in her Crimean war, resolved to go home and raise a company, as he did, first spending some weeks in lodgings at Boston (Orange Street) in order to hear Theodore Parker preach and visit Harvard College, of which I was then a student, in the senior class. He visited me and my classmate, Edwin Morton, and called on some of the Cambridge friends of Clough. In January, 1855, he sailed for England, and there received the letter of Thoreau printed on pages 249–251.

The acquaintance with Mr. Ricketson began by letter before Cholmondeley reached Concord, but Thoreau did not visit him until December, 1854. Mr. Ricketson says, "In the summer of 1854 I purchased, in

1 See Memoir of Bronson Alcott, pp. 483–494. The remark of Emerson quoted on p. 486, that Cholmondeley was "the son of a Shropshire squire," was not strictly correct, his father being a Cheshire clergyman of a younger branch of the ancient race of Cholmondeley. But he was the grandson of a Shropshire squire (owner of land), for his mother was daughter and sister of such gentlemen, and it was her brother Richard who presented Reginald Heber and Charles Cholmondeley to the living of Hodnet, near Market Drayton.
New Bedford, a copy of ‘Walden.’ I had never heard of its author, but in this admirable and most original book I found so many observations on plants, birds, and natural objects generally in which I was also interested, that I felt at once I had found a congenial spirit. During this season I was rebuilding a house in the country, three miles from New Bedford, and had erected a small building which was called my ‘shanty;’ and my family being then in my city house, I made this building my temporary home. From it I addressed my first letter to the author of ‘Walden.’ In reply he wrote, ‘I had duly received your very kind and frank letter, but delayed to answer it thus long because I have little skill as a correspondent, and wished to send you something more than my thanks. I was gratified by your prompt and hearty acceptance of my book. Yours is the only word of greeting I am likely to receive from a dweller in the woods like myself,—from where the whip-poor-will and cuckoo are heard, and there are better than moral clouds drifting over, and real breezes blow.’ From that year until his death in 1862 we exchanged visits annually, and letters more frequently. He was much interested in the botany of our region, finding here many marine plants he had not before seen. When our friendship began, the admirers of his only two published books were few; most prominent among them were Emerson, Alcott, and Channing of Concord, Messrs. Blake and T. Brown of Worcester, Mr. Marston Watson of Plymouth, and myself. Many accused him of being an imitator of Emerson; others thought him unsocial, impracticable, and ascetic. Now he was none of these; a more original man never lived, nor one more thoroughly personifying civility; no man could hold a finer relationship with his family than he.”

In reply to Mr. Ricketson’s first letter (August 12, 1854) above mentioned, Thoreau sent, after six weeks’ delay, the reply of October 1, the beginning of which was just quoted. Continuing, Thoreau said:—

“Your account excites in me a desire to see the Middleborough ponds, of which I had already heard somewhat; as also some very beautiful ponds on the Cape, in Harwich, I think, near which I once passed. I have sometimes also thought of visiting that remnant of our Indians still living near you. But then, you know, there is nothing like one’s native fields and lakes. The best news you send me is, not that Nature with you is so fair and genial, but that there is one there who likes her so well. That proved all that was asserted.

“Homer, of course, you include in your list of lovers of Nature; and, by the way, let me mention here—for this is ‘my thunder’ lately—William Gilpin’s long series of books on the Picturesque, with their illustrations. If it chances that you have not met with these, I cannot just now frame a better wish than that you may one day derive as much pleasure from the inspection of them as I have.

“Much as you have told me of yourself, you have still, I think, a little the advantage of me in this correspondence, for I have told you still more in my book. You have therefore the broadest mark to fire at.
"A young English author, Thomas Cholmondeley, is just now waiting for me to take a walk with him; therefore excuse this very barren note from "Yours, hastily at last."

Between the letter just quoted and Thoreau's next, of December 19, 1854, a letter is obviously missing. Mr. Ricketson had answered (October 12), the first letter, and on December 14 had written again to convey an invitation from Mr. Mitchell that Thoreau should lecture at New Bedford, the 26th, on his way to Nantucket for the 28th. Probably Thoreau had replied to the letter of October 12, and to the invitation to bring Cholmondeley with him in the pleasant October season. In this reply he had said something which called forth from Ricketson an expression of sympathy, as well as the December invitation; for Thoreau thus replied to the letter of December 14:

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, December 19, 1854.

Dear Sir,—I wish to thank you for your sympathy. I had counted on seeing you when I came to New Bedford, though I did not know exactly how near to it you permanently dwell; therefore I gladly accept your invitation to stop at your house. I am going to lecture at Nantucket the 28th, and as I suppose I must improve the earliest opportunity to get there from New Bedford, I will endeavor to come on Monday, that I may see yourself and New Bedford before my lecture.

I should like right well to see your ponds, but that is hardly to be thought of at present. I fear that it is impossible for me to combine such things with the business of lecturing. You cannot serve God and Mammon. However, perhaps I shall have time to see something of your country. I am aware that you have not so much snow as we; there has been excellent sleighing here since the 5th inst.

Mr. Cholmondeley has left us, so that I shall come alone. Will you be so kind as to warn Mr. Mitchell that I accept at once his invitation to lecture on the 26th of this month, for I do not know that he has got my letter. Excuse this short note."

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, December 19, 1854.

Mr. Blake,—I suppose you have heard of my truly providential meeting with Mr. [T.] Brown; providential because it saved me from the suspicion that my words had fallen altogether on stony ground, when it turned out that there was some Worcester soil there. You will allow me to consider that I correspond with him through you.

I confess that I am a very bad correspondent, so far

1 Mr. Ricketson's immediate reply was received by Thoreau before he wrote to Blake on the 22d. He set out from Concord for Cambridge on Christmas Day, and reached Brooklawn, the country-house of his friend, towards evening of that short day, on foot, with his umbrella and traveling-bag, and he made so striking a figure in the eyes of Ricketson that he sketched it roughly in his shanty-book. His children have engraved it in their pleasing volume Daniel Ricketson and His Friends, from the pages of which several of these letters are taken. It is by no means a bad likeness of the plain and upright Thoreau.
as promptness of reply is concerned; but then I am sure to answer sooner or later. The longer I have forgotten you, the more I remember you. For the most part I have not been idle since I saw you. How does the world go with you? or rather, how do you get along without it? I have not yet learned to live, that I can see, and I fear that I shall not very soon. I find, however, that in the long run things correspond to my original idea,—that they correspond to nothing else so much; and thus a man may really be a true prophet without any great exertion. The day is never so dark, nor the night even, but that the laws at least of light still prevail, and so may make it light in our minds if they are open to the truth. There is considerable danger that a man will be crazy between dinner and supper; but it will not directly answer any good purpose that I know of, and it is just as easy to be sane. We have got to know what both life and death are, before we can begin to live after our own fashion. Let us be learning our a-b-c’s as soon as possible.

In every et, knew the sun to be knocked down and rolled through a mud-puddle; he comes out honor-bright from behind every storm. Let us then take sides with the sun, seeing we have so much leisure. Let us not put all we prize into a football to be kicked, when a bladder will do as well.

When an Indian is burned, his body may be broiled, it may be no more than a beefsteak. What of that? They may broil his heart, but they do not therefore broil his courage,—his principles. Be of good courage! That is the main thing.

Ær. 37] TO HARRISON BLAKE

If a man were to place himself in an attitude to bear manfully the greatest evil that can be inflicted on him, he would find suddenly that there was no such evil to bear; his brave back would go a-begging. When Atlas got his back made up, that was all that was required. (In this case a priv., not pleon., and τάχυς.) The world rests on principles. The wise gods will never make underpinning of a man. But as long as he crouches, and skulks, and shirks his work, every creature that has weight will be treading on his toes, and crushing him; he will himself tread with one foot on the other foot.

The monster is never just there where we think he is. What is truly monstrous is our cowardice and sloth.

Have no idle disciplines like the Catholic Church and others; have only positive and fruitful ones. Do what you know you ought to do. Why should we ever go abroad, even across the way, to ask a neighbor’s advice? There is a nearer neighbor within us incessantly telling us how we should behave. But we wait for the neighbor without to tell us of some false, easier way.

They have a census-table in which they put down the number of the insane. Do you believe that they put them all down there? Why, in every one of these houses there is at least one man fighting or squabbling a good part of his time with a dozen pet demons of his own breeding and cherishing, which are relentlessly gnawing at his vitals; and if perchance he resolve at length that he will courageously combat them, he says, “Ay! ay! I will attend to you after dinner!” And, when that time comes, he concludes that he is good for
an other stage, and reads a column or two about the Eastern War! Pray, to be in earnest, where is Sevastopol? Who is Mendikoff? and Nicholas behind there? who the Allies? Did not we fight a little (little enough to be sure, but just enough to make it interesting) at Alma, at Balacava, at Inkermann? We love to fight far from home. Ah! the Minié musket is the king of weapons. Well, let us get one then.

I just put another stick into my stove,—a pretty large mass of white oak. How many men will do enough this cold winter to pay for the fuel that will be required to warm them? I suppose I have burned up a pretty good-sized tree to-night,—and for what? I settled with Mr. Tarbell for it the other day; but that was n’t the final settlement. I got off cheaply from him. At last, one will say, “Let us see, how much wood did you burn, sir?” And I shall shudder to think that the next question will be, “What did you do while you were warm?” Do we think the ashes will pay for it? that God is an ash-man? It is a fact that we have got to render an account for the deeds done in the body.

Who knows but we shall be better the next year than we have been the past? At any rate, I wish you a really new year,—commencing from the instant you read this,—and happy or unhappy, according to your deserts.

TO HARRISON BLAKE.

Concord, December 22, 1854.

Mr. Blake. — I will lecture for your Lyceum on the 4th of January next; and I hope that I shall have time for that good day out of doors. Mr. Cholmonde-
This was a common mistake to make. When Thoreau ran the gauntlet of the Cape Cod villages,—‘feeling as strange,’ he says, ‘as if he were in a town in China’,—one of the old fishermen could not believe that he had not something to sell. Being finally satisfied that it was not a peddler with his pack, the old man said, ‘Wal, it makes no odds what it is you carry, so long as you carry Truth along with ye.’ Mr. Ricketson came to the same conclusion about his visitor, and in the early September of 1855 returned the visit.

On the 4th of January, 1855, Ricketson wrote, saying, ‘Your visit, short as it was, gave us all at Brooklawn much satisfaction;’ adding that he might visit Concord late in January, when he expected to be in Boston. Thoreau replied:—

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, January 6, 1855.

Mr. Ricketson,—I am pleased to hear from the shanty, whose inside and occupant I have seen. I had a very pleasant time at Brooklawn, as you know, and thereafter at Nantucket. I was obliged to pay the usual tribute to the sea, but it was more than made up to me by the hospitality of the Nantucketers. Tell Arthur that I can now compare notes with him; for though I went neither before nor behind the mast, since we had n’t any, I went with my head hanging over the side all the way.

In spite of all my experience, I persisted in reading to the Nantucket people the lecture which I read at New Bedford, and I found them to be the very audi-

ence for me. I got home Friday night, after being lost in the fog off Hyannis. I have not yet found a new jackknife, but I had a glorious skating with Channing the other day, on the skates found long ago.

Mr. Cholmondeley sailed for England direct, in the America, on the 3d, after spending a night with me. He thinks even to go to the East and enlist. Last night I returned from lecturing in Worcester.

I shall be glad to see you when you come to Boston, as will also my mother and sister, who know something about you as an abolitionist. Come directly to our house. Please remember me to Mrs. Ricketson, and also to the young folks.

After writing that he expected to be at the anti-slavery meetings in Boston, January 24 and 25, ill health and a snow-storm detained Ricketson at Brooklawn, whereupon Thoreau wrote:—

1 Hyannis was once a port for the sailing of the steamers to Nantucket, where probably Thoreau was to land on his return. He had visited the Cape before, but never Nantucket. Thomas Cholmondeley went home with the distinct purpose of going to the Crimean war, and did so. The subject of the New Bedford lecture was “Getting a Living.”

Channing, his wife and children having left him, was living by himself in his house opposite to Thoreau. Late in 1855 he rejoined Mrs. Channing, in a household near Dorchester, and became one of the editors of the New Bedford Mercury, residing in that city in 1856–57, after the death of Mrs. Channing.
TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, February 1, 1855.

Dear Sir,—I supposed, as I did not see you on the 24th or 25th, that some track or other was obstructed; but the solid earth still holds together between New Bedford and Concord, and I trust that as this time you stayed away, you may live to come another day.

I did not go to Boston, for with regard to that place I sympathize with one of my neighbors, an old man, who has not been there since the last war, when he was compelled to go. No, I have a real genius for staying at home.

I have been looking of late at Bewick’s tail-pieces in the “Birds,”—all they have of him at Harvard. Why will he be a little vulgar at times? Yesterday I made an excursion up our river,—skated some thirty miles in a few hours, if you will believe it. So with reading and writing and skating the night comes round again.

The early part of 1855 was spent by Thomas Cholmondeley in a tiresome passage to England, whence he wrote (January 27) to Thoreau that he had reached Shropshire, and been commissioned captain in the local militia, in preparation for service at Sévastopol, but reminding his Concord friend of a half promise to visit England some day. To this Thoreau made answer thus:—

Æf. 37] TO THOMAS CHOLMONDELEY 249

TO THOMAS CHOLMONDELEY (AT HODNET).

Concord, Mass., February 7, 1855.

Dear Cholmondeley,—I am glad to hear that you have arrived safely at Hodnet, and that there is a solid piece of ground of that name which can support a man better than a floating plank, in that to me as yet purely historical England. But have I not seen you with my own eyes, a piece of England herself, and was not your letter come out to me thence? I have now reason to believe that Salop is as real a place as Concord; with at least as good an underpinning of granite, floating on liquid fire. I congratulate you on having arrived safely at that floating isle, after your disagreeable passage in the steamer America. So are we not all making a passage, agreeable or disagreeable, in the steamer Earth, trusting to arrive at last at some less undulating Salop and brother’s house?

I cannot say that I am surprised to hear that you have joined the militia, after what I have heard from your lips; but I am glad to doubt if there will be occasion for your volunteering into the line. Perhaps I am thinking of the saying that it “is always darkest just before day.” I believe it is only necessary that England be fully awakened to a sense of her position, in order that she may right herself, especially as the weather will soon cease to be her foe. I wish I could believe that the cause in which you are embarked is the cause of the people of England. However, I have no sympathy with the idleness that would contrast this fighting with the teachings of the pulpit; for, perchance,
more true virtue is being practiced at Sevastopol than in many years of peace. It is a pity that we seem to require a war, from time to time, to assure us that there is any manhood still left in man.

I was much pleased with [J. J. G.] Wilkinson’s vigorous and telling assault on Allopathy, though he substitutes another and perhaps no stronger thing for that. Something as good on the whole conduct of the war would be of service. Cannot Carlyle supply it? We will not require him to provide the remedy. Every man to his trade. As you know, I am not in any sense a politician. You, who live in that snug and compact isle, may dream of a glorious commonwealth, but I have some doubts whether I and the new king of the Sandwich Islands shall pull together. When I think of the gold-diggers and the Mormons, the slaves and the slaveholders and the filibusters, I naturally dream of a glorious private life. No, I am not patriotic; I shall not meddle with the Gem of the Antilles. General Quitman’s cannot count on my aid, alas for him! nor can General Pierce’s.

I still take my daily walk, or skate over Concord fields or meadows, and on the whole have more to do with nature than with man. We have not had much snow this winter, but have had some remarkably cold weather. the mercury, February 6, not rising above 6° below zero during the day, and the next morning falling to 26°. Some ice is still thirty inches thick about us.

1 Quitman, aided perhaps by Laurence Oliphant, was aiming to capture Cuba with “filibusters” (filibusters).

2 Then President of the United States, whose life Hawthorne had written in 1852.

A rise in the river has made uncommonly good skating, which I have improved to the extent of some thirty miles a day, fifteen out and fifteen in.

Emerson is off westward, enlightening the Hamiltonians [in Canada] and others, mingling his thunder with that of Niagara. Charming still warming his five wits — his sixth, you know, is always limber—over that stove, with the dog down cellar. Lowell has just been appointed Professor of Belles-Lettres in Harvard University, in place of Longfellow, resigned, and will go very soon to spend another year in Europe, before taking his seat.

I am from time to time congratulating myself on my general want of success as a lecturer; apparent want of success, but is it not a real triumph? I do my work clean as I go along, and they will not be likely to want me anywhere again. So there is no danger of my repeating myself, and getting to a barrel of sermons, which you must upset, and begin again with.

My father and mother and sister all desire to be remembered to you, and trust that you will never come within range of Russian bullets. Of course, I would rather think of you as settled down there in Shropshire, in the camp of the English people, making acquaintance with your men, striking at the root of the evil, perhaps assaulting that rampart of cotton bags that you tell of. But it makes no odds where a man goes or stays, if he is only about his business.

Let me hear from you, wherever you are, and believe me yours ever in the good fight, whether before Sevastopol or under the wreken.
While Cholmondeley's first letter from England was on its way to Concord, Thoreau was one day making his occasional call at the Harvard College Library (where he found and was allowed to take away volumes relating to his manifold studies), when it occurred to him to call at my student-chamber in Holworthy Hall, and there leave a copy of his "Week." I had never met him, and was then out; the occasion of his call was a review of his two books that had come out a few weeks earlier in the Harvard Magazine, of which I was an editor and might be supposed to have had some share in the criticism. The volume was left with my classmate Lyman, accompanied by a message that it was intended for the critic in the Magazine. Accordingly, I gave it to Edwin Morton, who was the reviewer, and notified Thoreau by letter of that fact, and of my hope to see him soon in Cambridge or Concord. 1 To this he replied in a few days as below:—

TO F. B. SANBORN (AT HAMPTON FALLS, N. H.).

CONCORD, February 2, 1855.

DEAR SIR,—I fear that you did not get the note which I left with the Librarian for you, and so will thank you again for your politeness. I was sorry that I was obliged to go into Boston almost immediately.

1 I had been visiting Emerson occasionally for a year or two, and knew Abbot well at this time; was also intimate with Cholmondeley in the autumn of 1854, but had never seen Thoreau, a fact which shows how recluse were then his habits. The letter below, and the long one describing his trip to Minnesota, were the only ones I received from him in a friendship of seven years. See Sanborn's Thoreau, pp. 192-200. Edwin Morton was my classmate. See pp. 286, 333, 440.

Believe me yours truly,

HENRY D. THOREAU.

However, I shall be glad to see you whenever you come to Concord, and I will suggest nothing to discourage your coming, so far as I am concerned; trusting that you know what it is to take a partridge on the wing. You tell me that the author of the criticism is Mr. Morton. I had heard as much,—and indeed guessed more. I have latterly found Concord nearer to Cambridge than I believed I should, when I was leaving my Alma Mater; and hence you will not be surprised if even I feel some interest in the success of the Harvard Magazine.

At this time I was under engagement with Mr. Emerson and others in Concord to take charge of a small school there in March; and did so without again seeing the author of "Walden" in Cambridge. Soon after my settlement at Concord, in the house of Mr. Channing, just opposite Thoreau's, he made an evening call on me and my sister (April 11, 1855), but I had already met him more than once at Mr. Emerson's, and was even beginning to take walks with him, as frequently happened in the next six years. In the following summer I began to dine daily at his mother's table, and thus saw him almost every day for three years.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

CONCORD, June 27, 1855.

MR. BLAKE,—I have been sick and good for nothing but to lie on my back and wait for something to
FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS [1855]

turn up, for two or three months. This has compelled me to postpone several things, among them writing to you, to whom I am so deeply in debt, and inviting you and Brown to Concord,—not having brains adequate to such an exertion. I should feel a little less ashamed if I could give any name to my disorder,—but I cannot, and our doctor cannot help me to it,—and I will not take the name of any disease in vain. However, there is one consolation in being sick; and that is the possibility that you may recover to a better state than you were ever in before. I expected in the winter to be deep in the woods of Maine in my canoe, long before this; but I am so far from this that I can only take a languid walk in Concord streets.

I do not know how the mistake arose about the Cape Cod excursion. The nearest I have come to that with anybody is this: About a month ago Channing proposed to me to go to Truro on Cape Cod with him, and board there a while,—but I declined. For a week past, however, I have been a little inclined to go there and sit on the seashore a week or more; but I do not venture to propose myself as the companion of him or of any peripatetic man. Not that I should not rejoice to have you and Brown or C. sitting there also. I am not sure that C. really wishes to go now; and as I go simply for the medicine of it, I should not think it worth the while to notify him when I am about to take my bitters. Since I began this, or within five minutes, I have begun to think that I will start for Truro next Saturday morning, the 30th. I do not know at what hour the packet leaves Boston, nor exactly what kind of accommodation I shall find at Truro.

I should be singularly favored if you and Brown were there at the same time; and though you speak of the 20th of July, I will be so bold as to suggest your coming to Concord Friday night (when, by the way, Garrison and Phillips hold forth here), and going to the Cape with me. Though we take short walks together there, we can have long talks, and you and Brown will have time enough for your own excursions besides.

I received a letter from Cholmondeley last winter, which I should like to show you, as well as his book. He said that he had "accepted the offer of a captaincy in the Salop Militia," and was hoping to take an active part in the war before long.

I thank you again and again for the encouragement your letters are to me. But I must stop this writing, or I shall have to pay for it.

NORTH TRURO, July 8, 1855.

There being no packet, I did not leave Boston till last Thursday, though I came down on Wednesday, and Channing with me. There is no public house here; but we are boarding in a little house attached to the Highland Lighthouse with Mr. James Small, the keeper. It is true the table is not so clean as could be desired, but I have found it much superior in that respect to a Provincetown hotel. They are what are called "good livers." Our host has another larger and very good

1 The book was Ultima Thule, describing New Zealand.
house, within a quarter of a mile, unoccupied, where he says he can accommodate several more. He is a very good man to deal with, — has often been the representative of the town, and is perhaps the most intelligent man in it. I shall probably stay here as much as ten days longer. Board $3.50 per week. So you and Brown had better come down forthwith. You will find either the schooner Melrose or another, or both, leaving Commerce Street, or else T Wharf, at 9 A. M. (it commonly means 10), Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, — if not other days. We left about 10 A. M., and reached Provincetown at 5 P. M., — a very good run. A stage runs up the Cape every morning but Sunday, starting at 4½ A. M., and reaches the post-office in North Truro, seven miles from Provincetown, and one from the lighthouse, about 6 o'clock. If you arrive at P. before night, you can walk over, and leave your baggage to be sent. You can also come by cars from Boston to Yarmouth, and thence by stage forty miles more, — through every day, but it costs much more, and is not so pleasant. Come by all means, for it is the best place to see the ocean in the States. . . . I hope I shall be worth meeting.

July 14.

You say that you hope I will excuse your frequent writing. I trust you will excuse my infrequent and curt writing until I am able to resume my old habits, which for three months I have been compelled to abandon. Methinks I am beginning to be better. I think to leave the Cape next Wednesday, and so shall not see you here; but I shall be glad to meet you in Con-

P. S. — There is no mail up till Monday morning.

During the spring and early summer of 1855, Thoreau was much occupied with his home duties, or was ill, — the earlier approaches of that disease of which he languished, taking medical advice in 1860-61. This must have prevented an earlier visit to Concord by his friend Ricketson than September, 1855, and I find no letters intervening, although there must have been one or two, to arrange the visit. He reached Concord about September 20, and found me living in the lower stories of Channing’s house, while the owner chiefly occupied the attic, where, no doubt, as in the old Hunt house, Ricketson smoked with him. They went together to call on Edmund Hosmer, and it was at the sight of this old house that Ricketson formed the plan of occupying a chamber there. It stood a half-mile down the river, a little below where the Assabet runs into the main channel. Writing to Thoreau, Sunday, September 23, Ricketson said: —

“ How charmingly you, Channing, and I dovetailed together! Few men smoke such pipes as we did, — the real Calumet; the tobacco that we smoked was free labor produce. I have n’t lost sight of Solon Hosmer, the wisest-looking man in Concord, and a real free-sofer. I want you to see him, and tell him not to take down the old house where the free-sofers met. I think
I should like to have the large chamber for an occasional sojourn in Concord. It can be easily tinkered up so as to be a comfortable roost for a recluse, — a few old chairs, a table, bed, etc., would be all-sufficient; then you and Channing could come over in your punt and rusticate.”

The “punt” was Thoreau’s boat, in which he sometimes set up a small mast and sail, and which he kept at the foot of Channing’s garden, where, that summer, my heavy four-oared boat also lay, when my pupils were not rowing in it. In his letter to Blake of September 26, Thoreau described Ricketson, and the next day he answered Ricketson’s letter. Cholmondeley in the meantime, the war being not yet over, was making his way to the Crimea through southern Europe.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, September 26, 1855.

Mr. Blake,—The other day I thought that my health must be better,—that I gave at last a sign of vitality,—because I experienced a slight chagrin. But I do not see how strength is to be got into my legs again. These months of feebleness have yielded few, if any, thoughts, though they have not passed without serenity, such as our sluggish Musketaquid suggests. I hope that the harvest is to come. I trust that you have at least warped up the stream a little daily, holding fast by your anchors at night, since I saw you, and have kept my place for me while I have been absent.

Mr. Ricketson of New Bedford has just made me a visit of a day and a half, and I have had a quite good

time with him. He and Channing have got on particularly well together. He is a man of very simple tastes, notwithstanding his wealth; a lover of nature; but, above all, singularly frank and plain-spoken. I think that you might enjoy meeting him.

Sincerity is a great but rare virtue, and we pardon to it much complaining, and the betrayal of many weaknesses. R. says of himself, that he sometimes thinks that he has all the infirmities of genius without the genius; is wretched without a hair pillow, etc.; expresses a great and awful uncertainty with regard to “God,” “Death,” his “immortality;” says, “If I only knew,” etc. He loves Cowper’s “Task” better than anything else; and thereafter perhaps, Thomson, Gray, and even Howitt. He has evidently suffered for want of sympathizing companions. He says that he sympathizes with much in my books, but much in them is naught to him,—“namby-pamby,”—“stuff,”—“mystical.” Why will not I, having common sense, write in plain English always; teach men in detail how to live a simpler life, etc.; not go off into ——? But I say that I have no scheme about it,—no designs on men at all; and, if I had, my mode would be to tempt them with the fruit, and not with the manure. To what end do I lead a simple life at all, pray? That I may teach others to simplify their lives; — and so all our lives be simplified merely, like an algebraic formula? Or not, rather, that I may make use of the ground I have cleared, to live more worthily and profitably? I would fain lay the most stress forever on that which is the most important,—imports the most to me,—
though it were only (what it is likely to be) a vibration in the air. As a preacher, I should be prompted to tell men, not so much how to get their wheat bread cheaper, as of the bread of life compared with which that is bran. Let a man only taste these loaves, and he becomes a skillful economist at once. He'll not waste much time in earning those. Don't spend your time in drilling soldiers, who may turn out hirelings after all, but give to untrained peasantry a country to fight for. The schools begin with what they call the elements, and where do they end?

I was glad to hear the other day that Higginson and —— were gone to Ktaadn; it must be so much better to go to than a Woman's Rights or Abolition Convention; better still, to the delectable primitive mounts within you, which you have dreamed of from your youth up, and seen, perhaps, in the horizon, but never climbed.

But how do you do? Is the air sweet to you? Do you find anything at which you can work, accomplishing something solid from day to day? Have you put sloth and doubt behind, considerably? — had one redeeming dream this summer? I dreamed, last night, that I could vault over any height it pleased me. That was something; and I contemplated myself with a slight satisfaction in the morning for it.

Methinks I will write to you. Methinks you will be glad to hear. We will stand on solid foundations to one another,— I a column planted on this shore, you on that. We meet the same sun in his rising. We were built slowly, and have come to our bearing. We

will not mutually fall over that we may meet, but will grandly and eternally guard the straits. Methinks I see an inscription on you, which the architect made, the stucco being worn off to it. The name of that ambitious worldly king is crumbling away. I see it toward sunset in favorable lights. Each must read for the other, as might a sailor-by. Be sure you are star-y-pointing still. How is it on your side? I will not require an answer until you think I have paid my debts to you.

I have just got a letter from Ricketson, urging me to come to New Bedford, which possibly I may do. He says I can wear my old clothes there.

Let me be remembered in your quiet house.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

CONCORD, September 27, 1855.

FRIEND RICKETSON,— I am sorry that you were obliged to leave Concord without seeing more of it,— its river and woods, and various pleasant walks, and its worthies. I assure you that I am none the worse for my walk with you, but on all accounts the better. Methinks I am regaining my health; but I would like to know first what it was that ailed me.

I have not yet conveyed your message to Mr. Hosmer, but will not fail to do so. That idea of occupy-
ing the old house is a good one, — quite feasible, — and you could bring your hair pillow with you. It is an inn in Concord which I had not thought of, — a philosopher’s inn. That large chamber might make a man’s idea expand proportionately. It would be well to have an interest in some old chamber in a deserted house in every part of the country which attracted us. There would be no such place to receive one’s guests as that. If old furniture is fashionable, why not go the whole house at once? I shall endeavor to make Mr. Hosmer believe that the old house is the chief attraction of his farm, and that it is his duty to preserve it by all honest appliances. You might take a lease of it in perpetuo, and done with it.

I am so wedded to my way of spending a day, — require such broad margins of leisure, and such a complete wardrobe of old clothes, — that I am ill fitted for going abroad. Pleasant is it sometimes to sit at home, on a single egg all day, in your own nest, though it may prove at last to be an egg of chalk. The old coat that I wear is Concord; it is my morning robe and study gown, my working dress and suit of ceremony, and my nightgown after all. Cleave to the simplest ever. Home, — home, — home. Cars sound like cares to me.

I am accustomed to think very long of going anywhere, — am slow to move. I hope to hear a response of the oracle first. However, I think that I will try the effect of your talisman on the iron horse next Saturday, and dismount at Tarkiln Hill. Perhaps your sea — in truth built for the Winthrops two centuries before. It was soon after torn down.

air will be good for me. I conveyed your invitation to Channing, but he apparently will not come.

Excuse my not writing earlier; but I had not decided.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord, October 12, 1855.

Mr. Ricketson, — I fear that you had a lonely and disagreeable ride back to New Bedford through the Carver woods and so on, — perhaps in the rain, too, and I am in part answerable for it. I feel very much in debt to you and your family for the pleasant days I spent at Brooklawn. Tell Arthur and Walton that the shells which they gave me are spread out, and make quite a show to inland eyes. Methinks I still hear the strains of the piano, the violin, and the flageolet blended together. Excuse me for the noise which I believe drove you to take refuge in the shanty. That shanty is indeed a favorable place to expand in, which I fear I did not enough improve.

On my way through Boston I inquired for Gilpin’s works at Little, Brown & Co.’s, Munroe’s, Ticknor’s, and Burnham’s. They have not got them. They told me at Little, Brown & Co.’s that his works (not complete), in twelve vols., 8vo, were imported and sold in this country five or six years ago for about fifteen dollars. Their terms for importing are ten per cent on the cost. I copied from the “London Catalogue of Books, 1846–51,” at their shop, the following list of Gilpin’s Works: —

1 Sons of Mr. Ricketson; the second, a sculptor, modeled the medallion head of Thoreau reproduced in photogravure for the frontispiece of this volume.
Beside these, I remember to have read one volume on "Prints;" his "Southern Tour" (1775); "Lakes of Cumberland," two vols.; "Highlands of Scotland and West of England," two vols. — N. B. There must be plates in every volume.

I still see an image of those Middleborough ponds in my mind's eye,—broad shallow lakes, with an iron mine at the bottom,—comparatively unvexed by sails,—only by Tom Smith and his squaw Sepit's "sharper." I find my map of the State to be the best I have seen of that district. It is a question whether the islands of Long Pond or Great Quitticus offer the greatest attractions to a Lord of the Isles. That plant which I found on the shore of Long Pond chances to be a rare and beautiful flower,—the *Sabbatia chloroidea*—referred to Plymouth.

In a Description of Middleborough in the Hist. Coll., vol. iii, 1810, signed Nehemiah Bennet, Middleborough, 1793, it is said: "There is on the easterly shore of Assawampsitt Pond, on the shore of Betty's Neck, two rocks which have curious marks thereon (supposed to be done by the Indians), which appear like the stepping of a person with naked feet which settled into the rocks; likewise the prints of a hand on several places, with a number of other marks; also there is a rock on a high hill a little to the eastward of the old stone fishing wear, where there is the print of a person's hand in said rock."

It would be well to look at those rocks again more carefully; also at the rock on the hill.

I should think that you would like to explore Snipatuit Pond in Rochester,—it is so large and near. It is an interesting fact that the alewives used to ascend to it,—if they do not still,—both from Mattapoisett and through Great Quitticus.

There will be no trouble about the chamber in the old house, though, as I told you, Mr. Hosmer may expect some compensation for it. He says, "Give my respects to Mr. Ricketson, and tell him that I cannot be at a large expense to preserve an antiquity or curiosity. Nature must do its work." "But," says I, "he asks you only not to assist nature."

It was on October 1 that Thoreau made this visit to New Bedford, spending the best part of a week with his friends there. They sailed about the bay and visited the ponds in Middleborough, and on Saturday, October 6, he parted with Ricketson at Plymouth, and returned home. At that time Ricketson proposed to
return Thoreau’s visit before October 20, but, in a note now lost, Thoreau sent him word that Channing had left Concord, “perhaps for the winter.” The visit was then given up,—which accounts for the tone of Thoreau’s next letter, of October 16.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, October 16, 1855.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—I have got both your letters at once. You must not think Concord so barren a place when Channing is away. There are the river and fields left yet; and I, though ordinarily a man of business, should have some afternoons and evenings to spend with you, I trust,—that is, if you could stand so much of me. If you can spend your time profitably here, or without ennui, having an occasional ramble or tête-à-tête with one of the natives, it will give me pleasure to have you in the neighborhood. You see I am preparing you for our awful unsocial ways,—keeping in our dens a good part of the day,—sucking our claws perhaps. But then we make a religion of it, and that you cannot but respect.

If you know the taste of your own heart, and like it, come to Concord, and I’ll warrant you enough here to season the dish with,—aye, even though Channing and Emerson and I were all away. We might paddle quietly up the river. Then there are one or two more ponds to be seen, etc.

I should very much enjoy further rambling with you

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Mr. Channing had gone, October, 1855, to live in New Bedford, and help edit the Mercury there.

in your vicinity, but must postpone it for the present. To tell the truth, I am planning to get seriously to work after these long months of inefficiency and idleness. I do not know whether you are haunted by any such demon which puts you on the alert to pluck the fruit of each day as it passes, and store it safely in your bin. True, it is well to live abandonedly from time to time; but to our working hours that must be as the spile to the bung. So for a long season I must enjoy only a low slanting gleam in my mind’s eye from the Middleborough ponds far away.

Methinks I am getting a little more strength into those knees of mine; and, for my part, I believe that God does delight in the strength of a man’s legs.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, December 9, 1855.

MR. BLAKE,—Thank you! thank you for going a-wooding with me,—and enjoying it,—for being warmed by my wood fire. I have indeed enjoyed it much alone. I see how I might enjoy it yet more with company,—how we might help each other to live. And to be admitted to Nature’s hearth costs nothing. None is excluded, but excludes himself. You have only to push aside the curtain.

I am glad to hear that you were there too. There are many more such voyages, and longer ones, to be made on that river, for it is the water of life. The Ganges is nothing to it. Observe its reflections,—no idea but is familiar to it. That river, though to dull eyes it seems terrestrial wholly, flows through Elysium.
What powers bathe it invisible to villagers! Talk of its shallowness; — that hay-carts can be driven through it at midsummer; its depth passeth my understanding. If, forgetting the allurements of the world, I could drink deeply enough of it; if, cast adrift from the shore, I could with complete integrity float on it, I should never be seen on the Mill-Dam again. If there is any depth in me, there is a corresponding depth in it. It is the cold blood of the gods. I paddle and bathe in their artery.

I do not want a stick of wood for so trivial a use as to burn even, but they get it overnight, and carve and gild it that it may please my eye. What persevering lovers they are! What infinite pains to attract and delight us! They will supply us with fagots wrapped in the daintiest packages, and freight paid; sweet-scented woods, and bursting into flower, and resounding as if Orpheus had just left them; — these shall be our fuel, and we still prefer to chaffer with the wood-merchant!

The jug we found still stands draining bottom up on the bank, on the sunny side of the house. That river, — who shall say exactly whence it came, and whither it goes? Does aught that flows come from a higher source? Many things drift downward on its surface which would enrich a man. If you could only be on the alert all day, and every day! And the nights are as long as the days.

Do you not think you could contrive thus to get woody fibre enough to bake your wheaten bread with?

1 The centre of Concord village, where the post-office and shops are, — so called from an old mill-dam where now is a street.
ingly witty withal. She says they called her old when she was young, and she has never grown any older. I wish you could see her.

My books did not arrive till November 30th, the cargo of the Asia having been complete when they reached Liverpool. I have arranged them in a case which I made in the meanwhile, partly of river boards. I have not dipped far into the new ones yet. One is splendidly bound and illuminated. They are in English, French, Latin, Greek, and Sanscrit. I have not made out the significance of this godsend yet.

Farewell, and bright dreams to you!

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, December 25, 1855.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—Though you have not shown your face here, I trust that you did not interpret my last note to my disadvantage. I remember that, among other things, I wished to break it to you, that, owing to engagements, I should not be able to show you so much attention as I could wish, or as you had shown to me. How we did scour over the country! I hope your horse will live as long as one which I hear just died in the south of France at the age of forty. Yet I had no doubt you would get quite enough of me. Do not give it up so easily. The old house is still empty, and Hosmer is easy to treat with.

Channing was here about ten days ago. I told him

1 The books on India, Egypt, etc., sent by Cholmondeley. See p. 271. They were divided between the Concord Public Library and the libraries of Alcott, Blake, Emerson, Sanborn, etc.

2 These books were ordered by Cholmondeley in London, and sent to Boston just as he was starting for the Crimean War, in October, 1855, calling them "a nest of Indian books." They included Mill's History of British India, several translations of the sacred books of India, and one of them in Sanscrit; the works of Bunsen, so far as then published, and other valuable books. In the note accompanying
and know how to prize them. I send you information of this as I might of the birth of a child.

Please remember me to all your family.

On the date of Thoreau's letter of December 25, 1855, another event occurred, of some note in these annals of friendship. Channing, from his Dorchester abode, suddenly showed himself at Ricketson's door. "I had just written his name when old Ranger announced him. . . . He arrived on Christmas day" (as Thoreau had done the year before) "and his first salutation on meeting me at the front door of my house was, 'That's your shanty,' pointing towards it. He is engaged with the editor of the N. B. Mercury, and boards in town, but whereabouts I have not yet [February 26, 1856] discovered. He usually spends Saturday and a part of Sunday with me." In replying to this information, Thoreau gives that admirable character of his poet neighbor which has often been quoted.

This gift, Cholmondeley said, "I think I never found so much kindness in all my travels as in your country of New England." In return, Thoreau sent his English friend, in 1857, his own Week, Emerson's Poems, Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, and F. L. Olmsted's book on the Southern States (then preparing for the secession which they attempted four years later). This was perhaps the first copy of Whitman seen in England, and when Cholmondeley began to read it to his stepfather, Rev. Z. Macaulay, at Hodnet, that clergyman declared he would not hear it, and threatened to throw it in the fire. On reading the Week he had received Walden from Thoreau when first in America, Cholmondeley wrote me, "Would you tell dear Thoreau that the lines I admire so much in his Week begin thus:

'Low-anchored cloud,
Newfoundland air,' etc.

In my mind the best thing he ever wrote."
was in New Bedford. When he was here last (in December, I think), he said, like himself, in answer to my inquiry where he lived, "that he did not know the name of the place;" so it has remained in a degree of obscurity to me. As you have made it certain to me that he is in New Bedford, perhaps I can return the favor by putting you on the track to his boarding-house there. Mrs. Arnold told Mrs. Emerson where it was; and the latter thinks, though she may be mistaken, that it was at a Mrs. Lindsay's.

I am rejoiced to hear that you are getting on so bravely with him and his verses. He and I, as you know, have been old cronies,—

"Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill,
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and both together heared," etc.

"But O, the heavy change," now he is gone. The Channing you have seen and described is the real Simon Pure. You have seen him. Many a good ramble may you have together! You will see in him still more of the same kind to attract and to puzzle you. How to serve him most effectually has long been a problem with his friends. Perhaps it is left for you to solve it. I suspect that the most that you or any one can do for him is to appreciate his genius,—to buy and read, and cause others to buy and read, his poems. That is the hand which he has put forth to the world,—take hold of that. Review them if you can,—perhaps take the risk of publishing something more which he may write. Your knowledge of Cowper will help you to know Channing. He will accept sympathy and aid, but he will not bear questioning, unless the aspects of the sky are particularly auspicious. He will ever be "reserved and enigmatic," and you must deal with him at arm's length.

I have no secrets to tell you concerning him, and do not wish to call obvious excellences and defects by far-fetched names. I think I have already spoken to you more, and more to the purpose, on this theme, than I am likely to write now; nor need I suggest how witty and poetic he is, and what an inexhaustible fund of good fellowship you will find in him.

As for visiting you in April, though I am inclined enough to take some more rambles in your neighborhood, especially by the seaside, I dare not engage myself, nor allow you to expect me. The truth is, I have my enterprises now as ever, at which I tug with ridiculous feebleness, but admirable perseverance, and cannot say when I shall be sufficiently fancy-free for such an excursion.

You have done well to write a lecture on Cowper. In the expectation of getting you to read it here, I applied to the curators of our Lyceum; but, alas, our

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{Ellery Channing is mentioned, though not by name, in the Week (pp. 163, 378), and in \textit{Walden} (p. 225). He was the comrade of Thoreau in Berkshire, and on the Hudson, in New Hampshire, Canada, and Cape Cod, and in many rambles nearer Concord. He was also a companion of Hawthorne in his river voyages, as mentioned in the \textit{Mosses}.}\]
Lyceum has been a failure this winter for want of funds. It ceased some weeks since, with a debt, they tell me, to be carried over to the next year’s account. Only one more lecture is to be read by a Signor Somebody, an Italian, paid for by private subscription, as a deed of charity to the lecturer. They are not rich enough to offer you your expenses even, though probably a month or two ago they would have been glad of the chance.

However, the old house has not failed yet. That offers you lodging for an indefinite time after you get into it; and in the meanwhile I offer you bed and board in my father’s house,—always excepting hair pillows and new-fangled bedding.

Remember me to your family.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

CONCORD, March 13, 1856.

MR. BLAKE,—It is high time I sent you a word. I have not heard from Harrisburg since offering to go there, and have not been invited to lecture anywhere else the past winter. So you see I am fast growing rich. This is quite right, for such is my relation to the lecture-goers, I should be surprised and alarmed if there were any great call for me. I confess that I am considerably alarmed even when I hear that an individual wishes to meet me, for my experience teaches me that we shall thus only be made certain of a mutual strangeness, which otherwise we might never have been aware of.

I have not yet recovered strength enough for such a walk as you propose, though pretty well again for circumscribed rambles and chamber work. Even now, I am probably the greatest walker in Concord,—to its disgrace be it said. I remember our walks and talks and sailing in the past with great satisfaction, and trust that we shall have more of them ere long,—have more woodings-up,—for even in the spring we must still seek “fuel to maintain our fires.”

As you suggest, we would fain value one another for what we are absolutely, rather than relatively. How will this do for a symbol of sympathy? * * * *

As for compliments, even the stars praise me, and I praise them. They and I sometimes belong to a mutual admiration society. Is it not so with you? I know you of old. Are you not tough and earnest to be talked at, praised, or blamed? Must you go out of the room because you are the subject of conversation? Where will you go to, pray? Shall we look into the “Letter Writer” to see what compliments are admissible? I am not afraid of praise, for I have practiced it on myself. As for my deserts, I never took an account of that stock, and in this connection care not whether I am deserving or not. When I hear praise coming, do I not elevate and arch myself to hear it like the sky, and as impersonally? Think I appropriate any of it to my weak legs? No. Praise away till all is blue.
I see by the newspapers that the season for making sugar is at hand. Now is the time, whether you be rock, or white maple, or hickory. I trust that you have prepared a store of sap-tubs and sumach spouts, and invested largely in kettles. Early the first frosty morning, tap your maples, — the sap will not run in summer, you know. It matters not how little juice you get, if you get all you can, and boil it down. I made just one crystal of sugar once, one twentieth of an inch cube, out of a pumpkin, and it sufficed. Though the yield be no greater than that, this is not less the season for it, and it will be not the less sweet, nay, it will be infinitely the sweeter.

Shall, then, the maple yield sugar, and not man? Shall the farmer be thus active, and surely have so much sugar to show for it, before this very March is gone, — while I read the newspaper? While he works in his sugar-camp let me work in mine, — for sweetness is in me, and to sugar it shall come, — it shall not all go to leaves and wood. Am I not a sugar maple man, then? Boil down the sweet sap which the spring causes to flow within you. Stop not at syrup, — go on to sugar, though you present the world with but a single crystal, — a crystal not made from trees in your yard, but from the new life that stirs in your pores. Cheerfully skim your kettle, and watch it set and crystallize, making a holiday of it if you will. Heaven will be propitious to you as to him.

Say to the farmer: There is your crop; here is mine. Mine is a sugar to sweeten sugar with. If you will listen to me, I will sweeten your whole load, — your whole life.

Then will the callers ask, Where is Blake? He is in his sugar-camp on the mountainside. Let the world await him. Then will the little boys bless you, and the great boys too, for such sugar is the origin of many condiments, — Blakians in the shops of Worcester, of new form, with their mottoes wrapped up in them. Shall men taste only the sweetness of the maple and the cane the coming year?

A walk over the crust to Asnebhumskit, standing there in its inviting simplicity, is tempting to think of,—making a fire on the snow under some rock! The very poverty of outward nature implies an inward wealth in the walker. What a Golconda is he conversant with, thawing his fingers over such a blaze! But — but —

Have you read the new poem, "The Angel in the House"? Perhaps you will find it good for you.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, May 21, 1856.

MR. BLAKE,—I have not for a long time been putting such thoughts together as I should like to read to the company you speak of. I have enough of that sort to say, or even read, but not time now to arrange it. Something I have prepared might prove for their entertainment or refreshment per chance; but I would not like to have a hat carried round for it. I have just been reading some papers to see if they would do for your company; but though I thought pretty well of them as long as I read them to myself, when I got an auditor to try them on, I felt that they would not answer. How could I let you drum up a company to hear
them? In fine, what I have is either too scattered or loosely arranged, or too light, or else is too scientific and matter-of-fact (I run a good deal into that of late) for so hungry a company.

I am still a learner, not a teacher, feeding somewhat omnivorously, browsing both stalk and leaves; but I shall perhaps be enabled to speak with the more precision and authority by and by,—if philosophy and sentiment are not buried under a multitude of details.

I do not refuse, but accept your invitation, only changing the time. I consider myself invited to Worcester once for all, and many thanks to the inviter. As for the Harvard excursion, will you let me suggest another? Do you and Brown come to Concord on Saturday, if the weather promises well, and spend the Sunday here on the river or hills, or both. So we shall save some of our money (which is of next importance to our souls), and lose—I do not know what. You say you talked of coming here before; now do it. I do not propose this because I think that I am worth your spending time with, but because I hope that we may prove flint and steel to one another. It is at most only an hour's ride farther, and you can at any rate do what you please when you get here.

This was the town of Harvard, not the college. Perhaps the excursion was to visit Fruitlands, where Alcott and Lane had established their short-lived community, in a beautiful spot near Still River, an affluent of the Nashua, and half-way from Concord to Wachusett. "Anebunskit," mentioned in a former letter, is the highest hill near Worcester, as "Nobscot" is the highest near Concord. Both have Indian names.

Then we will see if we have any apology to offer for our existence. So come to Concord,—come to Concord,—come to Concord! or,—your suit shall be defaulted.

As for the dispute about solitude and society, any comparison is impertinent. It is an idling down on the plane at the base of a mountain, instead of climbing steadily to its top. Of course you will be glad of all the society you can get to go up with. Will you go to glory with me? is the burden of the song. I love society so much that I swallowed it all at a gulp,—that is, all that came in my way. It is not that we love to be alone, but that we love to soar, and when we do soar, the company grows thinner and thinner till there is none at all. It is either the Tribune on the plain, a sermon on the mount, or a very private ecstasy still higher up. We are not the less to aim at the summits, though the multitude does not ascend them. Use all the society that will abet you. But perhaps I do not enter into the spirit of your talk.

In the spring of 1856, Mr. Alcott, then living in Walpole, N. H., visited Concord, and while there suggested to Thoreau that the upper valley of the Connecticut, in which Walpole lies, was good walking-ground, and that he would be glad to see him there. When autumn began to hover in the distance, Thoreau recalled this invitation, and sent the letter below.

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1 The New York newspaper.
TO BRONSON ALCOTT (AT WALPOLE, N. H.).

Concord, September 1, 1856.

MR. ALCOTT,—I remember that, in the spring, you invited me to visit you. I feel inclined to spend a day or two with you and on your hills at this season, returning, perhaps, by way of Brattleboro. What if I should take the cars for Walpole next Friday morning? Are you at home? And will it be convenient and agreeable to you to see me then? I will await an answer.

I am but poor company, and it will not be worth the while to put yourself out on my account; yet from time to time I have some thoughts which would be the better for an airing. I also wish to get some hints from September on the Connecticut to help me understand that season on the Concord; to snuff the musty fragrance of the decaying year in the primitive woods. There is considerable cellar-room in my nature for such stores; a whole row of bins waiting to be filled, before I can celebrate my Thanksgiving. Mould is the richest of soils, yet I am not mould. It will always be found that one flourishing institution exists and battens on another mouldering one. The Present itself is parasitic to this extent.

Your fellow-traveler,

HENRY D. THOREAU.

As fortune would have it, Mr. Alcott was then making his arrangements for a conversational tour in the vicinity of New York; but he renewed the invitation for himself, while repeating it in the name of Mrs. Alcott and his daughters. Thoreau made the visit, I believe, and some weeks later, at the suggestion of Mr. Alcott, he was asked by Marcus Spring of New York to give lectures and survey their estate for a community at Perth Amboy, N. J., in which Mr. Spring and his friends, the Birneys, Wells, Grimkés, etc., had united for social and educational purposes. It was a colony of radical opinions and old-fashioned culture; the Grimkés having been bred in Charleston, S. C., which they left by reason of their opposition to negro slavery, and the elder Birney having held slaves in Alabama until his conscience bade him emancipate them, after which he, too, could have no secure home among slaveholders. He was the first presidential candidate of the voting Abolitionists, as Lincoln was the last; and his friend, Theodore Weld, who married Miss Grimké, had been one of the early apostles of emancipation in Ohio. Their circle at Eagleswood appealed to Thoreau's sense of humor, and is described by him in a letter soon to be given.

In June, 1856, Thoreau made a long visit at Brooklaw. In August, Mr. Ricketson, who had proposed a summer visit to Concord, found himself prevented by feeble health, and received the two following letters from Thoreau:—
TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, September 2, 1856.

Friend Ricketson,—My father and mother regret that your indisposition is likely to prevent your coming to Concord at present. It is as well that you do not, if you depend on seeing me, for I expect to go to New Hampshire the latter part of the week. I shall be glad to see you afterward, if you are prepared for and can endure my unsocial habits.

I would suggest that you have one or two of the teeth which you can best spare extracted at once, for the sake of your general, no less than particular health. This is the advice of one who has had quite his share of toothache in this world. I am a trifle stouter than when I saw you last, yet far, far short of my best estate.

I thank you for two newspapers which you have sent me; am glad to see that you have studied out the history of the ponds, got the Indian names straightened, —which means made more crooked,—etc., etc. I remember them with great satisfaction. They are all the more interesting to me for the lean and sandy soil that surrounds them. Heaven is not one of your fertile Ohio bottoms, you may depend on it. Ah, the Middleborough ponds! — Great Platte lakes. Remember me to the perch in them. I trust that I may have some better craft than that oarless pumpkin-seed the next time I navigate them.

From the size of your family I infer that Mrs. Ricketson and your daughters have returned from Franconia. Please remember me to them, and also to Arthur and Walton; and tell the latter that if, in the course of his fishing, he should chance to come across the shell of a terrapin, and will save it for me, I shall be exceedingly obliged to him.

Channing dropped in on us the other day, but soon dropped out again.

Concord, September 23, 1856.

Friend Ricketson,—I have returned from New Hampshire, and find myself in statu quo. My journey proved one of business purely. As you suspected, I saw Alcott, and I spoke to him of you, and your good will toward him; so now you may consider yourself introduced. He would be glad to hear from you about a conversation in New Bedford. He was about setting out on a conversing tour to Fitchburg, Worcester, and, three or four weeks hence, Waterbury, Ct., New York, Newport (?) or Providence (?). You may be sure that you will not have occasion to repent of any exertions which you may make to secure an audience for him. I send you one of his programmes, lest he should not have done so himself.

You propose to me teaching the following winter. I find that I cannot entertain the idea. It would require such a revolution of all my habits, I think, and would sap the very foundations of me. I am engaged to Concord and my own private pursuits by 10,000 ties, and it would be suicide to rend them. If I were weaker, and not somewhat stronger, physically, I should be more tempted. I am so busy that I cannot even think...
of visiting you. The days are not long enough, or I am not strong enough to do the work of the day, before bedtime.

Excuse my paper. It chances to be the best I have.

In October, 1856, Mr. Spring, whom Mr. Alcott was then visiting, wrote to Thoreau inviting him to come to Eagleswood, give lectures, and survey two hundred acres of land belonging to the community, laying out streets and making a map of the proposed village. Thoreau accepted the proposal, and soon after wrote the following letter, which Miss Thoreau submitted to Mr. Emerson for publication, with other letters, in the volume of 1865; but he returned it, inscribed, “Not printable at present.” The lapse of time has removed this objection.

TO SOPHIA THOREAU.

[Direct] Eagleswood, Perth Amboy, N. J.,
Saturday eve, November 1, 1856.

DEAR SOPHIA,—I have hardly had time and repose enough to write to you before. I spent the afternoon of Friday (it seems some months ago) in Worcester, but failed to see [Harrison] Blake, he having “gone to the horse-race” in Boston; to atone for which I have just received a letter from him, asking me to stop at Worcester and lecture on my return. I called on [Theo.] Brown and [T. W.] Higginson; in the evening came by way of Norwich to New York in the steamer Commonwealth, and, though it was so windy inland, had a perfectly smooth passage, and about as good a

sleep as usually at home. Reached New York about seven A. M., too late for the John Potter (there was n’t any Jonas), so I spent the forenoon there, called on Greeley (who was not in), met [F. A. T.] Bellew in Broadway and walked into his workshop, read at the Astor Library, etc. I arrived here, about thirty miles from New York, about five p. m. Saturday, in company with Miss E. Peabody, who was returning in the same covered wagon from the Landing to Eagleswood, which last place she has just left for the winter.

This is a queer place. There is one large long stone building, which cost some forty thousand dollars, in which I do not know exactly who or how many work (one or two familiar places and more familiar names have turned up), a few shops and offices, an old farmhouse, and Mr. Spring’s perfectly private residence, within twenty rods of the main building. The city of Perth Amboy is about as big as Concord, and Eagleswood is one and a quarter miles southwest of it, on the Bay side. The central fact here is evidently Mr. [Theodore] Weld’s school, recently established, around which various other things revolve. Saturday evening I went to the schoolroom, hall, or what not, to see the children and their teachers and patrons dance. Mr. Weld, a kind-looking man with a long white beard, danced with them, and Mr. [E. J.] Cutler, his assistant (lately from Cambridge, who is acquainted with Sanborn), Mr. Spring, and others. This Saturday evening dance is a regular thing, and it is thought something strange if you don’t attend. They take it for granted that you want society!
Sunday forenoon I attended a sort of Quaker meeting at the same place (the Quaker aspect and spirit prevail here, — Mrs. Spring says, "Does thee not?"), where it was expected that the Spirit would move me (I having been previously spoken to about it); and it, or something else, did, — an inch or so. I said just enough to set them a little by the ears and make it lively. I had excused myself by saying that I could not adapt myself to a particular audience; for all the speaking and lecturing here have reference to the children, who are far the greater part of the audience, and they are not so bright as New England children. Imagine them sitting close to the wall, all around a hall, with old Quaker-looking men and women here and there. There sat Mrs. Weld [Grimké] and her sister, two elderly gray-headed ladies, the former in extreme Bloomer costume, which was what you may call remarkable; Mr. Arnold Buffum, with broad face and a great white beard, looking like a pier-head made of the cork-tree with the bark on, as if he could buffet a considerable wave; James G. Birney, formerly candidate for the presidency, with another particularly white head and beard; Edward Palmer, the anti-money man (for whom communities were made), with his ample beard somewhat grayish. Some of them, I suspect, are very worthy people. Of course you are wondering to what extent all these make one family, and to what extent twenty. Mrs. Kirkland ¹ (and this a name only to me) I saw. She has just bought a lot here. They all know

¹ Mrs. Caroline Kirkland, wife of Prof. William Kirkland, then of New York, — a writer of wit and fame at that time.

more about your neighbors and acquaintances than you suspected.

On Monday evening I read the moose story to the children, to their satisfaction. Ever since I have been constantly engaged in surveying Eagleswood, — through woods, salt marshes, and along the shore, dodging the tide, through bushes, mud, and beggar-ticks, having no time to look up or think where I am. (It takes ten or fifteen minutes before each meal to pick the beggar-ticks out of my clothes; burs and the rest are left, and rents mended at the first convenient opportunity.) I shall be engaged perhaps as much longer. Mr. Spring wants me to help him about setting out an orchard and vineyard, Mr. Birney asks me to survey a small piece for him, and Mr. Alcott, who has just come down here for the third Sunday, says that Greeley (I left my name for him) invites him and me to go to his home with him next Saturday morning and spend the Sunday.

It seems a twelvemonth since I was not here, but I hope to get settled deep into my den again ere long. The hardest thing to find here is solitude — and Concord. I am at Mr. Spring’s house. Both he and she and their family are quite agreeable.

I want you to write to me immediately (just left off to talk French with the servant man), and let father and mother put in a word. To them and to Aunts, love from

HENRY.

The date of this visit to Eagleswood is worthy of note, because in that November Thoreau made the
TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

EAGLESWOOD, N. J., November 19, 1856.

MR. BLAKE,—I have been here much longer than I expected, but have deferred answering you, because I could not foresee when I should return. I do not know yet within three or four days. This uncertainty makes it impossible for me to appoint a day to meet you, until it should be too late to hear from you again. I think, therefore, that I must go straight home. I feel some objection to reading that "What shall it profit" lecture again in Worcester; but if you are quite sure that it will be worth the while (it is a grave consideration), I will even make an independent journey from Concord for that purpose. I have read three of my old lectures (that included) to the Eagleswood people, and, unexpectedly, with rare success,—i.e., I was aware that what I was saying was silently taken in by their ears.

You must excuse me if I write mainly a business letter now, for I am sold for the time,—am merely Thoreau the surveyor here,—and solitude is scarcely obtainable in these parts.

Alcott has been here three times, and, Saturday before last, I went with him and Greeley, by invitation of the last, to G.'s farm, thirty-six miles north of New York. The next day A. and I heard Beecher preach; and what was more, we visited Whitman the next morning (A. had already seen him), and were much interested and provoked. He is apparently the greatest democrat the world has seen. Kings and aristocracy go by the board at once, as they have long deserved to. A remarkably strong though coarse nature, of a sweet disposition, and much prized by his friends. Though peculiar and rough in his exterior, his skin (all over (?)) red, he is essentially a gentleman. I am still somewhat in a quandary about him,—feel that he is essentially strange to me, at any rate; but I am surprised by the sight of him. He is very broad, but, as I have said, not fine. He said that I misapprehended him. I am not quite sure that I do. He told us that he loved to ride up and down Broadway all day on an omnibus, sitting beside the driver, listening to the roar of the carts, and sometimes gesticulating and declaiming Homer at the top of his voice. He has long been an editor and writer for the newspapers,—was editor of the New Orleans Crescent once; but now has no employment but to read and write in the forenoon, and walk in the afternoon, like all the rest of the scribbling gentry.

I shall probably be in Concord next week; so you can direct to me there.
TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, December 6, 1853.

Mr. Blake,—I trust that you got a note from me at Eagleswood, about a fortnight ago. I passed through Worcester on the morning of the 25th of November, and spent several hours (from 3.30 to 6.20) in the travelers' room at the depot, as in a dream, it now seems. As the first Harlem train unexpectedly connected with the first from Fitchburg, I did not spend the forenoon with you as I had anticipated, on account of baggage, etc. If it had been a seasonable hour, I should have seen you.—i.e., if you had not gone to a horse-race. But think of making a call at half past three in the morning! (would it not have implied a three-o'clock-in-the-morning courage in both you and me?) as it were, ignoring the fact that mankind are really not at home,—are not out, but so deeply in that they cannot be seen,—nearly half their hours at this season of the year.

I walked up and down the main street, at half past five, in the dark, and paused long in front of Brown's store, trying to distinguish its features; considering whether I might safely leave his Putnam in the door-handle, but concluded not to risk it. Meanwhile a watchman (?) seemed to be watching me, and I moved off. Took another turn around there, and had the very earliest offer of the Transcript 1 from an urchin behind, whom I actually could not see, it was so dark. So I withdrew, wondering if you and B. would

1 A Worcester newspaper.

know if I had been there. You little dream who is occupying Worcester when you are all asleep. Several things occurred there that night which I will venture to say were not put into the Transcript. A cat caught a mouse at the depot, and gave it to her kitten to play with. So that world-famous tragedy goes on by night as well as by day, and nature is emphatically wrong. Also I saw a young Irishman kneel before his mother, as if in prayer, while she wiped a cinder out of his eye with her tongue; and I found that it was never too late (or early?) to learn something. These things transpired while you and B. were, to all practical purposes, nowhere, and good for nothing,—not even for society,—not for horse-races,—nor the taking back of a Putnam's Magazine. It is true, I might have recalled you to life, but it would have been a cruel act, considering the kind of life you would have come back to.

However, I would fain write to you now by broad daylight, and report to you some of my life, such as it is, and recall you to your life, which is not always lived by you, even by daylight. Blake! Brown! are you awake? are you aware what an ever-glorious morning this is,—what long-expected, never-to-be-repeated opportunity is now offered to get life and knowledge?

For my part, I am trying to wake up,—to wring slumber out of my pores; for, generally, I take events as unconcernedly as a fence-post,—absorb wet and cold like it, and am pleasantly tickled with lichens slowly spreading over me. Could I not be content, then, to be a cedar post, which lasts twenty-five years? 
 Would I not rather be that than the farmer that set it? or he that preaches to the farmer? and go to the heaven of posts at last? I think I should like that as well as any would like it. But I should not care if I sprouted into a living tree, put forth leaves and flowers, and bore fruit.

I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual. It is surprising how contented one can be with nothing definite,—only a sense of existence. Well, anything for variety. I am ready to try this for the next ten thousand years, and exhaust it. How sweet to think of! my extremities well charred, and my intellectual part too, so that there is no danger of worm or rot for a long while. My breath is sweet to me. O how I laugh when I think of my vague, indefinite riches. No run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment.

What are all these years made for? and now another winter comes, so much like the last? Can’t we satisfy the beggars once for all?

Have you got in your wood for this winter? What else have you got in? Of what use a great fire on the hearth, and a confounded little fire in the heart? Are you prepared to make a decisive campaign,—to pay for your costly tuition,—to pay for the suns of past summers,—for happiness and unhappiness lavished upon you?

Does not Time go by swifter than the swiftest equine trotter or racker?

Stir up Brown. Remind him of his duties, which outrun the date and span of Worcester’s years past and to come. Tell him to be sure that he is on the main street, however narrow it may be, and to have a lit sign, visible by night as well as by day.

Are they not patient waiters,—they who wait for us? But even they shall not be losers.

December 7.

That Walt Whitman, of whom I wrote to you, is the most interesting fact to me at present. I have just read his second edition (which he gave me), and it has done me more good than any reading for a long time. Perhaps I remember best the poem of Walt Whitman, an American, and the Sun-Down Poem. There are two or three pieces in the book which are disagreeable, to say the least; simply sensual. He does not celebrate love at all. It is as if the beasts spoke. I think that men have not been ashamed of themselves without reason. No doubt there have always been dens where such deeds were unblushingly recited, and it is no merit to compete with their inhabitants. But even on this side he has spoken more truth than any American or modern that I know. I have found his poem exhilarating, encouraging. As for its sensuality,—and it may turn out to be less sensual than it appears,—I do not so much wish that those parts were not written, as that men and women were so pure that they could read them without harm, that is, without understanding them. One woman told me that no woman could read it,—as if a man could read what a woman could not. Of course Walt Whitman can communicate to us no experience, and if we are shocked, whose experience is it that we are reminded of?
On the whole, it sounds to me very brave and American, after whatever deductions. I do not believe that all the sermons, so called, that have been preached in this land put together are equal to it for preaching.

We ought to rejoice greatly in him. He occasionally suggests something a little more than human. You can't confound him with the other inhabitants of Brooklyn or New York. How they must shudder when they read him! He is awfully good.

To be sure I sometimes feel a little imposed on. By his heartiness and broad generalities he puts me into a liberal frame of mind prepared to see wonders,—as it were, sets me upon a hill or in the midst of a plain,—stirs me well up, and then,—throws in a thousand of brick. Though rude, and sometimes ineffectual, it is a great primitive poem,—an alarum or trumpet-note ringing through the American camp. Wonderfully like the Orientals, too, considering that when I asked him if he had read them, he answered, "No: tell me about them."

I did not get far in conversation with him,—two more being present,—and among the few things which I chanced to say, I remember that one was, in answer to him as representing America, that I did not think much of America or of politics, and so on, which may have been somewhat of a damper to him.

Since I have seen him, I find that I am not disturbed by any brag or egoism in his book. He may turn out the least of a braggart of all, having a better right to be confident.

He is a great fellow.

There is in Alcott's diary an account of this interview with Whitman, and the Sunday morning in Ward Beecher's Brooklyn church, from which a few passages may be taken. Hardly any person met by either of these Concord friends in their later years made so deep an impression on both as did this then almost unknown poet and thinker, concerning whom Cholmondeley wrote to Thoreau in 1857: "Is there actually such a man as Whitman? Has any one seen or handled him? His is a tongue ‘not understood’ of the English people. I find the gentleman altogether left out of the book. It is the first book I have ever seen which I should call a 'new book.'"

Mr. Alcott writes under date of November 7, 1856, in New York: "Henry Thoreau arrives from Eagleswood, and sees Swinton, a wise young Scotchman, and Walt Whitman's friend, at my room (15 Laight Street),—Thoreau declining to accompany me to Mrs. Botta's parlors, as invited by her. He sleeps here. (November 8.) We find Greeley at the Harlem station, and ride with him to his farm, where we pass the day, and return to sleep in the city,—Greeley coming in with us; Alice Cary, the authoress, accompanying us also. (Sunday, November 9.) We cross the ferry to Brooklyn, and hear Ward Beecher at the Plymouth Church. It was a spectacle,—and himself the preacher, if preacher there be anywhere now in pulpits. His auditors had to weep, had to laugh, under his potent magnetism, while his doctrine of justice to all men, bond and free, was grand. House, entries, aisles, galleries, all were crowded. Thoreau called it pagan, but I pronounced it good, very
good,—the best I had witnessed for many a day, and hopeful for the coming time. At dinner at Mrs. Manning's. Miss M. S. was there, curious to see Thoreau. After dinner we called on Walt Whitman (Thoreau and 1), but finding him out, we got all we could from his mother, a stately, sensible matron, believing absolutely in Walter, and telling us how good he was, and how wise when a boy: and how his four brothers and two sisters loved him, and still take counsel of the great man he has grown to be. We engaged to call again early in the morning, when she said Walt would be glad to see us. (Monday, 10th.) Mrs. Tyndale of Philadelphia goes with us to see Walt,—Walt the satyr, the Bacchus, the very god Pan. We sat with him for two hours, and much to our delight: he promising to call on us at the International at ten in the morning to-morrow, and there have the rest of it." Whitman failed to call at his hour the next day.

TO B. B. WILEY (AT CHICAGO).

Concord, December 12, 1856.

Mr. Wiley, 1—It is refreshing to hear of your earnest purpose with respect to your culture, and I can send you no better wish than that you may not be thwarted by the cares and temptations of life. Depend on it, now is the accepted time, and probably you will never find yourself better disposed or freer to attend to your culture than at this moment. When They who inspire us with the idea are ready, shall not we be ready also?

I do not remember anything which Confucius has said directly respecting man's "origin, purpose, and destiny." He was more practical than that. He is full of wisdom applied to human relations,—to the private life,—the family,—government, etc. It is remarkable that, according to his own account, the sum and substance of his teaching is, as you know, to do as you would be done by.

He also said (I translate from the French), "Conduct yourself suitably towards the persons of your family, then you will be able to instruct and to direct a nation of men."

"To nourish one's self with a little rice, to drink water, to have only his bended arm to support his head, is a state which has also its satisfaction. To be rich and honored by iniquitous means is for me as the floating cloud which passes."

"As soon as a child is born he must respect its faculties: the knowledge which will come to it by and by does not resemble at all its present state. If it arrive at the age of forty or fifty years without having learned anything, it is no more worthy of any respect." This last, I think, will speak to your condition.

But at this rate I might fill many letters.

Our acquaintance with the ancient Hindoos is not at all personal. The full names that can be relied upon

\[\text{ET. 39}\]

TO B. B. WILEY
are very shadowy. It is, however, tangible works that we know. The best I think of are the Bhagvat Geeta (an episode in an ancient heroic poem called the Mahabharat), the Vedas, the Vishnu Purana, the Institutes of Menu, etc.

I cannot say that Swedenborg has been directly and practically valuable to me, for I have not been a reader of him, except to a slight extent; but I have the highest regard for him, and trust that I shall read his works in some world or other. He had a wonderful knowledge of our interior and spiritual life, though his illuminations are occasionally blurred by trivialities. He comes nearer to answering, or attempting to answer, literally, your questions concerning man's origin, purpose, and destiny, than any of the worthies I have referred to. But I think that that is not altogether a recommendation; since such an answer to these questions cannot be discovered any more than perpetual motion, for which no reward is now offered. The noblest man it is, methinks, that knows, and by his life suggests, the most about these things. Crack away at these nuts, however, as long as you can,—the very exercise will ennoble you, and you may get something better than the answer you expect.

TO B. B. WILEY (AT CHICAGO).

Concord, April 26, 1857.

Mr. Wiley,—I see that you are turning a broad furrow among the books, but I trust that some very private journal all the while holds its own through their midst. Books can only reveal us to ourselves, and as often as they do us this service we lay them aside. I should say, read Goethe's autobiography, by all means, also Gibbon's, Haydon the painter's, and our Franklin's of course; perhaps also Alfieri's, Benvenuto Cellini's, and De Quincey's 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater,'—since you like autobiography. I think you must read Coleridge again, and further, skipping all his theology, i.e., if you value precise definitions and a discriminating use of language. By the way, read De Quincey's Reminiscences of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

How shall we account for our pursuits, if they are original? We get the language with which to describe our various lives out of a common mint. If others have their losses which they are busy repairing, so have I mine, and their horse and horse may perhaps be the symbols of some of them.¹ But also I have lost, or am in danger of losing, a far finer and more ethereal treat-

¹ When, in 1855 or 1856, Thoreau started to wade across from Duxbury to Clark's Island, and was picked up by a fishing-boat in the deep water, and landed on the "back side" of the island (see letter to Mr. Watson of April 25, 1858), Edward Watson ("Uncle Ed") was "saggin' round" to see that everything was right alongshore, and encountered the unexpected visitor. "How did you come here?" "Oh, from Duxbury," said Thoreau, and they walked to the old Watson house together. "You say in one of your books," said Uncle Ed, "that you once lost a horse and a hound and a dove,—now I should like to know what you meant by that?" "Why, everybody has met with losses, have n't they?" "If m, — pretty way to answer a fellow!" said Mr. Watson; but it seems this was the usual answer. In the long dining-room of the old house that night he sat by the window and told the story of the Norse voyagers to New England,—perhaps to that very island and the Gurnet near by,—as Morton fancies in his review of Thoreau in the Harvard Magazine (January, 1855).
sure, which commonly no loss, of which they are conscious, will symbolize. This I answer hastily and with some hesitation, according as I now understand my words.

Methinks a certain polygamy with its troubles is the fate of almost all men. They are married to two wives: their genius (a celestial muse), and also to some fair daughter of the earth. Unless these two were fast friends before marriage, and so are afterward, there will be but little peace in the house.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, December 31, 1856.

Mr. Blake,—I think it will not be worth the while for me to come to Worcester to lecture at all this year. It will be better to wait till I am—perhaps unfortunately—more in that line. My writing has not taken the shape of lectures, and therefore I should be obliged to read one of three or four old lectures, the best of which I have read to some of your auditors before. I carried that one which I call "Walking, or the Wild," to Amherst, N. H., the evening of that cold Thursday, and I am to read another at Fitchburg, February 3. I am simply their hired man. This will probably be the extent of my lecturing hereabouts.

I must depend on meeting Mr. Wasson some other time.

1 This was when he spoke in the vestry of the Calvinistic church, and said, on his return to Concord, "that he hoped he had done something to upheave and demolish the structure above,"—the vestry being beneath the church.

Perhaps it always costs me more than it comes to lecture before a promiscuous audience. It is an irreparable injury done to my modesty even,—I become so indurated.

O solitude! obscurity! meanness! I never triumph so as when I have the least success in my neighbor's eyes. The lecturer gets fifty dollars a night; but what becomes of his winter? What consolation will it be hereafter to have fifty thousand dollars for living in the world? I should like not to exchange any of my life for money.

These, you may think, are reasons for not lecturing, when you have no great opportunity. It is even so, perhaps. I could lecture on dry oak leaves; I could, but who could hear me? If I were to try it on any large audience, I fear it would be no gain to them, and a positive loss to me. I should have behaved rudely toward my rustling friends.

I am surveying, instead of lecturing, at present. Let me have a skimming from your "pan of unwrinkled cream."

1 Notwithstanding this unwillingness to lecture, Thoreau did speak at Worcester, February 13, 1857, on "Walking," but scrupulously added to his consent (February 6), "I told Brown it had not been much altered since I read it in Worcester; but now I think of it, much of it must have been new to you, because, having since divided it into two, I am able to read what before I omitted. Nevertheless, I should like to have it understood by those whom it concerns, that I am invited to read in public (if it be so) what I have already read, in part, to a private audience." This throws some light on his method of preparing lectures, which were afterwards published as essays; they were made up from his journals, and new entries expanded them.
The proposition about Mr. Alcott in Thoreau's letter of September 23, 1856, to Mr. Ricketson took effect in the spring of 1857, and early in April he went to visit the Ricketsons in New Bedford, going down from Walpole, and there met his younger friends Channing and Thoreau. Anticipating Mr. Alcott's visit, Thoreau wrote thus:

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

CONCORD, March 28, 1857.

FRIEND RICKETSON, — If it chance to be perfectly agreeable and convenient to you, I will make you a visit next week (say Wednesday or Thursday), and we will have some more rides to Assawampset and the seashore. Have you got a boat on the former yet? Who knows but we may camp out on the island? I propose this now, because it will be more novel to me at this season, and I should like to see your early birds, etc.

Your historical papers have all come safely to hand, and I thank you for them. I see that they will be indispensable mémoires pour servir. By the way, have you read Church's "History of Philip's War," and looked up the localities? It should make part of a chapter.

I had a long letter from Cholmondeley lately, which I should like to show you.

I will expect an answer to this straightway, — but be sure you let your own convenience and inclinations rule it. Please remember me to your family.

He was welcomed, of course, and went down April 2, as indicated in the letter of the day before. But he had not been informed that Alcott was already there, writing in his Diary of April 1, this sketch of Brooklawn and its occupants:

"A neat country residence, surrounded by wild pastures and low woods, — the little stream Acushnet flowing east of the house, and into Fairhaven Bay. The hamlet of Acushnet at the 'Head of the River' lies within half a mile of Ricketson's house. His tastes are pastoral, simple even to wildness; and he passes a good part of his day in the fields and woods, — or in his rude 'Shanty' near his house, where he writes and reads his favorite authors, Cowper having the first place. He is in easy circumstances, and has the manners of an English gentleman, — frank, hospitable, and with positive persuasions of his own; mercurial, perhaps, and wayward a little sometimes, but full of kindness and sensibility to suffering."

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

CONCORD, April 1, 1857.

DEAR RICKETSON,— I got your note of welcome night before last. Channing is not here; at least I have not seen nor heard of him, but depend on meeting him in New Bedford. I expect, if the weather is favorable, to take the 4.30 train from Boston to-morrow, Thursday, p. m., for I hear of no noon train, and shall be glad to find your wagon at Tarkiln Hill, for I see it will be rather late for going across lots.

Alcott was here last week, and will probably visit New Bedford within a week or two.
I have seen all the spring signs you mention, and a few more, even here. Nay, I heard one frog peep nearly a week ago,—methinks the very first one in all this region. I wish that there were a few more signs of spring in myself; however, I take it that there are as many within us as we think we hear without us. I am decent for a steady pace, but not yet for a race. I have a little cold at present, and you speak of rheumatism about the head and shoulders. Your frost is not quite out. I suppose that the earth itself has a little cold and rheumatism about these times; but all these things together produce a very fair general result. In a concert, you know, we must sing our parts feebly sometimes, that we may not injure the general effect. I should not wonder if my two-year-old invalidity had been a positively charming feature to some amateurs favorably located. Why not a blasted man as well as a blasted tree, on your lawn?

If you should happen not to see me by the train named, do not go again, but wait at home for me, or a note from

Yours,

HENRY D. THOREAU.

On that Thursday, April 2, Alcott wrote in his Diary, “Henry Thoreau comes to tea, also Ellery Channing, and we talk till into the evening late.” This visit of Thoreau was his longest, lasting until April 15, and it was during the fortnight that he sang “Tom Bowling” and danced with vigor in the Brooklawn drawing-room, a scene which Alcott loved to describe. Sophia Thoreau, writing in 1862, said: “I have so often witnessed the like that I can easily imagine how it was, and I remember that Henry gave me some account. I recollect he said that he did not scruple to tread on Mr. Alcott’s toes.”

TO HARRISON BLAKE

Concord, April 17, 1857.

MR. BLAKE,—I returned from New Bedford night before last. I met Alcott there, and learned from him that probably you had gone to Concord. I am very sorry that I missed you. I had expected you earlier, and at last thought that I should get back before you came; but I ought to have notified you of my absence. However, it would have been too late, after I had made up my mind to go. I hope you lost nothing by going a little round.

I took out the celtis seeds at your request, at the time we spoke of them, and left them in the chamber on some shelf or other. If you have found them, very well; if you have not found them, very well; but tell Hale 1 of it, if you see him. My mother says that you and Brown and Rogers and Wasson (titles left behind) talk of coming down on me some day. Do not fail to come, one and all, and within a week or two, if possible; else I may be gone again. Give me a short notice, and then come and spend a day on Concord River,—or say that you will come if it is fair, unless

1 Rev. Edward E. Hale, then pastor at Worcester. Others mentioned in the letter are Rev. David A. Wasson and Dr. Seth Rogers,—the latter a physician with whom Mr. Wasson was living in Worcester.
you are confident of bringing fair weather with you. Come and be Concord, as I have been Worcester.

Perhaps you came nearer to me for not finding me at home; for trains of thought the more connect when trains of cars do not. If I had actually met you, you would have gone again; but now I have not yet dismissed you. I hear what you say about personal relations with joy. It is as if you had said: "I value the best and finest part of you, and not the worst. I can even endure your very near and real approach, and prefer it to a shake of the hand." This intercourse is not subject to time or distance.

I have a very long new and faithful letter from Cholmondeley which I wish to show you. He speaks of sending me more books!!

If I were with you now, I could tell you much of Ricketson, and my visit to New Bedford; but I do not know how it will be by and by. I should like to have you meet R., who is the frankest man I know. Alcott and he get along very well together. Channing has returned to Concord with me,—probably for a short visit only.

Consider this a business letter, which you know counts nothing in the game we play. Remember me particularly to Brown.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

CONCORD, June 6, 1857, 3 P.M.

Mr. Blake,—I have just got your note, but I am sorry to say that I this very morning sent a note to Channing, stating that I would go with him to Cape Cod next week on an excursion which we have been talking of for some time. If there were time to communicate with you, I should ask you to come to Concord on Monday, before I go; but as it is, I must wait till I come back, which I think will be about ten days hence. I do not like this delay, but there seems to be a fate in it. Perhaps Mr. Wasson will be well enough to come by that time. I will notify you of my return, and shall depend on seeing you all.

June 23d. I returned from Cape Cod last evening, and now take the first opportunity to invite you men of Worcester to this quiet Mediterranean shore. Can you come this week on Friday, or next Monday? I mention the earliest days on which I suppose you can be ready. If more convenient, name some other time within ten days. I shall be rejoiced to see you, and to act the part of skipper in the contemplated voyage. I have just got another letter from Cholmondeley, which may interest you somewhat.

TO MARSTON WATSON (AT PLYMOUTH).

CONCORD, August 17, 1857.

Mr. Watson,—I am much indebted to you for your glowing communication of July 20th. I had that very day left Concord for the wilds of Maine; but when I returned, August 8th, two out of the six worms remained nearly, if not quite, as bright as at first, I was assured. In their best estate they had excited the admiration of many of the inhabitants of Concord. It was a singular coincidence that I should find these worms awaiting me, for my mind was full of a pho-
phorescence which I had seen in the woods. I have waited to learn something more about them before acknowledging the receipt of them. I have frequently met with glow-worms in my night walks, but am not sure they were the same kind with these. Dr. Harris once described to me a larger kind than I had found, "nearly as big as your little finger;" but he does not name them in his report.

The only authorities on Glow-worms which I chance to have (and I am pretty well provided) are Kirby and Spence (the fullest), Knapp ("Journal of a Naturalist”), "The Library of Entertaining Knowledge” (Rennie), a French work, etc., etc.; but there is no minute, scientific description of any of these. This is apparently a female of the genus Lampyris; but Kirby and Spence say that there are nearly two hundred species of this genus alone. The one commonly referred to by English writers is the Lampyris noctiluca; but judging from Kirby and Spence’s description, and from the description and plate in the French work, this is not that one, for, besides other differences, both say that the light proceeds from the abdomen. Perhaps the worms exhibited by Durkee (whose statement to the Boston Society of Natural History, second July meeting, in the Traveller of August 12, 1857, I send you) were the same with these. I do not see how they could be the L. noctiluca, as he states.

I expect to go to Cambridge before long, and if I get any more light on this subject I will inform you. The two worms are still alive.

I shall be glad to receive the drosera at any time, if

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, August 18, 1857.

Dear Sir,—Your Wilson Flagg 1 seems a serious person, and it is encouraging to hear of a contemporary who recognizes Nature so squarely, and selects such a theme as “Barns.” (I would rather “Mount Auburn” were omitted.) But he is not alert enough. He wants stirring up with a pole. He should practice turning a series of somersets rapidly or jump up and see how many times he can strike his feet together before coming down. Let him make the earth turn round now the other way, and whet his wits on it, whichever way it goes, as on a grindstone; in short, see how many ideas he can entertain at once.

His style, as I remember, is singularly vague (I refer

1 A writer on scenery and natural history, who outlived Thoreau, and never forgave him for the remark about “stirring up with a pole,” which really might have been less graphic.
FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS [1857]

312 to the book), and, before I got to the end of the sentences, I was off the track. If you indulge in long periods, you must be sure to have a snapper at the end. As for style of writing, if one has anything to say, it drops from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground. There are no two ways about it, but down it comes, and he may stick in the points and stops wherever he can get a chance. New ideas come into this world somewhat like falling meteors, with a flash and an explosion, and perhaps somebody’s castle-roof perforated. To try to polish the stone in its descent, to give it a peculiar turn, and make it whistle a tune, perchance, would be of no use, if it were possible. Your polished stuff turns out not to be meteoric, but of this earth. However, there is plenty of time, and Nature is an admirable schoolmistress.

Speaking of correspondence, you ask me if I “cannot turn over a new leaf in that line.” I certainly could if I were to receive it; but just then I looked up and saw that your page was dated “May 10,” though mailed in August, and it occurred to me that I had seen you since that date this year. Looking again, it appeared that your note was written in ’56!! However, it was a new leaf to me, and I turned it over with as much interest as if it had been written the day before. Perhaps you kept it so long in order that the manuscript and subject-matter might be more in keeping with the old-fashioned paper on which it was written.

I traveled the length of Cape Cod on foot, soon after you were here, and, within a few days, have returned from the wilds of Maine, where I have made a journey of three hundred and twenty-five miles with a canoe and an Indian, and a single white companion. — Edward Hoar, Esq., of this town, lately from California, — traversing the head waters of the Kennebec, Penobscot, and St. John.

Can’t you extract any advantage out of that depression of spirits you refer to? It suggests to me cider-mills, wine-presses, etc., etc. All kinds of pressure or power should be used and made to turn some kind of machinery.

Channing was just leaving Concord for Plymouth when I arrived, but said he should be here again in two or three days.

Please remember me to your family, and say that I have at length learned to sing “Tom Bowlin” according to the notes.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, September 9, 1857.

FRIEND RICKETSON, — I thank you for your kind invitation to visit you, but I have taken so many vacations this year, — at New Bedford, Cape Cod, and Maine, — that any more relaxation — call it rather dissipation — will cover me with shame and disgrace. I have not earned what I have already enjoyed. As some heads cannot carry much wine, so it would seem that I cannot bear so much society as you can. I have an immense appetite for solitude, like an infant for sleep, and if I don’t get enough of it this year, I shall cry all the next.

My mother’s house is full at present; but if it were
not, I would have no right to invite you hither, while entertaining such designs as I have hinted at. However, if you care to storm the town, I will engage to take some afternoon walks with you,—retiring into profoundest solitude the most sacred part of the day.

Ricketson had written to invite Thoreau to visit him again, saying among other things, “Walton’s small sailboat is now on Assawampset Pond.” After visiting Concord that autumn, he proposed another visit in December, saying (December 11, 1857), “I long to see your long beard. Channing says it is terrible to behold, but improves you mightily.” This fixes the date, late in that year, when Thoreau first wore his full beard, as shown in his latest portraits.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, August 18, 1857.

Mr. Blake,—Fifteenthly. It seems to me that you need some absorbing pursuit. It does not matter much what it is, so it be honest. Such employment will be favorable to your development in more characteristic and important directions. You know there must be impulse enough for steerageway, though it be not toward your port, to prevent your drifting helplessly on to rocks or shoals. Some sails are set for this purpose only. There is the large fleet of scholars and men of science, for instance, always to be seen standing off and on every coast, and saved thus from running on to reefs, who will at last run into their proper haven, we trust.

It is a pity you were not here with Brown and Wiley. I think that in this case, for a rarity, the more the merrier.

You perceived that I did not entertain the idea of our going together to Maine on such an excursion as I had planned. The more I thought of it, the more imprudent it appeared to me. I did think to have written you before going, though not to propose your going also; but I went at last very suddenly, and could only have written a business letter, if I had tried, when there was no business to be accomplished. I have now returned, and think I have had a quite profitable journey, chiefly from associating with an intelligent Indian. My companion, Edward Hoar, also found his account in it, though he suffered considerably from being obliged to carry unusual loads over wet and rough “carries,”—in one instance five miles through a swamp, where the water was frequently up to our knees, and the fallen timber higher than our heads. He went over the ground three times, not being able to carry all his load at once. This prevented his ascending Ktaadn. Our best nights were those when it rained the hardest, on account of the mosquitoes. I speak of these things, which were not unexpected, merely to account for my not inviting you.

Having returned, I flatter myself that the world appears in some respects a little larger, and not, as usual, smaller and shallower, for having extended my range. I have made a short excursion into the new world which the Indian dwells in, or is. He begins where we leave off. It is worth the while to detect new faculties
in man,—he is so much the more divine; and anything that fairly excites our admiration expands us. The Indian, who can find his way so wonderfully in the woods, possesses so much intelligence which the white man does not,—and it increases my own capacity, as well as faith, to observe it. I rejoice to find that intelligence flows in other channels than I knew. It redeems for me portions of what seemed brutish before.

It is a great satisfaction to find that your oldest convictions are permanent. With regard to essentials, I have never had occasion to change my mind. The aspect of the world varies from year to year, as the landscape is differently clothed, but I find that the truth is still true, and I never regret any emphasis which it may have inspired. Ktaadn is there still, but much more surely my old conviction is there, resting with more than mountain breadth and weight on the world, the source still of fertilizing streams, and affording glorious views from its summit, if I can get up to it again. As the mountains still stand on the plain, and far more unchangeable and permanent,—stand still grouped around, farther or nearer to my maturer eye, the ideas which I have entertained,—the everlasting teats from which we draw our nourishment.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, November 16, 1857.

MR. BLAKE,—You have got the start again. It was I that owed you a letter or two, if I mistake not. They make a great ado nowadays about hard times; ¹

¹ The panic of 1837,—the worst since 1837.

but I think that the community generally, ministers and all, take a wrong view of the matter, though some of the ministers preaching according to a formula may pretend to take a right one. This general failure, both private and public, is rather occasion for rejoicing, as reminding us whom we have at the helm,—that justice is always done. If our merchants did not most of them fail, and the banks too, my faith in the old laws of the world would be staggered. The statement that ninety-six in a hundred doing such business surely break down is perhaps the sweetest fact that statistics have revealed,—exhilarating as the fragrance of sal-lows in spring. Does it not say somewhere, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice"? If thousands are thrown out of employment, it suggests that they were not well employed. Why don't they take the hint? It is not enough to be industrious; so are the ants. What are you industrious about?

The merchants and company have long laughed at transcendentalism, higher laws, etc., crying, "None of your moonshine," as if they were anchored to something not only definite, but sure and permanent. If there was any institution which was presumed to rest on a solid and secure basis, and more than any other represented this boasted common sense, prudence, and practical talent, it was the bank; and now those very banks are found to be mere reeds shaken by the wind. Scarcey one in the land has kept its promise... It would seem as if you only need live forty years in any age of this world, to see its most promising government become the government of Kansas, and banks nowhere.
Not merely the Brook Farm and Fourierite communities, but now the community generally has failed. But there is the moonshine still, serene, beneficent, and unchanged. Hard times, I say, have this value, among others, that they show us what such promises are worth,—where the sure banks are. I heard some Mr. Eliot praised the other day because he had paid some of his debts, though it took nearly all he had (why, I’ve done as much as that myself many times, and a little more), and then gone to board. What if he has? I hope he’s got a good boarding-place, and can pay for it. It’s not everybody that can. However, in my opinion, it is cheaper to keep house,—i.e., if you don’t keep too big a one.

Men will tell you sometimes that “money’s hard.” That shows it was not made to eat, I say. Only think of a man in this new world, in his log cabin, in the midst of a corn and potato patch, with a sheepfold on one side, talking about money being hard! So are flints hard; there is no alloy in them. What has that got to do with his raising his food, cutting his wood (or breaking it), keeping indoors when it rains, and, if need be, spinning and weaving his clothes? Some of those who sank with the steamer the other day found out that money was heavy too. Think of a man’s priding himself on this kind of wealth, as if it greatly enriched him. As if one struggling in mid-ocean with a bag of gold on his back should gasp out, “I am worth a hundred thousand dollars.” I see them struggling just as ineffectually on dry land, may, even more hopelessly, for, in the former case, rather than sink, they will finally let the bag go; but in the latter they are pretty sure to hold and go down with it. I see them swimming about in their greatcoats, collecting their rents, really getting their dues, drinking bitter draughts which only increase their thirst, becoming more and more water-logged, till finally they sink plumb down to the bottom. But enough of this.

Have you ever read Ruskin’s books? If not, I would recommend [you] to try the second and third volumes (not parts) of his “Modern Painters.” I am now reading the fourth, and have read most of his other books lately. They are singularly good and encouraging, though not without crudeness and bigotry. The themes in the volumes referred to are Infinity, Beauty, Imagination, Love of Nature, etc.,—all treated in a very living manner. I am rather surprised by them. It is remarkable that these things should be said with reference to painting chiefly, rather than literature. The “Seven Lamps of Architecture,” too, is made of good stuff; but, as I remember, there is too much about art in it for me and the Hottentots. We want to know about matters and things in general. Our house is as yet a hut.

You must have been enriched by your solitary walk over the mountains. I suppose that I feel the same awe when on their summits that many do on entering a church. To see what kind of earth that is on which you have a house and garden somewhere, perchance! It is equal to the lapse of many years. You must ascend a mountain to learn your relation to matter, and so to your own body, for it is at home there, though
you are not. It might have been composed there, and
will have no farther to go to return to dust there, than
in your garden; but your spirit inevitably comes away,
and brings your body with it, if it lives. Just as awful
really, and as glorious, is your garden. See how I can
play with my fingers! They are the funniest compa-
nions I have ever found. Where did they come from?
What strange control I have over them? Who
am I? What are they? — those little peaks — call them Mad-
son, Jefferson, Lafayette. What is the matter? My
fingers, do I say? Why, ere long, they may form the
topmost crystal of Mount Washington. I go up there
to see my body's cousins. There are some fingers, toes,
bowels, etc., that I take an interest in, and therefore
I am interested in all their relations.

Let me suggest a theme for you: to state to yourself
precisely and completely what that walk over the
mountains amounted to for you, — returning to this
essay again and again, until you are satisfied that all
that was important in your experience is in it. Give
this good reason to yourself for having gone over the
mountains, for mankind is ever going over a mountain.
Don't suppose that you can tell it precisely the first
dozen times you try, but at 'em again, especially where,
after a sufficient pause, you suspect that you are touch-
ing the heart or summit of the matter, reiterate your
blows there, and account for the mountain to yourself.
Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long
while to make it short. It did not take very long to
get over the mountain, you thought; but have you got
over it indeed? If you have been to the top of Mount

Washington, let me ask, what did you find there?
That is the way they prove witnesses, you know. Go-
ing up there and being blown on is nothing. We never
do much climbing while we are there, but we eat our
luncheon, etc., very much as at home. It is after we
get home that we really go over the mountain, if ever.
What did the mountain say? What did the mountain
do?

I keep a mountain anchored off eastward a little
way, which I ascend in my dreams both awake and
asleep. Its broad base spreads over a village or two,
which does not know it; neither does it know them, nor
do I when I ascend it. I can see its general outline as
plainly now in my mind as that of Wachusett. I do
not invent in the least, but state exactly what I see. I
find that I go up it when I am light-footed and earnest.
It ever smokes like an altar with its sacrifice. I am not
aware that a single villager frequents it or knows of it.
I keep this mountain to ride instead of a horse.

Do you not mistake about seeing Moosehead Lake
from Mount Washington? That must be about one
hundred and twenty miles distant, or nearly twice as
far as the Atlantic, which last some doubt if they can
see thence. Was it not Umbagog?

Dr. Solger has been lecturing in the vestry in this

1 Reinhold Solger, Ph. D., — a very intellectual and well-taught
Prussian, who was one of the lecturers for a year or two at my "Con-
cord School," the successor of the Concord "Academy," in which
the children of the Emerson, Alcott, Hawthorne, Hoar, and Ripley
families were taught. At this date the lectures were given in the vestry
of the parish church, which Thoreau playfully termed "a meeting-
house cellar." It was there that Louisa Alcott acted plays.
town on Geography, to Sanborn's scholars, for several months past, at five p. m. Emerson and Alcott have been to hear him. I was surprised when the former asked me, the other day, if I was not going to hear Dr. Solger. What, to be sitting in a meeting-house cellar at that time of day, when you might possibly be outdoors! I never thought of such a thing. What was the sun made for? If he does not prize daylight, I do. Let him lecture to owls and dormice. He must be a wonderful lecturer indeed who can keep me indoors at such an hour, when the night is coming in which no man can walk.

Are you in want of amusement nowadays? Then play a little at the game of getting a living. There never was anything equal to it. Do it temperately, though, and don't sweat. Don't let this secret out, for I have a design against the Opera. Opera!! Pass along the exclamations, devil.¹

Now is the time to become conversant with your wood-pile (this comes under Work for the Month), and be sure you put some warmth into it by your mode of getting it. Do not consent to be passively warmed. An intense degree of that is the hotness that is threatened. But a positive warmth within can withstand the fiery furnace, as the vital heat of a living man can withstand the heat that cooks meat.

After returning from the last of his three expeditions to the Maine woods (in 1846, 1853, and 1857), Thoreau was appealed to by his friend Higginson, then

¹ Exclamation points and printer's devil
I do not know whether you think of ascending the St. Lawrence in a canoe; but if you should, you might be delayed not only by the current, but by the waves, which frequently run too high for a canoe on such a mighty stream. It would be a grand excursion to go to Quebec by the Chaudière, descend the St. Lawrence to the Rivière du Loup, and return by the Madawaska and St. John to Fredericton, or farther,—almost all the way down-stream,—a very important consideration.

I went to Moosehead in company with a party of four who were going a-hunting down the Allegash and St. John, and thence by some other stream over into the Restigouche, and down that to the Bay of Chaleur,—to be gone six weeks. Our northern terminus was an island in Heron Lake on the Allegash. (Vide Colton’s railroad and township map of Maine.)

The Indian proposed that we should return to Bangor by the St. John and Great Schoodic Lake, which we had thought of ourselves; and he showed us on the map where we should be each night. It was then noon, and the next day night, continuing down the Allegash, we should have been at the Madawaska settlements, having made only one or two portages; and thereafter, on the St. John there would be but one or two more falls, with short carries; and if there was not too much wind, we could go down that stream one hundred miles a day. It is settled all the way below Madawaska. He knew the route well. He even said that this was easier, and would take but little more time, though much farther, than the route we decided on,—i.e., by Webster Stream, the East Branch, and main Penobscot to Oldtown; but he may have wanted a longer job. We preferred the latter, not only because it was shorter, but because, as he said, it was wilder.

We went about three hundred and twenty-five miles with the canoe (including sixty miles of stage between Bangor and Oldtown); were out twelve nights, and spent about $49 apiece,—which was more than was necessary. We paid the Indian, who was a very good one, $1.50 per day and 50 cents a week for his canoe. This is enough in ordinary seasons. I had formerly paid $2 for an Indian and for white batteau-men.

If you go to Madawaska in a leisurely manner, supposing no delay on account of rain or the violence of the wind, you may reach Mt. Kineo by noon, and have the afternoon to explore it. The next day you may get to the head of the lake before noon, make the portage of two and a half miles over a wooden railroad, and drop down the Penobscot half a dozen miles. The third morning you will perhaps walk half a mile about Pine Stream Falls, while the Indian runs down,—cross the head of Chesuncook, reach the junction of the Caucomgomock and Umbazookskus by noon, and ascend the latter to Umbazookskus Lake that night. If it is low water, you may have to walk and carry a little on the Umbazookskus before entering the lake. The fourth morning you will make the carry of two miles to Mud Pond (Allegash water),,—and a very wet carry it is,—and reach Chamberlain Lake by noon, and Heron Lake, perhaps, that night, after a couple of very short carries at the outlet of Chamberlain. At the end of two days more you will probably
be at Madawaska. Of course the Indian can paddle twice as far in a day as he commonly does.

Perhaps you would like a few more details. We used (three of us) exactly twenty-six pounds of hard bread, fourteen pounds of pork, three pounds of coffee, twelve pounds of sugar (and could have used more), besides a little tea, Indian meal, and rice, — and plenty of berries and moose-meat. This was faring very luxuriously. I had not formerly carried coffee, sugar, or rice. But for solid food, I decide that it is not worth the while to carry anything but hard bread and pork, whatever your tastes and habits may be. These wear best, and you have no time nor dishes in which to cook anything else. Of course you will take a little Indian meal to fry fish in; and half a dozen lemons also, if you have sugar, will be very refreshing, — for the water is warm.1

To save time, the sugar, coffee, tea, salt, etc., should be in separate water-tight bags, labeled, and tied with a leathern string; and all the provisions and blankets should be put into two large india-rubber bags, if you can find them water-tight. Ours were not. A four-quart tin pail makes a good kettle for all purposes, and tin

1 Channing says (Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist, new ed., pp. 41, 42): “He made for himself a knapsack, with partitions for his books and papers, — india-rubber cloth (strong and large and spaced, the common knapsacks being unspaced). . . . After trying the merit of cocoa, coffee, water, and the like, tea was put down as the felicity of a walking ‘travail;’ — tea plenty, strong, with enough sugar, made in a tin pint cup. . . . He commended every party to carry ‘a junk of heavy cake’ with plums in it, having found by long experience that after toil it was a capital refreshment.”

plates are portable and convenient. Don’t forget an india-rubber knapsack, with a large flap, — plenty of dish-cloths, old newspapers, strings, and twenty-five feet of strong cord. Of india-rubber clothing, the most you can wear, if any, is a very light coat, — and that you cannot work in. I could be more particular, — but perhaps have been too much so already.

TO MARSTON WATSON (AT PLYMOUTH).

Concord, April 25, 1858.

Dear Sir,— Your unexpected gift of pear trees reached me yesterday in good condition, and I spent the afternoon in giving them a good setting out; but I fear that this cold weather may hurt them. However, I am inclined to think they are insured, since you have looked on them. It makes one’s mouth water to read their names only. From what I hear of the extent of your bounty, if a reasonable part of the trees succeed, this transplanting will make a new era for Concord to date from.

Mine must be a lucky star, for day before yesterday I received a box of mayflowers from Brattleboro, and yesterday morning your pear trees, and at evening a hummingbird’s nest from Worcester. This looks like fairy housekeeping.

I discovered two new plants in Concord last winter, the Labrador tea (Ledum latifolium), and yew (Taxus baccata).

By the way, in January I communicated with Dr. Durkee, whose report on glow-worms I sent you, and it appeared, as I expected, that he (and by his account
Aga
Gsiz, Gould, Jackson, and others to whom he showed
them) did not consider them a distinct species, but a
variety of the common, or Lampryls noctiluca, some of
which you got in Lincoln. Durkee, at least, has never
seen the last. I told him that I had no doubt about
their being a distinct species. His, however, were lumi-
nous throughout every part of the body, as those which
you sent me were not, while I had them.

Is nature as full of vigor to your eyes as ever, or do you
detect some falling off at last? Is the mystery of
the hog's bristle cleared up, and with it that of our
life? It is the question, to the exclusion of every other
interest.

I am sorry to hear of the burning of your woods, but,
thank Heaven, your great ponds and your sea cannot
be burnt. I love to think of your warm, sandy wood-
roads, and your breezy island out in the sea. What a
prospect you can get every morning from the hilltop
east of your house! I think that even the heathen that

1 Marston Watson, whose uncle, Edward Watson, with his nephews,
owned the “breezy island” where Thoreau had visited his friends
(Clark’s Island, the only one in Plymouth Bay), had built his own
house, “Hillside,” on the slope of one of the hills above Plymouth
town, and there laid out a fine park and garden, which Thoreau surveyed
for him in the autumn of 1854. Alcott and Mr. Watson carrying the
claim. For a description of Hillside, see Channing’s Wanderer (Boston,
1871) and Alcott’s Somerset and Canterbury (Boston: Roberts, 1882).

I am could say, or sing, or dance, morning prayers
there of some kind.

Please remember me to Mrs. Watson, and to the rest
of your family who are helping the sun shine yonder.

Of his habits in mountain-climbing, Channing says:
"He ascended such hills as Monadnoe by his own path;
would lay down his map on the summit and draw a
line to the point he proposed to visit below, — perhaps
forty miles away on the landscape, and set off bravely
to make the 'short-cut.' The lowland people wondered
to see him scaling the heights as if he had lost his way,
or at his jumping over their cow-yard fences, — asking
if he had fallen from the clouds. In a walk like this he
always carried his umbrella; and on this Monadnoe
trip, when about a mile from the station [in Troy, N. H.],
a torrent of rain came down; without the umbrella his
books, blankets, maps, and provisions would all have
been spoiled, or the morning lost by delay. On the
mountain there being a thick, soaking fog, the first ob-
ject was to camp and make tea. He spent five nights
in camp, having built another hut, to get varied views.
Flowers, birds, lichens, and the rocks were carefully
examined, all parts of the mountain were visited, and

suppose.” In a letter he says: “I have always heard the ‘Maiden in
the East’ was Mrs. Watson, — Mary Russell Watson, — and I sup-
pose there is no doubt of it. I may be prejudiced, but I have always
thought it one of his best things, — and I have highly valued his lines.
I find in my Dial, No. 6, I have written six new stanzas in the margin
of Friendship, and they are numbered to show how they should run.
I think Mrs. Brown gave them to me.”

1 Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist, new ed., pp. 42-45.
as accurate a map as could be made by pocket compass was carefully sketched and drawn out, in the five days spent there,—with notes of the striking aerial phenomena, incidents of travel and natural history. The outlook across the valley over to Wachusett, with its thunder-storms and battles in the cloud; the farmers' back-yards in Jaffrey, where the family cotton can be seen bleaching on the grass, but no trace of the pigmy family; the dry, soft air all night, the lack of dew in the morning; the want of water,—a pint being a good deal,—these, and similar things make up some part of such an excursion."

The Monadnock excursion above mentioned began June 3d, and continued three days. It inspired Thoreau to take a longer mountain tour with his neighbor and friend Edward Hoar, to which these letters relate, giving the ways and means of the journey,—a memorable one to all concerned.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

CONCORD, June 29, 1858, 8 A.M.

Mr. Blake,—Edward Hoar and I propose to start for the White Mountains in a covered wagon, with one horse, on the morning of Thursday the 1st of July, intending to explore the mountain-tops botanically, and camp on them at least several times. Will you take a seat in the wagon with us? Mr. Hoar prefers to hire the horse and wagon himself. Let us hear by express, as soon as you can, whether you will join us here by the earliest train on Thursday morning, or Wednesday night. Bring your map of the mountains, and as much

 provision for the road as you can,—hard bread, sugar, tea, meat, etc.,—for we intend to live like gipsies; also, a blanket and some thick clothes for the mountain-top.

July 1st. Last Monday evening Mr. Edward Hoar said that he thought of going to the White Mountains. I remarked casually that I should like to go well enough if I could afford it. Whereupon he declared that if I would go with him, he would hire a horse and wagon, so that the ride would cost me nothing, and we would explore the mountain-tops botanically, camping on them many nights. The next morning I suggested you and Brown's accompanying us in another wagon, and we could all camp and cook, gipsy-like, along the way,—or, perhaps, if the horse could draw us, you would like to bear half the expense of the horse and wagon, and take a seat with us. He liked either proposition, but said that if you would take a seat with us, he would prefer to hire the horse and wagon himself. You could contribute something else if you pleased. Supposing that Brown would be confined, I wrote to you accordingly, by express on Tuesday morning, via Boston, stating that we should start to-day, suggesting provision, thick clothes, etc., and asking for an answer; but I have not received one. I have just heard that you may be at Sterling, and now write to say that we shall still be glad if you will join us at Senter Harbor, where we expect to be next Monday morning. In any case, will you please direct a letter to us there at once?
TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, June 30, 1858.

Friend Ricketson,—I am on the point of starting for the White Mountains in a wagon with my neighbor Edward Hoar, and I write to you now rather to apologize for not writing, than to answer worthily your three notes. I thank you heartily for them. You will not care for a little delay in acknowledging them, since your date shows that you can afford to wait. Indeed, my head has been so full of company, etc., that I could not reply to you fitly before, nor can I now.

As for preaching to men these days in the Walden strain, is it of any consequence to preach to an audience of men who can fail, or who can be revived? There are few beside. Is it any success to interest these parties? If a man has speculated and failed, he will probably do these things again, in spite of you or me. I confess that it is rare that I rise to sentiment in my relations to men,—ordinarily to a mere patient, or may be wholesome, good-will. I can imagine something more, but the truth compels me to regard the ideal and the actual as two things.

Channing has come, and as suddenly gone, and left a short poem, “Near Home,” published (?) or printed by Munroe, which I have hardly had time to glance at. As you may guess, I learn nothing of you from him.

You already foresee my answer to your invitation to make you a summer visit: I am bound for the mountains. But I trust that you have vanquished, ere this, those dusky demons that seem to lurk around the Head of the River.¹ You know that this warfare is nothing but a kind of nightmare, and it is our thoughts alone which give those unworthy any body or existence.

I made an excursion with Blake, of Worcester, to Monadnock, a few weeks since. We took our blankets and food, spent two nights on the mountain, and did not go into a house.

Alcott has been very busy for a long time repairing an old shell of a house, and I have seen very little of him.² I have looked more at the houses which birds build. Watson made us all very generous presents from his nursery in the spring. Especially did he remember Alcott.

Excuse me for not writing any more at present, and remember me to your family.

In explanation of the next letter (October 31, 1858), it may be said that Ricketson had formed a plan for visiting Europe, which he gave up, and had recommended an “English Australian” who proposed to see Concord. In Thoreau’s reply, he mentions Mr. Hoar, who was not only his companion in later journeys, but, while in college or the Harvard Law School, had assisted Thoreau in that accidental forest fire, mentioned in the Journal, which brought both the young men into

¹ Near which, at New Bedford, Mr. Ricketson lived.
² This was the “Orchard House,” near Hawthorne’s “Wayside.” The estate on which it stands, now owned by Mrs. Lothrop, who also owns the “Wayside,” was surveyed for Mr. Alcott by Thoreau in October, 1857.
much disrepute among the Concord farmers and owners of wood-lots. At the date of the letter, Channing was flitting between New Bedford and Concord, and soon returned to spend the rest of his days in Thoreau’s town, where he died, December 23, 1901, the last survivor of the group of friends to whom these letters relate.

In July, 1858, as mentioned in this letter to Mr. Ricketson, Thoreau journeyed from Concord to the White Mountains, first visited with his brother John in 1839. His later companion was Edward Hoar, a botanist and lover of nature, who had been a magistrate in California, and in boyhood a comrade of Thoreau in shooting excursions on the Concord meadows. They journeyed in a wagon and Thoreau disliked the loss of independence in choice of camping-places involved in the care of a horse. He complained also of the magnificent inns (“mountain houses”) that had sprung up in the passes and on the plateaus since his first visit. “Give me,” he said, “a spruce-house made in the rain,” such as he and Channing afterward (1860) made on Monadnock in his last trip to that mountain. The chief exploit in the White Mountain trip was a visit to Tuckerman’s Ravine on Mt. Washington, of which Mr. Hoar, some years before his death (in 1893), gave me an account, containing the true anecdote of Thoreau’s finding the arnica plant when he needed it.

On their way to this rather inaccessible chasm, Thoreau and his comrade went first to what was then but a small tavern on the “tip-top” of Mt. Washington. It was a foggy day; and when the landlord was asked if he could furnish a guide to Tuckerman’s Ravine, he replied, “Yes, my brother is the guide; but if he went to-day he could never find his way back in this fog.” “Well,” said Thoreau, “if we cannot have a guide we will find it ourselves;” and he at once produced a map he had made the day before at a roadside inn, where he had found a wall map of the mountain region, and climbed on a table to copy that portion he needed. With this map and his pocket compass he “struck a bee-line,” said Mr. Hoar, for the ravine, and soon came to it, about a mile away. They went safely down the steep stairs into the chasm, where they found the midsummer iceberg they wished to see. But as they walked down the bed of the Peabody River, flowing from this ravine, over boulders five or six feet high, the heavy packs on their shoulders weighed them down, and finally, Thoreau’s foot slipping, he fell and sprained his ankle. He rose, but had not limped five steps from the place where he fell, when he said, “Here is the arnica, anyhow,” — reached out his hand and plucked the Arnica mollis, which he had not before found anywhere. Before reaching the mountains they had marked in their botany books forty-six species of plants they hoped to find there, and before they came away they had found forty-two of them.

When they reached their camping-place, farther down, Thoreau was so lame he could not move about, and lay there in the camp several days, eating the pork and other supplies they had in their packs, Mr. Hoar going each day to the inn at the mountain summit. This camp was in a thicket of dwarf firs at the foot of the
ravine, where, just before his accident, by carelessness in lighting a fire, some acres of the mountain woodland had been set on fire; but this proved to be the signal for which Thoreau had told his Worcester friends to watch, if they wished to join him on the mountain. "I had told Blake," says Thoreau in his Journal, "to look out for a smoke and a white tent. We had made a smoke sure enough. We slept five in the tent that night, and found it quite warm." Mr. Hoar added: "In this journey Thoreau insisted on our carrying heavy packs, and rather despised persons who complained of the burden. He was chagrined, in the Maine woods, to find his Indian, Joe Polis (whom, on the whole, he admired), excited and tremulous at sight of a moose, so that he could scarcely load his gun properly. Joe, who was a good Catholic, wanted us to stop traveling on Sunday and hold a meeting; and when we insisted on going forward, the Indian withdrew into the woods to say his prayers — then came back and picked up the breakfast things, and we paddled on. As to Thoreau's courage and manliness, nobody who had seen him among the Penobscot rocks and rapids — the Indian trusting his life and his canoe to Henry's skill, promptitude, and nerve — would ever doubt it."

Channing says: 1 "In his later journeys, if his companion was footsore or loitered, he steadily pursued his

1 Channing's Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist, new ed., pp. 6, 15, 16. Channing himself was, no doubt, the "follower" and "companion" here mentioned; no person so frequently walked with Thoreau in his long excursions. They were together in New Boston, N. H., when the minister mentioned in the Week reproved Thoreau for not going to meeting on Sunday. When I first lived in Concord (March, 1855), and asked the innkeeper what Sunday services the village held, he replied, "There's the Orthodox, an' the Unitarian, an' th' Walden Pond Association," — meaning by the last what Emerson called "the Walkers." — those who rambled in the Walden woods on Sundays.

road. Once, when a follower was done up with headache and incapable of motion, hoping his associate would comfort him and perhaps afford him a sip of tea, he said, "There are people who are sick in that way every morning, and go about their affairs," and then marched off about his. In such limits, so inevitable, was he compacted. . . . This tone of mind grew out of no insensibility; or, if he sometimes looked coldly on the suffering of more tender natures, he sympathized with their afflictions, but could do nothing to admire them. He would not injure a plant unnecessarily. At the time of the John Brown tragedy, Thoreau was driven sick. So the country's misfortunes in the Union war acted on his feelings with great force: he used to say he 'could never recover while the war lasted.'” Hawthorne had an experience somewhat similar, though he, too, was of stern stuff when need was, and had much of the old Salem sea-captains in his sensitive nature.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, October 31, 1858.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—I have not seen anything of your English author yet. Edward Hoar, my companion in Maine and at the White Mountains, his sister Elizabeth, and a Miss Prichard, another neighbor of ours, went to Europe in the Niagara on the 6th. I told them
to look out for you under the Yardley Oak, but it
seems they will not find you there.

I had a pleasant time in Tuckerman’s Ravine at the
White Mountains in July, entertaining four beside
myself under my little tent through some soaking
rains; and more recently I have taken an interesting walk
with Channing about Cape Ann. We were obliged to
“dipper it” a good way, on account of the scarcity of
fresh water, for we got most of our meals by the shore.
Channing is understood to be here for the winter, but
I rarely see him.

I should be pleased to see your face here in the
course of the Indian summer, which may still be ex-
pected, if any authority can tell us when that phenom-
enon does occur. We would like to hear the story of
your travels; for if you have not been fairly intoxicated
with Europe, you have been half-seas-over, and so can
probably tell more about it.

This alludes to the fact that Ricketson got as far as
Halifax in his attempt at Europe; and in his reply
(October 3, 1858) he gave Thoreau an account of
his short voyage, on which the next letter comments.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, November 6, 1858.

FRIEND RICKETSON. — I was much pleased with your
lively and lifelike account of your voyage. You were
more than repaid for your trouble after all. The coast
of Nova Scotia, which you sailed along from Windsor
westward, is particularly interesting to the historian of
this country, having been settled earlier than Plymouth.
Your “Isle of Haut” is properly “Isle Haute,” or
the High Island of Champlain’s map. There is an-
other off the coast of Maine. By the way, the Amer-
ican elk of American authors (Cervus Canadensis) is a
distinct animal from the moose (Cervus alces), though
the latter is called elk by many.

You drew a very vivid portrait of the Australian,
—short and stout, with a pipe in his mouth, and his
book inspired by beer, Pot First, Pot Second, etc. I
suspect that he must be potbellied withal. Methinks I
see the smoke going up from him as from a cottage on
the moor. If he does not quench his genius with his
beer, it may burst into a clear flame at last. However,
perhaps he intentionally adopts the low style.

What do you mean by that ado about smoking, and
my “purer tastes”? I should like his pipe as well as
his beer at least. Neither of them is so bad as to be
“highly connected,” which you say he is, unfortunately.
No! I expect nothing but pleasure in “smoke from
your pipe.”

You and the Australian must have put your heads
together when you concocted those titles,—with pipes
in your mouths over a pot of beer. I suppose that your
chapters are, Whiff the First, Whiff the Second, etc.
But of course it is a more modest expression for “Fire
from my Genius.”

You must have been very busy since you came back,
or before you sailed, to have brought out your History,
of whose publication I had not heard. I suppose that
I have read it in the Mercury. Yet I am curious to
see how it looks in a volume, with your name on the title-page.

I am more curious still about the poems. Pray put some sketches into the book: your shanty for frontispiece; Arthur and Walton’s boat (if you can) running for Cuttyhunk in a tremendous gale; not forgetting “Be honest boys,” etc., near by; the Middleborough ponds with a certain island looming in the distance; the Quaker meeting-house, and the Brady house, if you like; the villagers catching smelts with dip-nets in the twilight, at the Head of the River, etc., etc. Let it be a local and villageous book as much as possible. Let some one make it trite.

Let some one make a characteristic selection of mottoes from your shanty walls, and sprinkle them in an irregular manner, at all angles, over the fly-leaves and margins, as a man stamps his name in a hurry; and also canes, pipes, and jackknives, of all your patterns, about the frontispiece. I can think of plenty of devices for tail-pieces. Indeed, I should like to see a hair pillow, accurately drawn, for one: a cat, with a bell on, for another; the old horse, with his age printed in the hollow of his back; half a coconut-shell by a spring; a sheet of blotted paper; a settle occupied by a settler at full length, etc., etc., etc. Call all the arts to your aid.

Don’t wait for the Indian summer, but bring it with you.

P. S. — Let me ask a favor. I am trying to write something about the autumnal tints, and I wish to know how much our trees differ from English and European ones in this respect. Will you observe, or

TO DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord, November 22, 1858.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—I thank you for your “History.”1 Though I have not yet read it again, I have looked far enough to see that I like the homeliness of it: that is, the good, old-fashioned way of writing, as if you actually lived where you wrote. A man’s interest in a single bluebird is worth more than a complete but dry list of the fauna and flora of a town. It is also a considerable advantage to be able to say at any time, “If D. R. is not here, here is his book.” Alcott being here, and inquiring after you (whom he has been expecting), I lent the book to him almost immediately. He talks of going West the latter part of this week. Channing is here again, as I am told, but I have not seen him.

I thank you also for the account of the trees. It was to my purpose, and I hope you got something out of it too. I suppose that the cold weather prevented your coming here. Suppose you try a winter walk on skates. Please remember me to your family.

1 Of New Bedford, first published in the Mercury of that city, while Channing was one of the editors, and afterwards in a volume.
Late in November, 1858, Cholmondeley, who had not written for a year and six months, suddenly notified Thoreau from Montreal that he was in Canada, and would visit Concord the next week. Accordingly he arrived early in December, and urged his friend to go with him to the West Indies. John Thoreau, the father, was then in his last illness, and for that and other reasons Thoreau could not accept the invitation; but he detained Cholmondeley in Concord some days, and took him to New Bedford, December 8th, having first written this note to Mr. Ricketson:

"Thomas Cholmondeley, my English acquaintance, is here, on his way to the West Indies. He wants to see New Bedford, a whaling town. I tell him I would like to introduce him to you there,—thinking more of his seeing you than New Bedford. So we propose to come your way to-morrow. Excuse this short notice, for the time is short. If on any account it is inconvenient to see us, you will treat us accordingly."

Of this visit and his English visitor, Mr. Ricketson wrote in his journal the next day:

"We were all much pleased with Mr. Cholmondeley. He is a tall spare man, thirty-five years of age, of fair and fresh complexion, blue eyes, light-brown and fine hair, nose small and Roman, beard light and worn full, with a mustache. A man of fine culture and refinement of manners, educated at Oriel College, Oxford, of an old Cheshire family by his father, a clergyman. He wore a black velvet sack coat, and lighter-colored trousers,—a sort of genteel traveling suit; perhaps a cap, but by no means a fashionable 'castor.' He reminded me of our dear friend, George William Curtis.” Few greater compliments could this diarist give than to compare a visitor to Curtis, the lamented.

Mr. Cholmondeley left Concord for the South, going as far as to Virginia, in December and January; then came back to Concord the 20th of January, 1859, and after a few days returned to Canada, and thence to England by way of Jamaica. He was in London when Theodore Parker reached there from Santa Cruz, in June, and called on him, with offers of service; but does not seem to have heard of Parker’s death till I wrote him in May, 1861. At my parting with him in Concord, he gave me money with which to buy grapes for the invalid father of Thoreau,—an instance of his constant consideration for others; the Thoreaus hardly affording such luxuries as hothouse grapes for the sick. Sophia Thoreau, who perhaps was more appreciative of him than her more stoical brother, said after his death, “We have always had the truest regard for him, as a person of rare integrity, great benevolence, and the sincerest friendliness.” This well describes the man whose every-day guise was literally set down by Mr. Ricketson.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

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 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 for 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.

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

1 The club with which Thoreau here makes merry was the Saturday Club, meeting at Parker's Hotel in Boston the last Saturday in each month, of which Emerson, Agassiz, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Henry James, and other men of letters were members. Thoreau, though invited, never seems to have met with them, as Channing did, on one memorable occasion, at least, described by Mr. James in a letter cited in the Memoir of Bronson Alcott, who also occasionally dined with this club. The conversation at Emerson's next mentioned was also memorable for the vigor with which Miss Mary Emerson, then eighty-four years old, rebuked Mr. James for what she thought his dangerous Antinomian views concerning the moral law.
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. 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 liesingly 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 doubtless 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 he 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 from 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 tucked 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 neighbor halloo (Brown, maybe) 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 Nacos 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.

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,’ 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.

1 This was Tuckerman’s Ravine at the White Mountains, where Thoreau met with his mishap in the preceding July.
The death of John Thoreau (who was born October 8, 1787) occurred February 3d, and Thoreau gave his lecture on "Autumnal Tints" at Worcester, February 22, 1859. Mrs. Thoreau survived all her children except Sophia, and died in 1872.

At his father's death, Thoreau sent a newspaper announcement of it to Ricketson, who had already seen it mentioned by Channing in the Mercury. Ricketson at once wrote, to pay his tribute to the character of the elder Thoreau, saying: "I have rarely met a man who inspired me with more respect. 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 impressed with his good sense, his fine social nature, and his genuine hospitality." Of this remark Thoreau took notice in his interesting reply.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, 12th February, 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 knew 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 of 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 how to make a good article, pencil or other (for he practiced various arts), and was never satisfied with what he had produced. Nor was he ever disposed in the least 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 twenty-one, fifty years ago. As I sat in a circle the other evening with my mother and sister, my mother's two sisters, and my father's two sisters, it occurred to me that my father, though seventy-one, 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 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 and sister thank you heartily for your sympathy. The latter, in particular, agrees with you in thinking that it is communion with still living and 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 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 22d, and shall see Blake and 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 I did not sufficiently recognize him.

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

A long silence had passed on Thoreau’s part before he wrote again to Ricketson,—nearly two years, in fact, and his friend complained of it. He had followed the public utterances of Thoreau with entire sympathy, although much in advance, in 1839-40, of public opinion respecting John Brown and slavery, and he had

sent him letters and complimentary verses. Finally, he almost implored Thoreau to renew the bond of friendship. This will explain the tenor of Thoreau’s reply.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON

Concord, November 4, 1860.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—I thank you for the verses. They are quite too good to apply to me. However, I know what a poet’s license is, and will not get in the way.

But what do you mean by that prose? Why will you waste so many regards on me, and not know what to think of my silence? Infer from it what you might from the silence of a dense pine wood. It is its natural condition, except when the winds blow, and the jays scream, and the chickadee winds up his clock. My silence is just as inhuman as that, and no more. You know that I never promised to correspond with you, and so, when I do, I do more than I promised.

Such are my pursuits and habits that I rarely go abroad; and it is quite a habit with me to decline invitations to do so. Not that I could not enjoy such visits, if I were not otherwise occupied. I have enjoyed very much my visits to you, and my rides in your neighborhood, and am sorry that I cannot enjoy such things oftener; but life is short, and there are other things also to be done. I admit that you are more social than I am and far more attentive to “the common courtesies of life;” but this is partly for the reason that you have fewer or less exacting private pursuits.

Not to have written a note for a year is with me a
very venial offense. I think that I do not correspond
with any one so often as once in six months.

I have a faint recollection of your invitation referred
to; but I suppose that I had no new nor particular rea-
son for declining, and so made no new statement. I
have felt that you would be glad to see me almost
whenever I got ready to come; but I only offer myself
as a rare visitor, and a still rarer correspondent.

I am very busy, after my fashion, little as there is to
show for it, and feel as if I could not spend many days
nor dollars in traveling; for the shortest visit must have
a fair margin to it, and the days thus affect the weeks,
you know. Nevertheless, we cannot forego these luxu-
ries altogether. You must not regard me as a regular
diet, but at most only as acorns, which, too, are not to
be despised. — which, at least, we love to think are
edible in a bracing walk. We have got along pretty
well together in several directions, though we are such
strangers in others.

I hardly know what to say in answer to your letter.
Some are accustomed to write many letters, others very
few. I am one of the last. At any rate, we are pretty
sure, if we write at all, to send those thoughts which
we cherish, to that one who, we believe, will most re-
ligiously attend to them.

This life is not for complaint, but for satisfaction. I
do not feel addressed by this letter of yours. It sug-
gests only misunderstanding. Intercourse may be good;
but of what use are complaints and apologies? Any
complaint I have to make is too serious to be uttered,
for the evil cannot be mended.

TO HARRISON 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 at-
tend 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 flock 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 mur-
muring stream, while you lie dreaming on the bank;
but, it seems, you must take hold with your hands, and

1 He was looking after the manufacture of fine plumbago for the
electrotypes, which was the family business after pencil-making grew
unprofitable. The Thoreaus had a grinding-mill in Acton, and a pack-
ing-shop attached to their Concord house. “Parker’s society,” men-
tioned at the close of the letter, was the congregation of Theodore
Parker, then in Italy, where he died in May, 1860.
shove the wheel round. You can't depend on streams, poor fecile 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 praetorian 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 the 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.
FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS [1839]

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 Parker's society on the 9th of October next.

I am off — a-barberrying.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, October 31, 1859.

Mr. Blake,—I spoke to my townsmen last evening on "The Character of Captain Brown, now in the Clutches of the Slaveholder." I should like to speak to any company at Worcester who may wish to hear me; and will come if only my expenses are paid. I think we should express ourselves at once, while Brown is alive. The sooner the better. Perhaps 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.

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

HENRY D. THOREAU.

This address on John Brown was one of the first public utterances in favor of that hero; it was made up mainly from the entries in Thoreau's journals, since I had introduced Brown to him, and he to Emerson, in March, 1857; and especially from those pages that Thoreau had written after the news of Brown's capture in Virginia had reached him. It was first given in the vestry of the old parish church in Concord (where, in 1774, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts had met to prepare for armed resistance to British tyranny); was repeated at Worcester the same week, and before a great audience in Boston, the following Sunday,—after which it was published in the newspapers, and had a wide reading. Mr. Alcott in his diary mentions it under date of Sunday, October 30, thus: "Thoreau reads a paper on John Brown, his virtues, spirit, and deeds, this evening, and to the delight of his company,—the best that could be gathered at short notice,—and among them Emerson. (November 4.) Thoreau calls and reports about the reading of his lecture on Brown at Boston and Worcester. He has been the first to speak and celebrate the hero's courage and magnanimity; it is these that he discerns and praises. The men have much in common,—the sturdy manliness, straightforwardness, and independence. (November 5.) Ricketson from New Bedford arrives; he and Thoreau take supper with us. Thoreau talks freely and enthusiastically about Brown,—denouncing the Union, the President, the States, and Virginia particularly; wishes to publish his late speech, and has seen Boston publishers, but failed to find any to print it for him." It was soon after published, along with Emerson's two speeches in favor of Brown, by a new Boston publishing house (Thayer & Eldridge), in a volume called "Echoes of Harper's Ferry," edited by the late James Redpath, Brown's first biographer. In the following summer, Thoreau sent a second paper on Brown (written soon after his execution) to be read at a commemoration of
the martyr, beside his grave among the Adirondack Mountains. This is mentioned in his letter to Sophia Thoreau, July 8, 1860. He took an active part in arranging for the funeral service in honor of Brown, at Concord, the day of his death, December 2, 1859.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, May 20, 1860.

Mr. Blake,—I must endeavor to pay some of my debts to you. To begin where we left off, then.

The presumption is that we are always the same; our opportunities, and Nature herself, fluctuating. Look at mankind. No great difference between two, apparently; perhaps the same height, and breadth, and weight; and yet, to the man who sits most east, this life is a weariness, routine, (lust and ashes, and he drowns his imaginary cares (!) (a sort of friction among his vital organs) in a bowl. But to the man who sits most west, his contemporary (!), it is a field for all noble endeavors, an elysium, the dwelling-place of heroes and demigods. The former complains that he has a thousand affairs to attend to; but he does not realize that his affairs (though they may be a thousand) and he are one.

Men and boys are learning all kinds of trades but how to make men of themselves. They learn to make houses; but they are not so well housed, they are not so contented in their houses, as the woodchucks in their holes. What is the use of a house if you have not got a tolerable planet to put it on? — if you cannot tolerate the planet it is on? Grade the ground first. If a man believes and expects great things of himself, it makes no odds where you put him, or what you show him (of course you cannot put him anywhere, nor show him anything), he will be surrounded by grandeur. He is in the condition of a healthy and hungry man, who says to himself,—How sweet this crust is! If he despairs of himself, then Tophet is his dwelling-place, and he is in the condition of a sick man who is disgusted with the fruits of finest flavor.

Whether he sleeps or wakes,—whether he runs or walks,—whether he uses a microscope or a telescope, or his naked eye,—a man never discovers anything, never overtakes anything, or leaves anything behind, but himself. Whatever he says or does, he merely reports himself. If he is in love, he loves; if he is in heaven, he enjoys; if he is in hell, he suffers. It is his condition that determines his locality.

The principal, the only, thing a man makes, is his condition of fate. Though commonly he does not know it, nor put up a sign to this effect, "My own destiny made and mended here." (Not yours.) He is a master workman in the business. He works twenty-four hours a day at it, and gets it done. Whatever else he neglects or botches, no man was ever known to neglect this work. A great many pretend to make shoes chiefly, and would scout the idea that they make the hard times which they experience.

Each reaching and aspiration is an instinct with which all nature consists and co-operates, and therefore it is not in vain. But alas! each relaxing and desperation is an instinct too. To be active, well, happy, im-
plies rare courage. To be ready to fight in a duel or a battle implies desperation, or that you hold your life cheap.

If you take this life to be simply what old religious folks pretend (I mean the effete, gone to seed in a drought, mere human galls stung by the devil once), then all your joy and serenity is reduced to grinning and bearing it. The fact is, you have got to take the world on your shoulders like Atlas, and "put along" with it. You will do this for an idea's sake, and your success will be in proportion to your devotion to ideas. It may make your back ache occasionally, but you will have the satisfaction of hanging it or twirling it to suit yourself. Cowards suffer, heroes enjoy. After a long day's walk with it, pitch it into a hollow place, sit down and eat your luncheon. Unexpectedly, by some immortal thoughts, you will be compensated. The bank whereon you sit will be a fragrant and flowery one, and your world in the hollow a sleek and light gazelle.

Where is the "unexplored land" but in our own untried enterprises? To an adventurous spirit any place—London, New York, Worcester, or his own yard—is "unexplored land," to seek which Frémont and Kane travel so far. To a sluggish and defeated spirit even the Great Basin and the Polaris are trivial places. If they can get there (and, indeed, they are there now), they will want to sleep, and give it up, just as they always do. These are the regions of the Known and of the Unknown. What is the use of going right over the old track again? There is an adder in the path which your own feet have worn. You must make tracks into the Unknown. That is what you have your board and clothes for. Why do you ever mend your clothes, unless that, wearing them, you may mend your ways? Let us sing.

TO SOPHIA THOREAU (AT CAMPTON, N. H.).

CONCORD, July 8, 1860.

DEAR SOPHIA,—Mother reminds me that I must write to you, if only a few lines, though I have sprained my thumb, so that it is questionable whether I can write legibly, if at all. I can't "bear on" much. What is worse, I believe that I have sprained my brain too—that is, it sympathizes with my thumb. But that is no excuse, I suppose, for writing a letter in such a case is like sending a newspaper, only a hint to let you know that "all is well,"—but my thumb.

I hope that you begin to derive some benefit from that more mountainous air which you are breathing. Have you had a distinct view of the Franconia Notch Mountains (blue peaks in the northern horizon)? which I told you you could get from the road in Campton, probably from some other points nearer. Such a view of the mountains is more memorable than any other. Have you been to Squam Lake or overlooked it? I should think that you could make an excursion in that direction from which you could see the lake and mountains generally. Is there no friend of N. P. Rogers who can tell you where the "lions" are?

Of course I did not go to North Elba, but I sent

1 He was invited to a gathering of John Brown's friends at the
some reminiscences of last fall. I hear that John Brown, Jr., has now come to Boston for a few days. Mr. Sanborn’s case, it is said, will come on after some murder cases have been disposed of here.

I have just been invited formally to be present at the annual picnic of Theodore Parker’s society (that was), at Waverley, next Wednesday, and to make some remarks. But that is wholly out of my line. I do not go to picnics, even in Concord, you know.

Mother and Aunt Sophia rode to Acton in time yesterday. I suppose that you have heard that Mr. Hawthorne has come home. I went to meet him the other evening and found that he has not altered, except that he was looking quite brown after his voyage. He is as simple and childlike as ever.

I believe that I have fairly scared the kittens away, at last, by my pretended fierceness, which was. I will consider my thumb — and your eyes.

HENRY.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, August 3, 1860.

MR. BLAKE, — I some time ago asked Channing if he would not spend a week with me on Monadnock; but he did not answer decidedly. Lately he has talked of an excursion somewhere, but I said that now I must wait till my sister returned from Plymouth, N. H.

grave in the Adirondack woods. “Mr. Sanborn’s case” was an indictment and civil suit against Silas Carleton et al., for an attempt to kidnap F. B. Sanborn, who had refused to accept the invitation of the Senate at Washington to testify in the John Brown investigation.

She has returned, — and accordingly, on receiving your note this morning, I made known its contents to Channing, in order to see how far I was engaged with him. The result is that he decides to go to Monadnock tomorrow morning;1 so I must defer making an excursion with you and Brown to another season. Perhaps you will call as you pass the mountain. I send this by the earliest mail.

P. S. — That was a very insufficient visit which you made here the last time. My mother is better, though far from well; and if you should chance along here any time after your journey, I trust that we shall all do better.

The mention by Thoreau of John Brown and my “case” recalls to me an incident of those excited days

1 This is the excursion described by Thoreau in a subsequent letter, lasting six days, and the first that Channing had made which involved “camping out.” It was also Thoreau’s last visit to this favorite mountain; but Channing continued to go there after the death of his friend; and some of these visits are recorded in his poem “The Wanderer.” The last one was in September, 1869, when I accompanied him, and we again spent five nights on the plateau where he had camped with Thoreau. At that time, one of the “two good spruce houses, half a mile apart,” mentioned by Thoreau, was still standing, in ruins, — the place called by Channing “Henry’s Camp,” and thus described:—

We built our fortress where you see
You group of spruce-trees, sidewise on the line
Where the horizon to the eastward bounds,—
A point selected by sagacious art,
Where all at once we viewed the Vermont hills,
And the long outline of the mountain-ridge,
Ever renewing, changeful every hour.

See The Wanderer (Boston, 1871), p. 61.
which followed the attack by Brown on slavery in Virginia. The day after Brown’s death, but before the execution of his comrades, I received a message from the late Dr. David Thayer of Boston, implying, as I thought, that a son of Brown was at his house, whither I hurried to meet him. Instead, I found young F. J. Merriam of Boston, who had escaped with Owen Brown from Harper’s Ferry, and was now in Boston to raise another party against the slaveholders. He was unfit to lead or even join in such a desperate undertaking, and we insisted he should return to safety in Canada, — a large reward being offered for his seizure. He agreed to go back to Canada that night by the Fitchburg Railroad; but in his hot-headed way he took the wrong train, which ran no farther than Concord, — and found himself in the early evening at my house, where my sister received him, but insisted that I should not see him, lest I might be questioned about my guest. While he had supper and went to bed, I posted down to Mr. Emerson’s and engaged his horse and covered wagon, to be ready at sunrise, — he asking no questions. In the same way I engaged Mr. Thoreau to drive his friend’s horse to South Acton the next morning, and there put on board the first Canadian train a Mr. Lockwood, whom he would find at my house. Thoreau readily consented, asked no questions, walked to the Emerson stable the next morning, found the horse ready, drove him to my door, and took up Merriam, under the name of Lockwood, — neither knowing who the other was. Merriam was so flighty that, though he had agreed to go to Montreal, and knew that his life might depend on getting there early, he declared he must see Mr. Emerson, to lay before him his plan for invading the South, and consult him about some moral questions that troubled his mind. His companion listened gravely, — and hurried the horse towards Acton. Merriam grew more positive and suspicious, — “Perhaps you are Mr. Emerson; you look somewhat like him.” — “No, I am not,” said Thoreau, and drove steadily away from Concord. “Well, then, I am going back,” said the youth, and flung himself out of the wagon. How Thoreau got him in again, he never told me; but I suspected some judicious force, accompanying the grave persuasive speech natural to our friend. At any rate, he took his man to Acton, saw him safe on the train, and reported to me that “Mr. Lockwood had taken passage for Canada,” where he arrived that night. Nothing more passed between us until, more than two years after, he inquired one day, in his last illness, who my fugitive was. Merriam was then out of danger in that way, and had been for months a soldier in the Union army, where he died. I therefore said that “Lockwood” was the grandson of his mother’s old friend, Francis Jackson, and had escaped from Maryland. In return he gave me the odd incidents of their drive, and mentioned that he had spoken of the affair to his mother only since his illness. So reticent and practically useful could he be; as Channing says, “He made no useless professions, never asked one of those questions which destroy all relation; but he was

1 See Thoreau’s Journal, Dec. 3, 1859. Merriam mentioned Thoreau’s name to him, but never guessed who his companion was.
on the spot at the time, he meant friendship, and meant nothing else, and stood by it without the slightest abatement."

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, November 4, 1860.

Mr. Blake,—I am glad to hear any particulars of your excursion. As for myself, I looked out for you somewhat on that Monday, when, it appears, you passed Monadnock; turned my glass upon several parties that were ascending the mountain half a mile on one side of us. In short, I came as near to seeing you as you to seeing me. I have no doubt that we should have had a good time if you had come, for I had, all ready, two good spruce houses, in which you could stand up, complete in all respects, half a mile apart, and you and B. could have lodged by yourselves in one, if not with us.

We made an excellent beginning of our mountain life.1 You may remember that the Saturday previous was a stormy day. Well, we went up in the rain,—wet through,—and found ourselves in a cloud there at mid-afternoon, in no situation to look about for the best place for a camp. So I proceeded at once, through the cloud, to that memorable stone, "chunk yard," in which we made our humble camp once, and there, after putting our packs under a rock, having a good hatchet, I proceeded to build a substantial house, which Channing declared the handsomest he ever saw. (He never

1 This was Thoreau's last visit to Monadnock, and the one mentioned in the note of August 8, and in Channing's Wanderer.
blessings. And then, such a view of the wet rocks, with the wet lichens on them, as we had the next morning, but did not get again!

We and the mountain had a sound season, as the saying is. How glad we were to be wet, in order that we might be dried! How glad we were of the storm which made our house seem like a new home to us! This day's experience was indeed lucky, for we did not have a thunder-shower during all our stay. Perhaps our host reserved this attention in order to tempt us to come again.

Our next house was more substantial still. One side was rock, good for durability; the floor the same; and the roof which I made would have upheld a horse. I stood on it to do the shingling.

I noticed, when I was at the White Mountains last, several nuisances which render traveling thereabouts unpleasant. The chief of these was the mountain houses. I might have supposed that the main attraction of that region, even to citizens, lay in its wildness and unlikeness to the city, and yet they make it as much like the city as they can afford to. I heard that the Crawford House was lighted with gas, and had a large saloon, with its band of music, for dancing. But give me a spruce house made in the rain.

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An old Concord farmer tells me that he ascended Monadnock once, and danced on the top. How did that happen? Why, he being up there, a party of young men and women came up, bringing boards and a fiddler; and, having laid down the boards, they made a level floor, on which they danced to the music of the
were the subject of some conversation which we overheard. Five hundred persons at least came on to the mountain while we were there, but not one found our camp. We saw one party of three ladies and two gentlemen spread their blankets and spend the night on the top, and heard them converse; but they did not know that they had neighbors who were comparatively old settlers. We spared them the chagrin which that knowledge would have caused them, and let them print their story in a newspaper accordingly.

Yes, to meet men on an honest and simple footing, meet with rebuffs, suffer from sore feet, as you did,—ay, and from a sore heart, as perhaps you also did,—all that is excellent. What a pity that that young prince could not enjoy a little of the legitimate experience of traveling—he dealt with simply and truly, though rudely. He might have been invited to some hospitable house in the country, had his bowl of bread and milk set before him, with a clean pinafore; been told that there were punt and the fishing-rod, and he could amuse himself as he chose; might have swung a few birches, dug out a woodchuck, and had a regular good time, and finally been sent to bed with the boys,—and so never have been introduced to Mr. Everett at all. I have no doubt that this would have been a far more memorable and valuable experience than he got.

The snow-clad summit of Mt. Washington must have been a very interesting sight from Wachusett. How wholesome winter is, seen far or near; how good,

\[\text{Er. 43}\] TO HARRISON BLAKE

above all more sentimental, warm-blooded, short-lived, soft-hearted, moral goodness, commonly so called. Give me the goodness which has forgotten its own deeds,—which God has seen to be good, and let be. None of your just made perfect,—pickled ods! All that will save them will be their picturesqueness, as with blasted trees. Whatever is, and is not ashamed to be, is good. I value no moral goodness or greatness unless it is good or great, even as that snowy peak is. Pray, how could thirty feet of bowels improve it? Nature is goodness crystallized. You looked into the land of promise. Whatever beauty we behold, the more it is distant, serene, and cold, the purer and more durable it is. It is better to warm ourselves with ice than with fire.

Tell Brown that he sent me more than the price of the book, viz., a word from himself, for which I am greatly his debtor.

Thoreau began to be more seriously ill than he had been for some years, early in December, 1860. He exposed himself unduly in one of his walks, while counting the rings on stumps of trees, amid snow. He ceased much of his small activity of letter-writing; but, in addressing Ricketson the next spring, he took the unusual pains of writing him a letter of some length which he never sent. It was found among his papers after death,—the first draft of it, which ran as follows, but was left a fragment:—
TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, March 19, 1861.

Friend R,—Your letter reached me in due time, but I had already heard the bluebirds. They were here on the 26th of February at least,—but not yet do the larks sing or the flickers call, with us. The bluebirds come again, as does the same spring, but it does not find the same mortals here to greet it. You remember Minott’s cottage on the hillside,—well, it finds some change there, for instance. The little gray hip-roofed cottage was occupied at the beginning of February, this year, by George Minott and his sister Mary, respectively 78 and 80 years old, and Miss Potter, 74. These had been its permanent occupants for many years. Minott had been on his last legs for some time,—at last off his legs, expecting weekly to take his departure,—a burden to himself and friends,—yet dry and natural as ever. His sister took care of him, and supported herself and family with her needle, as usual. He lately willed his little property to her, as a slight compensation for her care. Feb. 13 their sister, 86 or 87, who lived across the way, died. Miss Minott had taken cold in visiting her, and was so sick that she could not go to her funeral. She herself died of lung fever on the 18th (which was said to be the same disease that her sister had),—having just willed her property back to George, and added her own mite to it. Miss Potter, too, had now become ill,—too ill to attend the funeral,—and she died of the same disease on the 23d. All

1 Now termed pneumonia.

departed as gently as the sun goes down, leaving George alone.

I called to see him the other day,—the 27th of February, a remarkably pleasant spring day,—and as I was climbing the sunny slope to his strangely deserted house, I heard the first bluebirds upon the elm that hangs over it. They had come as usual, though some who used to hear them were gone. Even Minott had not heard them, though the door was open,—for he was thinking of other things. Perhaps there will be a time when the bluebirds themselves will not return any more.

I hear that George, a few days after this, called out to his niece, who had come to take care of him, and was in the next room, to know if she did not feel lonely? “Yes, I do,” said she. “So do I,” added he. He said he was like an old oak, all shattered and decaying. “I am sure, Uncle,” said his niece, “you are not much like an oak!” “I mean,” said he, “that I am like an oak or any other tree, inasmuch as I cannot stir from where I am.”

Either this topic was too pathetic for Thoreau to finish the letter, or perchance he thought it not likely to interest his friend; for he threw aside this draft for three days, and then, with the same beginning, wrote a very different letter. The Minotts were old familiar acquaintance, and related to that Captain Minott whom Thoreau’s grandmother married as a second husband. George was his “old man of Verona,” who had not left Concord for more than forty years, except to stray
over the town bounds in hunting or wood-ranging; and Mary was the "tailoress" who for years made Thoreau's garments.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

CONCORD, March 22, 1861.

FRIEND RICKETSON, — The bluebird was here the 26th of February, at least, which is one day earlier than you 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 3rd of December, 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 post-office in some particularly fine noons. My health otherwise has not been affected in the least, nor my spirits. I have simply been imprisoned for so long, and it has not prevented my doing a good deal of reading and the like.

Channing has looked after me very faithfully; says he has made a study of my case, and knows me better than I know myself, etc., etc. 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 and 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 in this season, when the ways were so unsettled. I had a solid talk with them for a day and 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 second annual exhibition of all the schools in the town at the Town Hall last Saturday; at which all the masters and misses did themselves great credit, as I hear, and of course reflected some on their teachers and parents. They were making their little speeches from one till six o'clock p. m., to a large audience, which patiently listened to the end. In the meanwhile, the children made Mr. Alcott an unexpected present of a fine edition of "Pilgrim's Progress" and Herbert's Poems, which, of course, overcame all parties. I enclose an order of exercises.¹

We had, last night, an old-fashioned northeast snow-storm, far worse than anything in the winter; and 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

¹ In April, 1859, Mr. Alcott was chosen superintendent of the public schools of Concord, by a school committee of which Mr. Bull, the creator of the Concord grape, and Mr. Sanborn, were members, and for some years he directed the studies of the younger pupils, to their great benefit and delight. At the yearly "exhibitions," songs were sung composed by Louisa Alcott and others, and the whole town assembled to see and hear. The stress of civil war gradually checked this idyllic movement, and Mr. Alcott returned to his garden and library. It was two years after this that Miss Alcott had her severe experience as hospital nurse at Washington.
plastered over them, and 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 eight oxen each, to break out the roads; and the train due from Boston at 8½ A. M. has not arrived yet (4 p. m.). All the passing has been a train from above at 1½ A. M., which also was due at 8½ A. M. Where are the bluebirds now, think you? I suppose that you have not so much snow at New Bedford, if any.

TO PARKER PILLSBURY (AT CONCORD, N. H.).

Concord, April 10, 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 may have one. I send, nevertheless, a copy of “The Week,” the price of which is one dollar and twenty-five cents, which you can pay at your convenience.

As for your friend, my prospective reader, I hope he ignores Fort Sumter, and “Old Abe,” and 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, and 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 two, 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 Sumter and Pickens, and even of Buchanan (though I did not read his Message). I also read the New York Tribune; but then, I am reading Herodotus and Strabo, and Blodget’s “Climatology,” and “Six Years in the Desert of North America,” as hard as I can, to counterbalance it.

By the way, Alcott is at present our most popular and successful man, and has just published a volume in size, 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.

Parker Pillsbury, to whom this letter went, was an old friend of the Thoreau family, with whom he became intimate in the antislavery agitation, wherein they took part, while he was a famous orator, celebrated by Emerson in one of his essays. Mr. Pillsbury visited Thoreau in his last illness, when he could scarcely speak above a whisper, and, having made to him some remark concerning the future life, Thoreau replied, “My friend, one world at a time.” His petulant words in this letter concerning national affairs would hardly have been said a few days later, when,
at the call of Abraham Lincoln, the people rose to protect their government, and every President's Message became of thrilling interest, even to Thoreau.

Arrangements were now making for the invalid, about whose health his friends had been anxious for some years, to travel for a better climate than the New England spring affords, and early in May Thoreau set out for the upper Mississippi. He thus missed the last letter sent to him by his English friend Cholmondeley, which I answered, then forwarded to him at Redwing, in Minnesota. It is of interest enough to be given here.

T. CHOLMONDELEY TO THOREAU (IN MINNESOTA).

Shrewsbury [England], 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, 1 who was in England about a year ago; and I hope that he has got over his difficulties and is now in his own country again. I think he has seen rather more of English country life than most Yankee tourists; and appeared to find it curious, though I fear he was dulled by our ways; for he was too full of ceremony and compliments and bows, which is a mistake here; though very well in Spain. I am afraid he was rather on pins and needles; but he made a splendid speech at a volunteer supper, and indeed the very best, some said, ever heard in this part of the country.

We are here in a state of alarm and apprehension, the world being so troubled in East and West and everywhere. Last year the harvest was bad and 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 and 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 and living while we can; not being sure where we shall be this time a year.

Give my affectionate regards to your father, mother, and sister, and to Mr. Emerson and his family, and to Channing, Sanborn, Ricketson, Blake, and Morton and Alcott and 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 altogether; and I believe, Thoreau, that the human race will at last get rid of it, though perhaps not in an 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.

1 Edwin Morton of Plymouth, Mass., a friend of John Brown and Gerrit Smith, who went to England in October, 1859, to avoid testifying against his friends.
Have you heard of any good books lately? I think "Burnt Njal" good, and believe it to be genuine. "Hast thou not heard!" (says Steinrora to Thangbrand) "how Thor challenged Christ to single combat, and how he did not dare to fight with Thor?" When Gunnar brandishes his sword, three swords are seen in air. The account of Ospah and Brodir and Brian's battle is the only historical account of that engagement, which the Irish talk so much of; for I place little trust in O'Halloran's 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. Emerson's "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 Du Chaillu'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 Society's 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; and a better monument to a governor's 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, and then you may see the best actor in the world. He has carried out Goethe's idea of Hamlet as given in the "Wilhelm Meister," showing him forth as a fair-haired and fat man. I suppose you are not got fat yet?

Yours ever truly,

THOS. CHOLMONDELEY.

TO HARRISON BLAKE (AT WORCESTER).

Concord, May 3, 1861.

MR. BLAKE,—I am still as much an invalid as when you and 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

A word may be said of the after-life of this magnificent Englishman, who did not long survive his Concord correspondent. In March, 1863, being then in command of a battalion of Shropshire Volunteers, which he had raised, he inherited Condover Hall and the large estate adjacent, and took the name of Owen as a condition of the inheritance. A year later he married Miss Victoria Cotes, daughter of John and Lady Louisa Cotes (Co. Salop), a godchild of the Queen, and went to Italy for his wedding tour. In Florence he was seized with a malignant fever, April 10, 1864, and died there April 20,—not quite two years after Thoreau's death. His brother Reginald, who had met him in Florence, carried back his remains to England, and he is buried in Condover churchyard. Writing to an American friend, Mr. R. Cholmondeley said: "The whole county mourned for one who had made himself greatly beloved. During his illness his thoughts went back very much to America and her great sufferings. His large heart felt for your country as if it were his own." It seems that he did not go to New Zealand with the "Canterbury Pilgrims," as suggested in the Atlantic Monthly (December, 1893), but in the first of Lord Lyttelton's ships (the Charlotte Jane), having joined in Lord L.'s scheme for colonizing the island, where he remained only six months, near Christchurch.
account of their muggy heat in the summer, and the South of Europe, on account of the expense of time and 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's. I am only waiting to be well enough to start. Hope to get off within a week or ten 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, etc., etc., 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; and 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, and take a boat to St. Paul's.

I trust to find a private boarding-house in one or various agreeable places in that region, and spend my time there. I expect, and shall be prepared, to be gone three months; and I would like to return by a different route,—perhaps Mackinaw and 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 and all-absorbing but miserable business as my health, and not altogether his, to attend to, causing me to stop here and go there, etc., etc., unaccountably.

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

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

TO F. B. SANBORN (AT CONCORD).

REDWING, MINNESOTA, June 26, 1861.

Mr. Sanborn,—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 four hundred and fifty 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 and below this (we are at the head of Lake Pepin) must be three or four miles wide.

I am not even so well informed as to the progress of the war as you suppose. I have seen but one Eastern paper (that, by the way, was the Tribune) for five 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, and 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, and of the beauty of this portion of it (from Dunleith, and probably 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 two thousand miles from its mouth. There is not a "rip" below that, and the river is almost as wide in the upper as the lower part of its course. Steamers go up the Sank Rapids, above the Falls, near a hundred miles farther, and 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, etc., etc. In coming up the river from Dunleith, you meet with great rafts of sawed lumber and of logs, twenty rods or more in length, by five or six 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 three hundred or more miles up the Minnesota (St. Peter's) River, to Redwood, or the Lower Sioux Agency, in order to see the plains, and 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 in calculable 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, and the boat was steadily turning this way or that. At the greater bends, as the Traverse des Sioux, some of the passengers were landed, and 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, and the water was rather low (it had been about fifteen 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 and close to the shore, that we were obliged to run into and break down at least fifty 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 and a cable fastened to a tree, or we swung round in the current, and completely blocked up and blockaded the river, one end of the boat resting on each shore. And yet we would haul ourselves round again with the windlass and cable in an hour or two, though the boat was about one hundred and sixty feet long, and drew some three 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, and so raising it. We once ran fairly on to a concealed rock, with a shock that aroused all the passengers, and rested there, and the mate went below with a lamp, expecting to find a hole, but he did not. Snags and 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, and it is owing to its very crookedness. Ditch it straight, and it would not only be very swift, but soon run out. It was from ten to fifteen rods wide near the mouth, and from eight to ten or twelve at Redwood. Though the current was swift, I did not see a "rip" on it, and only three or four rocks. For three 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; and 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 voyage of the Baron la Hontan (written near the end of the seventeenth 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, and at length turned up a great river coming in from the west, which he called “La Rivière Longue;” and he relates various improbable things about the country and 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 Indian affairs in this quarter, and the newly appointed Indian agent were on board; also a German
band from St. Paul, a small cannon for salutes, and the money for the Indians (ay, and the gamblers, it was said, who were to bring it back in another boat). There were about one hundred passengers, chiefly from St. Paul, and more or less recently from the northeastern 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 the son of the Rev. Samuel May, and a classmate of yours, and had been looking for us at St. Anthony.

The last of the little settlements on the river was New Ulm, about one hundred miles this side of Redwood. It consists wholly of Germans. We left them one hundred 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, and some houses have been built for them. We were now fairly on the great plains, and looking south; and, after walking that way three miles, could see no tree in that horizon. The buffalo were said to be feeding within twenty-five or thirty miles.

A regular council was held with the Indians, who had come in on their ponies, and speeches were made on both sides through 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, and probably have reason to

1 Rev. Joseph May, a cousin of Louisa Alcott.

be so. This council was to be continued for two or three days,—the payment to be made the second 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 and their own benefit; and then we took leave of them, and of the officials who had come to treat with them.

Excuse these pencil marks, but my inkstand is unscrewable, and I can only direct my letter at the bar. I could tell you more, and 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 and Mackinaw in a day or two (or as soon as we hear from home) via Prairie du Chien, and not La Crosse.

I am glad to hear that you have written Cholmondeley,1 as it relieves me of some responsibility.

The tour described in this long letter was the first and last that Thoreau ever made west of the Mohawk Valley, though his friend Channing had early visited the great prairies, and lived in log cabins of Illinois, or sailed on the chain of great lakes, by which Thoreau made a part of this journey. It was proposed that

1 I had answered T. Cholmondeley's last letter, explaining that Thoreau was ill and absent.
Channing should accompany him this time, as he had in the tour through Lower Canada, and along Cape Cod, as well as in the journeys through the Berkshire and Catskill mountains, and down the Hudson; but some misunderstanding or temporary inconvenience prevented. The actual comrade was young Horace Mann, eldest son of the school-reformer and statesman of that name,—a silent, earnest, devoted naturalist, who died early. The place where his party met the Indians—only a few months before the Minnesota massacre of 1862—was in the county of Redwood, in the southwest of the State, where now is a thriving village of 1500 people, and no buffaloes within five hundred miles. Red Wing, whence the letter was written, is below St. Paul, on the Mississippi, and was even then a considerable town,—now a city of 7000 people. The Civil War had lately begun, and the whole North was in the first flush of its uprising in defense of the Union,—for which Thoreau, in spite of his earlier defiance of government (for its alliance with slavery), was as zealous as any soldier. He returned in July, little benefited by the journey, of which he did not take his usual sufficiency of notes, and to which there is little allusion in his books. Nor does it seem that he visited on the way his correspondent since January, 1856,—C. H. Greene, of Rochester, Michigan, who had never seen him in Concord. The opinion of Thoreau himself concerning this journey will be found in his next letter to Daniel Ricketson.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, August 15, 1861.

FRIEND RICKETSON,—When your last letter was written I was away in the far Northwest, 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 traveling, considerably, yet not essentially, better; my cough still continuing. If I don’t mend very quickly, I shall be obliged to go to another climate again very soon.

My ordinary pursuits, both indoors and out, have been for the most part omitted, or seriously interrupted,—walking, boating, scribbling, etc. Indeed, I have been sick so long that I have almost forgotten what it is to be well; and yet I feel that it is in all respects only my envelope. Channing and 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, and one from yourself.

Of course I am sufficiently surprised to hear of your conversion; ¹ yet I scarcely know what to say about it.

¹ A return to religious Quakerism, of which his friend had written enthusiastically.
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, and take such rides or sauntering walks with you as an invalid may.

The visit was made, and we owe to it the preservation of the latest portrait of Thoreau, who, at his friend's urgency, sat to a photographer in New Bedford; and thus we have the full-bearded likeness of August, 1861; from which, also, and from personal recollection, Mr. Walton Ricketson made the fine profile medallion reproduced in photogravure for this volume.

TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).

Concord, October 14, 1861.

FRIEND RICKETSON, — I think that, on the whole, my health is better than when you were here; but 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, and so I abide by Concord.

September was pleasanter and much better for me than August, and October has thus far been quite tolerable. Instead of riding on horseback, I ride in a wagon about every other day. My neighbor, Mr. E. R. Hoar, has two horses, and 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 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 went 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. Channing 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.
made alterations in the manuscript. In April, just before his death, the Atlantic printed a short and characteristic sketch of Thoreau by Bronson Alcott, and in August, Emerson's funeral oration, given in the parish church of Concord. During the last six months of his illness, his sister and his friends wrote letters for him, as will be seen by the two that follow.

**SOPHIA THOREAU TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).**

**Concord, December 19, 1861.**

MR. RICKETSON:

Dear Sir,—Thank you for your friendly interest in my dear brother. I wish that I could report more favorably in regard to his health. Soon after your visit to Concord, Henry commenced riding, and almost every day he introduced me to some of his familiar haunts, far away in the thick woods, or by the ponds; all very new and delightful to me. The air and exercise which he enjoyed during the fine autumn days were a benefit to him; he seemed stronger, had a good appetite, and was able to attend somewhat to his writing; but since the cold weather has come, his cough has increased, and he is able to go out but seldom. Just now he is suffering from an attack of pleurisy, which confines him wholly to the house. His spirits do not fail him; he continues in his usual serene mood, which is very pleasant for his friends as well as himself. I am hoping for a short winter and early spring, that the invalid may again be out of doors.

I am sorry to hear of your indisposition, and trust that you will be well again soon. It would give me pleasure to see some of your newspaper articles, since you possess a hopeful spirit. My patience is nearly exhausted. The times look very dark. I think the next soldier who is shot for sleeping on his post should be Gen. McClellan. Why does he not do something in the way of fighting? I despair of ever living under the reign of Sumner or Phillips.

**BRONSON ALCOTT TO DANIEL RICKETSON (AT NEW BEDFORD).**

**Concord, January 10, 1862.**

DEAR FRIEND,—You have not been informed of Henry's condition this winter, and will be sorry to hear that he grows feebler day by day, and is evidently failing and fading from our sight. He gets some sleep, has a pretty good appetite, reads at intervals, takes notes of his readings, and likes to see his friends, conversing, however, with difficulty, as his voice partakes of his general debility. We had thought this oldest inhabitant of our Planet would have chosen to stay and see it fairly dismissed into the Chaos (out of which he has brought such precious jewels,—gifts to friends, to mankind generally, diadems for fame to coming followers, forgetful of his own claims to the honors) before he chose simply to withdraw from the spaces and times he has adorned with the truth of his genius. But the masterly work is nearly done for us here. And our woods and fields are sorrowing, though not in sombre, but in robes of white, so becoming to the piety and probity they have known so long, and soon are to miss.
There has been none such since Pliny, and it will be long before there comes his like; the most sagacious and wonderful Worthy of his time, and a marvel to coming ones.

I write at the suggestion of his sister, who thought his friends would like to be informed of his condition to the latest date.

Ever yours and respectfully,

A. Bronson Alcott.

The last letter of Henry Thoreau, written by the hand of his sister, was sent to Myron Benton, a young literary man then living in Dutchess County, New York, who had written a grateful letter to the author of "Walden" (January 6, 1862), though quite unacquainted with him. Mr. Benton said that the news of Thoreau's illness had affected him as if it were that "of a personal friend whom I had known a long time," and added: "The secret of the influence by which your writings charm me is altogether as intangible, though real, as the attraction of Nature herself. I read and reread your books with ever fresh delight. Nor is it pleasure alone; there is a singular spiritual healthiness with which they seem imbued, — the expression of a soul essentially sound, so free from any morbid tendency." After mentioning that his own home was in a pleasant valley, once the hunting-ground of the Indians, Mr. Benton said: —

"I was in hope to read something more from your pen in Mr. Conway's Dial, 1 but only recognized that

1 This was a short-lived monthly, edited at Cincinnati (1861-62)
it for me.” He is actually more familiar with what I have written than I am myself.

The verses you refer to in Conway’s Dial were written by F. B. Sanborn of this town. I never wrote for that journal.

I am pleased when you say that in the “Week” you like especially “those little snatches of poetry interspersed through the book,” for these, I suppose, are the least attractive to most readers. I have not been engaged in any particular work on Botany, or the like, though, if I were to live, I should have much to report on Natural History generally.

You ask particularly after my health. I suppose that I have not many months to live; but, of course, I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing.

Yours truly,
HENRY D. THOREAU.

by Sophia E. Thoreau.

He died May 6, 1862; his mother died March 12, 1872, and his sister Sophia, October, 1876. With the death of his aunt, Maria Thoreau, nearly twenty years after her beloved nephew, the last person of the name in America (or perhaps in England) passed away.