

# THE STACK/STOCK/STICK

OF

## THE ARTIST OF *KOUROO*

### The Staff of Perfection

An artist of long ago  
Lived in the city of Kouroo.  
A perfect work he sought to make  
Being free of flaw or mistake.

For years no wood could he find  
To make the staff of just the right kind.  
In time his friends grew old and died,  
But he in youth did abide.

For time kept out of his way  
In his search for the wood each day.  
Before he found a stock to do  
In ruin was the city Kouroo.

He shaped it on and on  
While dynasties had come and gone.  
Kalpa no longer the polestar  
When he smoothed the staff of mar.

On the ferrule and the head  
The most precious jewels he did imbed.  
When the finishing stroke was done  
His creation was the fairest one.

The material and his art  
Were both pure in every part.  
Wonderful was the staff to see.  
How else could the result be?

— Walter Westfall

J. Cockburn Thompson, in the preface of his translation of *THE BHAGAVAD-GITA, OR A DISCOURSE BETWEEN KRISHNA AND ARJUNA ON DIVINE MATTERS, A SANSKRIT PHILOSOPHICAL POEM, TRANSLATED, WITH COPIOUS NOTES, AN INTRODUCTION ON SANSKRIT PHILOSOPHY, AND OTHER MATTERS* in 1855, offered that:

The Mahabharata, as all students of Sanskrit well know, is the great epic of India, which, from its popularity and extent, would seem to correspond with the Iliad among the Greeks. The theme of the whole work is a certain war which was carried on between two branches of one tribe, the descendants of Kuru, for the sovereignty of Hastinapura, commonly supposed to be the same as the modern Delhi. The elder branch is called by the general name of the whole tribe, Kurus; the younger goes by the

patronymic from Pandu, the father of its five principal leaders. This war between the Kurus and Pandavas occupies about twenty thousand slokas, or a quarter of the whole work, as we now possess it.... In order to understand the allusions there made [in the Bhagavad-Gita], a knowledge is requisite of the preceding history of the tribe, which will now be given as follows.

Of the name Kuru we know but little, but that little is sufficient to prove that it is one of great importance. We have no means of deriving it from any Sanskrit root, nor has it, like too many of the old Indian names, the appearance of being explanatory of the peculiarities of the person or persons whom it designates. It is, therefore, in all probability, a name of considerable antiquity, brought by the Aryan race from their first seat in Central Asia. Its use in Sanskrit is fourfold. It is the name of the northern quarter, or Dwipa, of the world, and is described as lying between the most northern range of snowy mountains and the polar sea. It is, further, the name of the most northern of the nine Varshas of the known world. Among the long genealogies of the tribe itself, it is found as the name of an ancient king, to whom the foundation of the tribe is attributed. Lastly, it designates an Aryan tribe of sufficient importance to disturb the whole of northern India with its factions, and to make its battles the theme of the longest epic of olden time.

Viewing these facts together, we should be inclined to draw the conclusion that the name was originally that of a race inhabiting Central Asia beyond the Himalaya, who emigrated with other races into the northwest of the Peninsula, and with them formed the great people who styled themselves unitedly Arya, or the Noble, to distinguish them from the aborigines whom they subdued, and on whose territories they eventually settled....

At the time when the plot of the Mahabharata was enacted, this tribe was situated in the plain of the Doab, and their particular region, lying between the Jumna and Sursooty rivers, was called Kurukshetra, or the plain of the Kurus. The capital of this country was Hastinapura, and here reigned, at a period of which we cannot give the exact date, a king named Vichitravirya. He was the son of Santanu and Satyawati; and Bhishma and Krishna Dwaipayana, the Vyasa, were his half-brothers; the former being his father's, the latter his mother's son. He married two sisters -Amba and Ambalika- but dying shortly after his marriage ... he left no progeny; and his half-brother, the Vyasa, instigated by divine command, married his widows and begot two sons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu. The former had one hundred sons, the eldest of whom was Duryodhana. The latter married firstly Pritha, or Kunti, the daughter of Sura, and secondly Madri. The children of these wives were the five Pandava princes; but as their mortal father had been cursed by a deer while hunting to be childless all his life, these children were mystically begotten by different deities. Thus Yudhishtira, Bhima, and Arjuna, were the sons of Pritha by Dharmma, Vayu, and Indra, respectively. Nakula was the son of Madri by Nasatya the elder, and Sahadeva, by Dasra the younger of the twin Asvinau, the physicians of the gods. This story would seem to be a fiction, invented to give a divine origin to the five heroes of the poem: but, however this may be, Duryodhana and his brothers are the leaders of the Kuru, or elder branch of the tribe; and the five Pandava princes those of the Pandava or younger branch. Dhritarashtra was blind, but although thus incapacitated for

governing, he retained the throne, while his son Duryodhana really directed the affairs of the State.... he prevailed on his father to banish his cousins, the Pandava princes, from the country. After long wanderings and varied hardships, these princes collected their friends around them, formed by the help of many neighboring kings a vast army, and prepared to attack their unjust oppressor, who had, in like manner, assembled his forces.

The hostile armies meet on the plain of the Kurus. Bhishma, the half-brother of Vichitravirya, being the oldest warrior among them, has the command of the Kuru faction; Bhima, the second son of Pandu, noted for his strength and prowess, is the general of the other party [Arjuna's]. The scene of our poem now opens, and remains throughout the same – the field of battle. In order to introduce to the reader the names of the principal chieftains in each army, Duryodhana is made to approach Drona, his military preceptor, and name them one by one. The challenge is then suddenly given by Bhishma, the Kuru general, by blowing his conch; and he is seconded by all his followers. It is returned by Arjuna, who is in the same chariot with the god Krishna, who, in compassion for the persecution he suffered, had become his intimate friend, and was now acting the part of a charioteer to him. He is followed by all the generals of the Pandavas. The fight then begins with a volley of arrows from both sides; but when Arjuna perceives it, he begs Krishna to draw up the chariot in the space between the two armies, while he examines the lines of the enemy. The god does so, and points out in those lines the numerous relatives of his friend. Arjuna is horror-struck at the idea of committing fratricide by slaying his near relations, and throws down his bow and arrow, declaring that he would rather be killed without defending himself, than fight against them. Krishna replies with the arguments which form the didactic and philosophical doctrines of the work, and endeavors to persuade him that he is mistaken in forming such a resolution. Arjuna is eventually overruled. The fight goes on, and the Pandavas defeat their opponents....

WALDEN: There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material; and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick, his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but he grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him. Before he had found a stock in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end, and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star; and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times. But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?

Dr. Bradley P. Dean has pointed out that:

"Kuru" (more specifically, "Kurus") appears in the Sankhya Karika within two particular contexts, and because Thoreau demonstrably studied this text very carefully and therefore almost certainly picked up certain associations with the word as a geographical locale (it was basically a Hindu paradise represented variously as of this world or, as in the Sankhya Karika, other-worldly). Jeffrey S. Cramer has "Kouroo" pointing solely and simply to a legendary hero named Kuru or Curu or Kooroo; I suggest Thoreau regarded "Kouroo" as a very particular kind of location, not as a person. Did the artist of the parable carve his staff in a city named Kouroo that straddles the eternal and the temporal, or did he carve his staff in a city famous for having been the birthplace or home of a legendary hero named Kouroo? The fact that Thoreau was familiar with "the northern Kurus" as a Hindu paradise, sometimes terrestrial and other times (as in the Sankhya Karika) other-worldly, is a significant bit of information, I think.

(For the terrestrial “northern Kurus” being, as it were, terrestrially paradisiacal, see several uses in the Mahabharata, perhaps most notably this one from Book 6, Section 7: “Dhritarashtra said, ‘Tell me, O Sanjaya, thou of great intelligence, of the regions to the north and the east side of Meru, as also of the mountains of Malyavat, in detail.’ Sanjaya said, ‘On the south of the Nila mountain and the northern side of Meru are the sacred Northern Kurus, O king, which are the residence of the Siddhas. The trees there bear sweet fruits, and are always covered with fruits and flowers. All the flowers are fragrant, and the fruits of excellent taste. Some of the trees, again, O king, yield fruits according to will [according to the will of the pickers?]. There are again some other trees, O king, that are called milk-yielding. These always yield milk and the six different kinds of food of the taste of Amrita itself. Those trees also yield cloths and in their fruits are ornaments. The entire land abounds with fine golden sands. A portion of the region there, extremely delightful, is seen to be possessed of the radiance of the ruby or diamond, or of the lapis lazuli or other jewels and gems. All the seasons there are agreeable and nowhere does the land become miry, O king. The tanks are charming, delicious, and full of crystal water. The men born there have dropped from the world of the celestials. All are of pure birth and all are extremely handsome in appearance. There twins are born and the women resemble Apsaras in beauty. They drink the milk, sweet as Amrita, of the milk-yielding trees. And the twins born there grow up equally, both possessed of equal beauty, both endued with similar virtues, and both equally dressed, both grow up in love, O monarch, like a couple of chakrabakas. The people of that country are free from illness and are always cheerful. Ten thousand and ten hundred years they live, O king, and never abandon one another. A class of birds called Bharunda, furnished with sharp beaks and possessed of great strength, take them up when dead and throw them into mountain caves. I have now described to thee, O king, the Northern Kurus briefly.’”)

Brad points out that this sort of material may be consulted on the internet at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuru\\_\(India\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuru_(India))

It is possible that this connection is not better known among Thoreauvians because this volume that Thoreau consulted was the one which had been stolen from the collection presented to him by Cholmondeley:

1993: “Stolen Thoreau Book Returned to Concord Museum” (a report by David Wood):

The Concord Museum recently got back, after a fifty-one-year absence, an important volume of Hindu religious literature from Thoreau’s library, the Sanskrit text of *BHAGAVAD-GITA*, edited by J. Cockburn Thompson and printed in Hertford, England, in 1855.

In 1855, the English writer Thomas Cholmondeley (pronounced Chum-ly) sent to his friend Henry Thoreau forty-four volumes of Oriental philosophical and religious writings, which Thoreau called in his journal “a royal gift.” Included in the gift was a new two-volume edition of the *BHAGAVAD-GITA*, a book Thoreau first read in 1846 while living at Walden Pond. Both volumes, the Sanskrit text and the English translation, are inscribed on the flyleaf in Thoreau’s hand “Henry D. Thoreau from Thomas Cholmondeley.”

When Thoreau died in 1862, he bequeathed some of the Cholmondeley books to Ralph Waldo Emerson; the rest, including the Bhagavad-Gita, he willed to Bronson Alcott, the pioneering educator and member of the inner circle of the Transcendentalists who is best known as the father of Louisa May Alcott. Alcott noted the bequest on the title page of each volume: “A. Bronson Alcott from H.D. Thoreau.” Alcott in turn gave the volumes to Frank Sanborn, Thoreau’s first biographer. After his death, Sanborn’s books were sold at auction, where Stephen Wakeman bought the Bhagavad-Gita. The two volumes made up lot 1072 of the Stephen Wakeman sale held on 24 April 1924. Boston book dealer Charles Goodspeed bought them and sold them to Edward Kittredge. Kittredge gave them to the Concord Antiquarian Society (now the Concord Museum) on the completion of its new building in 1930.

In 1942, the slimmer of the two blue-bound volumes, containing the Sanskrit text, was stolen from the Antiquarian Society. Fifty-one years later, a California collector informed the Museum that he had been offered the book, which, he knew from Walter Harding’s 1983 checklist of the books in Thoreau’s library, had been stolen. The book had apparently entered the library of Philadelphia philanthropist Joshua Bailey in the early 1950s and been sold at auction in the 1970s. The person offering the book for sale had bought it from a San Diego book dealer, who arranged the return of the volume to the Concord Museum.

Edward Kittredge, the donor of the volume to the Concord Antiquarian Society, prophesied its return in a letter to Society president Allen French dated 19 February 1942: “I feel sure the book will turn up some day and be restored to its proper place” Such a book cannot escape detection.... A bibliomaniac saw it, could not resist, and, I hope, has kept it safe. In time, therefore, it should be recovered.”

The book, along with its companion volume, is on exhibit in the Thoreau Gallery at the Concord Museum, 200 Lexington Road, Concord MA.

Perhaps the best way to begin to consider the “new legend” of the artist of Kouroo is to quote from the treatment provided it by Charles R. Anderson in his 1968 analysis *THE MAGIC CIRCLE OF WALDEN*, an analysis which seems to make Thoreau out to be one of those strange minds who toy with their own “divinity” and that makes Thoreau’s use of the parable out as merely an argument entirely within the set of images and conventions we understand as “linear time,” a set of images and conventions which inevitably lead to a preoccupation with death:

If Thoreau could hint at his own divinity by identifying with Apollo from time to time, he could also suggest that he has already achieved immortality. He does so by fashioning a legend of the artist of Kouroo that is a parable of his own life and vocation. It sounds like a Hindu myth, but no one has been able to discover a source for it. Happily it must be taken as an original creation, but rendered so perfectly in the guise of an Oriental scripture as to be mistaken for one. All that came directly from his reading is that Kouroo (Kooroo, Kuru) is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Bhagvat-Geeta* as a sacred land or nation, and is referred to in the Laws of Menu as the country of Brahmanical sages. When Thoreau published his extracts from the last named in The Dial for January 1843, he included that reference and, significantly, cited Menu's dictum: "The hand of an artist employed in his art is always pure." All the rest of this legend is Thoreau's own, his most impressive leap of the imagination. It begins:

There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who was disposed to strive after perfection. One day it come into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. . . . His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way. . . .


By the time this artist had found a stick suitable for carving, his friends had deserted him, or died, and the city itself was a hoary ruin. Before he had given it proper shape, the dynasty of the Candahars was over, and with the point of his stick he wrote the name of the last of them in the sand. Before he had polished and adorned it, Brahma had slept and waked many times:

But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions. . . . And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion. . . . The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?

Anderson<sup>1</sup> clinches this shallow interpretation of Henry Thoreau as God-wannabee by a selection of biographical

1. Charles R. Anderson. *THE MAGIC CIRCLE OF WALDEN*. NY, Chicago & San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968

detail:

 final clue identifying the artist of Kouroo as Thoreau, if any were needed, can be found in his letter to a friend, in the context of his own life and work and with a reference to Brahmins: “How admirably the artist is made to accomplish his self-culture by devotion to his art!” The letter was written in December 1853, about the same time the legend was being added to the book. It is clearly a parable of Thoreau’s own labors to create a perfect work of art in WALDEN, polishing and revising it through eight separate drafts over a period of as many years – all but literally devoting his life to it. His dedication and singleness of purpose endowed him also “with perennial youth.” As the carver of Kouroo aspired upward, fashioning his simple staff, as the original Creator of the pond rounded it with his hand into an object of natural beauty and symbolic significance, so Thoreau shaped his own experience into the magic circle of WALDEN – and then made his leap out of it by translating his facts from earth to heaven. If man is to escape from the trap of time and the limitations of nature, according to this book, he will be able to do so only through the immortality of art.

One might prefer that WALDEN should end here, but there is a tailpiece that risks anticlimax and escapes it by a hair. It brings the flight back to earth, and by returning to the issues of “Economy” brings the book full circle. Following the Kouroo passage there are six pages of sharp comments on the hurry and waste and desperation of life in the modern world. This starts Thoreau’s great book running downhill rather fast, to the reader’s dismay....

Yes, if what you are looking for is an “inspirational read,” this sequel does start Thoreau’s great “inspirational read” running downhill rather fast. The fact is that Anderson, looking to be inspired but fully trapped within his own superficial acceptance of the fundamental reality of our notions of temporality, is unable to grasp the connection between the parable of the artist of Kouroo and the talk of desperation which follows it. The parable is a denial of what has come to be known, in philosophical circles, as “consequentialism,” and what follows is a description of the unfortunate affect which is associated with consequentialism in the lives of those afflicted with it. Or, to put the matter another way, there is the most intimate connection between the fancy parable and the hard talk which follows because Thoreau’s parable is a depiction of the real unreality of temporality and the material which Thoreau has positioned following his inventive parable is a description of the sad emotional condition of those like Anderson who are unable to grasp this real unreality of temporality.

For an appreciation of Thoreau’s attitude toward the unreality of our notions of temporality, and of the images by which he sought to teach us also to live in his eternity, see:

You will note in WALDEN that there is a usage of the word “stock” which we don’t know was intentional. It is the only such usage and we would suppose that it is a printer error for the word “stick,” used elsewhere, yet we know that if it is a printer error, Thoreau failed to mark it for correction in later editions as he did other printer errors. It is this which, I fancy, has given me license to play with the word and name this hypertext “stack” project the “Stack of the Artist of Kouroo.” The other vowel left is “u,” and I hope my project doesn’t get “stuck.”

My candidate for the origin of the parable of the artist of Kouroo occurred in February 1851 while Thoreau was musing on the *geist* of the sort of person who is impressed by railroad and telegraph “progress.” Here, I have cited it in its full context, and you will note that the whittling that is going on is not a staff but the whittling of numbers of wooden stopples, and that the goal of the whittling is not present perfection but great future abundance. In other words, the positive parable of the artist of Kouroo is here growing out of Thoreau’s consideration of the negative mindset of the Etzler:

Walking in the woods it may be some afternoon the shadow of the wings of a thought flits across the landscape of my mind And I am reminded how little eventful is our lives What have been all these wars & survivors of wars and modern discoveries & improvements so called a mere irritation in the skin. But this shadow which is so soon past & whose substance is not detected suggests that there are events of importance whose interval is to us a true historic period.

The lecturer is wont to describe the 19th century -the American the last generation in an offhand & triumphant strain -wafting him to Paradise spreading his fame by steam & telegraph -recounting the number of wooden stopples he has whittled But who does not perceive that this is not a sincere or pertinent account of any man’s or nation’s life. It is the hip hip hurrah & mutual admiration society style. Cars go by & we know their substance as well as their shadow. They stop & we get into them. But those sublime thoughts passing on high do not stop & we never get into them. Their conductor is not like one of us.

I feel that the man who in his conversation with me about the life of man in New England lays much stress on rail-roads telegraphs & such enterprises does not go below the surface of things- He treats the shallow & transitory as if it were profound & enduring in one of the minds avatars in the intervals between sleeping & waking -aye even in one of the interstices of a Hindoo dynasty perchance such things as the 19th century with all its improvements may come & go again. Nothing makes a deep & lasting impression but what is weighty

February 27, Thursday (to March 3): Henry Thoreau would be surveying, during this period, for Cyrus Stow, a Pine Hill woodlot in the east part of Concord, in the rear of Joseph Merriam’s house off Old Bedford Road.

(The invoice for this work has been preserved in the Thoreau Collection at Middlebury College.)

View Henry Thoreau’s personal working drafts of his surveys courtesy of AT&T and the Concord Free Public Library:

[http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau\\_surveys/Thoreau\\_surveys.htm](http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau_surveys/Thoreau_surveys.htm)

(The official copy of this survey of course had become the property of the person or persons who had hired this Concord town surveyor to do their surveying work during the 19th Century. Such materials have yet to be recovered.)

View this particular personal working draft of a survey in fine detail:

[http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau\\_surveys/121a.htm](http://www.concordnet.org/library/scollect/Thoreau_surveys/121a.htm)



February 27, Thursday: Saw today on Pine Hill behind Mr. Joseph Merriam’s House a Norway pine. The first I have seen in Concord- Mr Gleason pointed it out to me as a singular pine which he did not know

the name of. It was a very handsome tree about 25 feet high. E Wood thinks that he has lost the surface of 2 acres of his meadow by the ice.— Got 15 cartloads out of a hummock left on another meadow

Blue joint was introduced into the first meadow where it did not grow before.

Of two men, one of whom knows nothing about a subject, and what is extremely rare, knows that he knows nothing—and the other really knows something about it, but thinks that he knows all— What great advantage has the latter over the former? Which is the best to deal with?

I do not know that knowledge amounts to anything more definite than a novel & grand surprise on a sudden revelation of the insufficiency of all that we had called knowledge before. An indefinite sense of the grandeur & glory of the Universe. It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun

But man cannot be said to know in any higher sense, than he can look serenely & with impunity in the face of the sun.

A culture which imports much muck from the meadows & deepens the soil—not that which trusts to heating manures & improved agricultural implements only.

How when a man purchases a thing he is determined to get & get hold of it using how many expletives & how long a string of synonymous or similiar terms signifying possession—in the legal process— What’s mine’s my own. An old Deed of a small piece of swamp land which I have lately surveyed at the risk of being mired past recovery says “that the said Spaulding his Heirs & Assigns, shall and may from time, & at all times forever hereafter, by force & virtue of these presents, lawfully, peaceably and quietly have, hold, use, occupy, possess and enjoy the said swamp &c”

Magnetic iron being anciently found in *Magnesia* hence—magnes or magnet employed by Pliny & others—

Chinese appear to have discovered the magnet very early A D 121 & before? used by them to steer ships in 419—mentioned by an Icelander 1068—in a French poem 1181 In Torfaeus Hist of Norway 1266—used by DeGama in 1427 leading stone hence load stone

The peroxide of hydrogen or ozone at first thought to be a chemical curiosity merely is found to be very generally diffused through nature.

The following bears on the floating ice which has risen from the bottom of the meadows— Robert Hunt says “Water conducts heat downward but very slowly; a mass of ice will remain undissolved but a few inches under water, on the surface of which, ether, or any other inflammable body, is burning. If ice swam beneath the surface, the summer sun would scarcely have power to thaw it; and thus our lakes & seas would be gradually converted into solid masses”<sup>2</sup>

The figures of serpents of griffins flying dragons and other embellishments of heraldry—the eastern idea of the world on an elephant that on a tortoise & that on a serpent again &c usually regarded as mythological in the com. sense of that word—are thought by Hunt? to “indicate a faint & shadowy knowledge of a previous state of organic existence”—such as geology partly reveals.

The fossil tortoise has been found in Asia large enough to support an elephant.

Ammonites, snake-stones, or petrified snakes have been found from of old—often decapitated.

In the N part of Grt Britain the fossil remains of encrinites are called “St. Cuthbert’s beads.”—“fiction dependant on truth.”

Westward is Heaven or rather heavenward is the west. The way to heaven is from east to west around the earth The sun leads & shows it The stars too light it.

Nature & man Some prefer the one others the other; but that is all *dè gustibus*— It makes no odds at what well you drink, provided it be a well-head.

Walking in the woods it may be some afternoon the shadow of the wings of a thought flits across the landscape of my mind And I am reminded how little eventful is our lives What have been all these wars & survivors of wars and modern discoveries & improvements so called a mere irritation in the skin. But this shadow which is so soon past & whose substance is not detected suggests that there are events of importance whose interval is to us a true historic period.

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I wish my neighbors were wilder.

A wildness whose glance no civilization could endure.

He who lives according to the highest law—is in one sense lawless That is an unfortunate discovery certainly that of a law which binds us where we did not know that we were bound. Live free—child of the mist. He who

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2. Wouldn’t Henry Thoreau have been fascinated to learn that Walden Pond originated as a mass of buried, slowly melting ice left behind by glaciation?

for whom the law is made who does not obey the law but whom the law obeys –reclines on pillows of down and is wafted at will whither he pleases –for man is superior to all laws both of heaven & earth. (when he takes his liberty.)

Wild as if we lived on the marrow of antelopes devoured raw

There would seem to be men in whose lives there have been no events of importance more than in the beetles which crawls in our path.



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