

Dark-eyed Junco ■ *Junco Hyemalis*

CREDIT



Sparrow ■ *Fringillidae*
American Tree Sparrow ■ *Spizella arborea*
Chipping Sparrow ■ *Spizella passerina* (chip-bird or hair-bird)
Dark-eyed Junco ■ *Junco hyemalis* (Slate-colored Sparrow or Snow-bird or *F. Hyemalis*)
Field Sparrow ■ *Spizella pusilla* (Rush Sparrow or *juncorum* or Huckleberry-bird)
Fox Sparrow ■ *Passerella iliaca* (Fox-colored Sparrow)
Grasshopper Sparrow ■ *Ammodramus savannarum* (Yellow-winged Sparrow or Savannarum or savanna)
Savannah Sparrow ■ *Passerculus sandwichensis* (seringo or seringo-bird or *passerina*)
Song Sparrow ■ *Melospiza melodia* (*melodia*)
Swamp Sparrow ■ *Melospiza georgiana*
Vesper Sparrow ■ *Pooecetes gramineus* (Bay-wing or White-in-tail or Grass Finch or Grass-bird)
White-throated Sparrow ■ *Zonotrichia albicollis*
European ■ sparrow (Thoreau never saw this bird.)

HELEN GERE CRUICKSHANK

Few birds are mentioned more frequently in the Journal than [Henry Thoreau](#)'s *F. hyemalis*, the slate-colored snowbird, though he rarely wrote at any length about it. On June 2, 1858, Thoreau found the nest of this species on Mount



Monadnock. He rejoiced about this discovery, for he noted in his Journal that Brewer said only one nest of the species was known to naturalists. It was on his mountain journeys and in the Maine wilderness that the Slate-colored Junco most impressed him.

Thoreau listened for the first songs of the junco in March, pleasant sound to hear on a cold day of early spring. He appreciated their company when he saw one of their flocks in late November and early December when the days were short and the hours of sunlight were limited.

The species is now a regular visitor to Concord feeding stations throughout the winter.



1852

March 18, Thursday: [Henry Thoreau](#) was written to by [Horace Greeley](#) in New-York.

New York, Mar. 18, 1852.

My Dear Sir:

I ought to have responded before this to yours of the 5th inst. but have been absent—hurried, &c. &c. I have had no time to bestow upon it till to-day.

I shall get you some money for the articles you send me, though not immediately.

As to your longer account of a canadian Tour, I don't know. It looks unmanageable. Can't you cut it into three or four, and omit all that relates to time? The cities are described to death; but I know you are at home with Nature, and that She rarely and slowly changes.

Break this up if you can, and I will try to have it swallowed and digested.

Yours,

Horace Greeley.

Henry D. Thoreau, Esq.

Concord, Mass.



March 18, Thursday: This morning the ground is again covered with snow – & the storm still continues.

That is a pretty good story told of a London citizen just retired to country life on a fortune who wishing among other novel rustic experiments, to establish a number of bee-communities, would not listen to the advice of his under steward – but asking fiercely “how he could be so thoughtless as to recommend a purchase of what might so easily be procured on the Downs?” ordered him to hire ten women to go in quest of bees the next morning, and to prepare hives for the reception of the captives. Early the next day the detachment started for the Downs, each furnished with a tin canister to contain the spoil; and after running about for hours, stunning the bees with blows from their straw bonnets, and encountering stings without number, secured about thirty prisoners who were safely lodged in a hive. But, as has been the fate of many arduous campaigns, little advantage accrued from all this fatigue & danger. Next morning the Squire sallied forth to visit his new colony. As he approached, a loud humming assured him that they were hard at work, when to his infinite disappointment, it was found that the bees had made their escape through a small hole in the hive, leaving behind them only an unfortunate humble bee, whose bulk prevented his squeezing himself through the aperture, and whose loud complaints had been mistaken for the busy hum of industry.” You must patiently study the method of nature and take advice of the under-steward. in the establishment of all communities, both insect & human–

This afternoon the woods & walls and the whole face of the country wears once more a wintry aspect – though there is more moisture in the snow – and the trunks of the trees are whitened now on a more southerly or S E side– These slight falls of snow which come & go again so soon when the ground is partly open in the spring – perhaps helping to open & crumble and prepare it for the seed are called “the poor man’s manure – they are no doubt more serviceable still to those who are rich-enough to have some manure spread on their grass ground – which the melting snow help’s dissolve & soak in. & carry to the roots of the grass. At any rate, it is all the poor man has got, whether it is good or bad.. There is more rain than snow now falling – and the lichens (especially the *parmelia conspersa*) appear to be full of fresh fruit – though they are nearly buried in snow The *evernia jubata* might now be called even a **very** dark olive green. I feel a certain sympathy with the pine or oak fringed with lichens in a wet day– – They remind me of the dewy & ambrosial vigor of nature and of man’s prime. The pond is still very little melted round the shore. As I go by a pile of red oak recently split in the woods & now wet with rain I perceive its strong urine-like scent– I see within the trunks solid masses of worm or ant borings turned to a black or very dark brown mould – purest of virgin mould six inches in diameter & some feet long

within the tree. The tree turned to mould again before its fall. But this snow has not driven back the birds – I hear the song-sparrow's [*Melospiza* **■** *melodia*] simple strain – most genuine herald of the spring. & see flocks of chubby northern birds with the habit of snow birds [*Dark-eyed Junco* **■** *Junco hyemalis*] passing north. A wise man will not go out of his way for information. He might as well go out of nature – or commit suicide. I am glad to hear that naked eyes are of any use, for I cannot afford to buy a Munich (?) Telescope. Probably the bees could not make industry attractive under the circumstances described above.

March 23, Tuesday: The justices of the Missouri Supreme Court ruled 2-to-1 that the Scotts were still enslaved. From the majority opinion we learn that: "We are almost persuaded that the introduction of slavery among us was, in the providence of God, who makes the evil passions of men subservient to His own glory, a means of placing that unhappy race within the pale of civilized nations."



March 23, Tuesday: I heard this forenoon a pleasant jingling note from the slate colored snow bird [*Dark-eyed Junco* **■** *Junco hyemalis*] on the oaks in the sun on Minot's hill-side. Apparently they sing with us in the pleasantest days before they go northward. Minot thinks that the farmers formerly cured their meadow hay better, gave it more sun so that the cattle liked it as well as the English now. As I cannot go upon a north west passage then I will find a passage round the actual world where I am. Connect the Bhering Straits & Lancaster Sounds of thought. Winter on Melville Island & make a chart of Bank's Land– Explore the northward trending Wellington Inlet–where there is said to be a perpetual open sea–cutting my way through floes of ice ... {³/₅ths page blank}

GEORGE MINOTT

April 28, Wednesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) commented in his journal about his reading either in [Évariste Régis Huc](#)'s 1850 work in French, *SOUVENIRS D'UN VOYAGE DANS LA TARTARIE, LE THIBET ET LA CHINE PENDANT LES ANNÉES 1844, 1845, ET 1846*, or in William Hazlett's translation HUC AND GABET: TRAVELS IN TARTARY, THIBET AND CHINA, DURING THE YEARS 1844-5-6 which had appeared in 1851: "I scarcely know why I am excited when in M. Huc's Book I read of the country of the Mongol Tartars as the "Land of Grass," but I am as much as if I were a cow."

CHINA

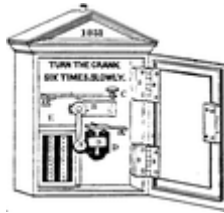


In [Ellery Channing](#)'s journal we find that on this date Thoreau caught a hyla, that is, a tree frog, but it was able to effect an escape.

At 12 o'clock noon a telegraphic fire alarm system, constructed on the basis of plans prepared by Dr. [William Francis Channing](#) and a self-effacing telegraphic engineer, Moses Gerrish Farmer, went into operation in [Boston](#), with the fire alarm office being situated in the City Building at Court Square and Williams Court. Staff included a superintendent, fire alarm operators, and repairmen. The system consisted of a closed electrically supervised assembly of circuits, street fire alarm boxes with code wheels and key breaks determining the number of current interruptions which produced coded signals on local instruments at a central office, where an operator transmitted signals received over separate fire alarm circuits to the appropriate fire house. The

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system featured telegraphic communication by key and sounder between individual street boxes and the central office. The system consisted of 40 street boxes connected into 3 box circuits, 3 bell circuits, 16 additional alarm bells for a total of 19, and a crude central office apparatus. The street fire alarm boxes were painted black and had an outside door that was kept locked. Each such box contained a manual crank (the sort of alarm device on which one merely pulled an arm downward would not be introduced, experimentally, until 1864).



Soon after his older brother Peyton's death, [Moncure Daniel Conway](#) appeared at the big brick [Quaker](#) meetinghouse in Sandy Spring, [Maryland](#). He was due to resume his duties as a Methodist circuit-rider but was troubled whether he was "living in full faith up to the Inward Voice." One of the Quakers, [Friend](#) Roger Brooke,¹ took him home to dinner and conversation after silent worship:



My uncle Dr. John Henry Daniel said to me, when I was leaving home, "So you are going to be a journeyman soul-saver." I did not begin life with that burden on me, and, when it came, was too young to question whether it was part of me – my hunch – or a pack of outside things like that strapped on Bunyan's pilgrim. My pack was symbolized in my saddle-bags, where the Bible,

1. A relative of the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, the Honorable Roger Brooke Taney, as our Southern correspondent does not hesitate to make clear.



Emerson's "Essays," Watson's "Theology," Carlyle's "Latter Day Pamphlets," Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," the Methodist Discipline, and Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection" got on harmoniously, – for a time. Dr. Daniel's label, "a journeyman soul-saver," told true in a sense: it was really my own enmeshed soul I had to save. I was struggling at the centre of an invisible web of outer influences and hereditary forces. I was without wisdom. How many blunders I made in my sermons, with which I took so much pains, I know not, but I remember a friendly hint from the wife of the Hon. Bowie Davis that a sermon was too "agrarian." In another case the recoil was more serious; it came through my presiding elder, who said, "From what I hear, a sermon of yours on the new birth was too profound." This troubled me deeply. I had supposed that Jesus meant to be profound, and put much study into the sermon, the only favourable response to which was from an aged negro woman who, long after I had left Methodism, laid her hand on my head, and said, "I never knew what the Lord meant by our being born again until I heard you preach about it, and bless the Lord, it's been plain ever since!" My early training in law courts determined my method of preaching. In preparing a sermon I fixed on some main point which I considered of vital importance, and dealt with it as if I were pleading before judge and jury. This method was not Methodism. I was in continual danger of being "too profound," and though congregations were interested in my sermons, they brought me more reputation for eccentricity than for eloquence. This, however, was not a matter of concern to me. Ambition for fame and popularity was not among my faults. My real mission was personal, – to individuals. In each neighbourhood on my circuit there were some whom I came to know with a certain intimacy, aspiring souls whose confidences were given me. However far away I might be, they rose before me when I was preparing for that appointment; they inspired passages in the sermon. No general applause could give me the happiness felt when these guests of my heart met me with smiles of recognition, or clasped my hand with gratitude.

It was an agricultural region, in which crime and even vices were rare. Slavery existed only in its mildest form, and there was no pauper population to excite my reformatory zeal. Nor was there even any sectarian prejudice to combat; the county was divided up between denominations friendly to each other and hospitable to me. My personal influence was thus necessarily humanized. I could not carry on any *propaganda* of Methodism in the homes of non-Methodist gentlemen and ladies who entertained me, – even had I felt so inclined, ? without showing my church inferior to theirs.

My belief is that I gradually preached myself out of the creeds by trying to prove them by my lawyer-like method. Moreover, I had the habit of cross-examining the sermons of leading preachers, finding statements that in a law court would have told against their case. At a camp-meeting in 1851 I learned that our presiding elder was about to preach on the resurrection



of the body. I slipped into his hand the following query: ?
A soldier fallen in the field remains unburied; his body mingles with the sod, springs up in the grass; cattle graze there and atoms of the soldier's body become beef; the beef is eaten by a man who suddenly dies while in him are particles of the soldier's body conveyed to him by the grass-fed beef. Thus two men die with the same material substance in them. How can there be an exact resurrection of both of those bodies as they were at the moment of death?

The preacher read out the query, and said, "All things are possible with God." Nothing more. It made a profound impression on me that a divine should take refuge in a phrase. The doctrine in question involved the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the "Apostles' Creed."

I made a note of another thing at this camp-meeting. The Rev. Lyttleton Morgan, an accomplished preacher, declared that in his Passion and Crucifixion Christ suffered all that the whole human race must have suffered in hell to all eternity but for that sacrifice. At dinner some ministers demurred at this doctrine; I maintained that it appeared to be a logical deduction from our theory of the Atonement. But I soon recognized that it was a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Rockville Circuit being near Washington, I was able at times to pass a few days in the capital, where I had relatives and acquaintances. I attended the debates in Congress, and in the Supreme Court, — where I heard Daniel Webster's speech in the famous Gaines case. It was a powerful speech, impressively delivered, but I had sufficient experience in courts to recognize several passages meant for the fashionable audience with which the room was crowded. He was against the appellant, Mrs. Gaines, who was pleading for her legitimacy as well as property, and described his client persistently besieged by litigation as a rock beaten by ocean waves. He drew all eyes on pleasant Myra Gaines, and I remember thinking the metaphor infelicitous. My sympathies were with the lady, and the "rock" might symbolize the stony heart of the man holding on to her property. But I was so interested in Webster's look and manner that, in my ignorance of the evidence, my attention to what he said was fitful, and the speech was obliterated by the thrilling romance rehearsed by the judges in their decisions. For it was in favor of the man holding on to her property. But I was so interested in Webster's look and manner that, in my ignorance of the evidence, my attention to what he said was fitful, and the speech was obliterated by the thrilling romance rehearsed by the judges in their decisions, for it was in two volumes, the minority opinion of Justice Wayne and Justice Daniel (my grand-uncle) in favour of Mrs. Gaines being especially thrilling. No American novelist would venture on such a tale of intrigue, adultery, bigamy, disguises, betrayal, as those justices searched through unshrinkingly, ignoring the company present. On one of my visits to Washington I heard a sermon from the famous Asbury Roszel which lifted the vast audience to



exultation and joy. His subject was the kingdom of God and triumphs of the Cross, and he began by declaring that it was universally agreed that ideal government was the rule of one supreme and competent individual head. This Carlylean sentiment uttered in the capital of the so-called Republic gave me some food for thought at the time; and I remembered it when I awakened to the anomaly of disowning as a republican the paraphernalia of royalty, while as a preacher I was using texts and hymns about thrones and Crowns and sceptres, and worshipping a king.

My interest in party politics had declined; I began to study large human issues. One matter that I entered into in 1851 was International Copyright. On this subject I wrote an article which appeared in the "National Intelligencer." I took the manuscript to the office, and there saw the venerable Joseph Gales, who founded the paper, and W.W. Seaton, the editor. Mr. Seaton remarked that I was "a very young man to be in holy orders," and after glancing at the article said he was entirely in sympathy with it. In that article I appealed to Senator Sumner to take up the matter, and thenceforth he sent me his speeches.

I little imagined how much personal interest I was to have some years later in Gales and Seaton, who were among the founders of the Unitarian church in Washington. I used sometimes to saunter into the bookshop of Frank Taylor, or that of his brother Hudson Taylor, afterwards intimate Unitarian friends, before I knew that there was a Unitarian church in Washington. From one of them I bought a book that deeply moved me: "The Soul: her Sorrows and her Aspirations. By Francis William Newman." I took this book to heart before I was conscious of my unorthodoxy, nothing in it then suggesting to me that the author was an unbeliever in supernaturalism.

The setting given by Newman's book to Charles Wesley's hymn – "Come, O thou Traveller unknown" – made that hymn my inspiration, and it has been my song in many a night wherein I have wrestled with phantoms.

But my phantoms were not phantasms, and brought no horrors into those beautiful woods and roads of Montgomery County. These were my study. I was wont to start off to my appointments early, in order that I might have no need to ride fast, and when clear of a village, take from my saddlebags my Emerson, my Coleridge, or Newman, and throwing the reins on my horse's neck, read and read, or pause to think on some point.

I remember that in reading Emerson repeatedly I seemed never to read the same essay as before: whether it was the new morning, or that I had mentally travelled to a new point of view, there was always something I had not previously entered into. His thoughts were mother-thoughts, to use Balzac's word. Over the ideas were shining ideals that made the world beautiful to me; the woods and flowers and birds amid which I passed made a continuous chorus for all this poetry and wit and wisdom. And science also; from Emerson I derived facts about nature that filled me with wonder. On one of my visits to Professor Baird, at the Smithsonian Institution, I talked of these statements;



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he was startled that I should be reading Emerson, with whose writings he was acquainted. At the end of our talk Baird said, "Whatever may be thought of Emerson's particular views of nature, there can be no question about the nature in him and in his writings: that is true and beautiful."

A college-mate, Newman Hank, was the preacher on Stafford Circuit, Virginia, and it was arranged that for one round of appointments he and I should exchange circuits. I thus preached for a month among those who had known me from childhood. Though few of them were Methodists, they all came to hear me, and I suppose many were disappointed. I had formerly spoken in their debating societies with the facility of inexperience, but was no longer so fluent.

At Fredericksburg, June 19, I preached to a very large congregation, and was invited to the houses of my old friends (none of them Methodists); but the culminating event was my sermon in our own town, Falmouth, three days later. How often had I sat in that building listening to sermons – Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian – occasionally falling under the spell of some orator who made me think its pulpit the summit of the world! How large that church in my childhood, and how grand its assemblage of all the beauty and wealth of the neighbourhood! When I stood in the pulpit and realized how small the room was, and could recognize every face, and observe every changing expression, – and when I saw before me my parents, my sister and brothers, with almost painful anxiety in their loving eyes, – strange emotions came to me; the first of my phantoms drew near and whispered, "Are you sure, perfectly sure, that the seeds you are about to sow in these hearts that cherish you are the simple truth of your own heart and thought?" My text was, "Thou wilt show me the path of life;" my theme, that every human being is on earth for a purpose. The ideal life was that whose first words were, "I must be about my Father's business," and the last, "It is finished."

When we reached home my uncle Dr. John Henry Daniel said, "There was a vein of Calvinism running all through that sermon." "I hate Calvinism," cried I. "No matter: the idea of individual predestination was in your sermon. And it may be true." My father was, I believe, gratified by the sermon, but he said, with a laugh, "One thing is certain, Monc: should the devil ever aim at a Methodist preacher, you'll be safe!"

In this sermon, which ignored hell and heaven, and dealt with religion as the guide and consecration of life on earth, I had unconsciously taken the first steps in my "Earthward Pilgrimage." When I returned to my own circuit, a burden was on me that could not roll off before the cross.

Our most cultured congregation was at Brookville, a village named after the race of which Roger Brooke was at this time the chief. Our pretty Methodist church there was attended by some Episcopalian families – Halls, Magraders, Donalds, Coulters – who adopted me personally. The finest mansion was that of John Hall, who insisted on my staying at his house when I was in the



neighbourhood. He was an admirable gentleman and so friendly with the Methodists that they were pleased at the hospitality shown their minister. Mrs. Hall, a grand woman intellectually and physically, was a daughter of Roger Brooke. She had been "disowned" by the Quakers for marrying "out of meeting," but it was a mere formality; they all loved her just as much. Her liberalism had leavened the families around her. She was not interested in theology, and never went to any church, but encouraged her lovely little daughters (of ten and twelve years) to enjoy Sunday like any other day. After some months she discovered that some of my views resembled those of her father, and desired me to visit him.

There was a flourishing settlement of Hicksite Quakers at Sandy Spring, near Brookville, but I never met one of them, nor knew anything about them. "Hicksite" was a meaningless word to me. "Uncle Roger," their preacher, was spoken of throughout Montgomery County as the best and wisest of men, and I desired to meet him. When I afterwards learned that "Hicksite" was equivalent to "unorthodox," it was easy to understand why none of them should seek the acquaintance of a Methodist minister. The Quakers assembled twice a week, and happening one Wednesday to pass their meeting-house, I entered, — impelled by curiosity. Most of those present were in Quaker dress, which I did not find unbecoming for the ladies, perhaps because the wearers were refined and some of them pretty. After a half-hour's silence a venerable man of very striking appearance, over six feet in height and his long head full of force, arose, laid aside his hat, and in a low voice, in strange contrast with his great figure, uttered these words: "Walk in the light while ye are children of the light, lest darkness come upon you." Not a word more. He resumed his seat and hat, and after a few minutes' silence shook hands with the person next him; then all shook hands and the meeting ended.

I rode briskly to my appointment, and went on with my usual duties. But this my first Quaker experience had to be digested. The old gentleman, with his Solomonic face (it was Roger Brooke), who had broken the silence with but one text, had given that text, by its very insulation and modification, a mystical suggestiveness.

After I had attended the Quaker meeting several times, it was heard of by my Methodist friends. One of these, a worthy mechanic, told me that Samuel Janney had preached in the Quaker meeting, and once said that "the blood of Jesus could no more save man than the blood of a bullock." This brother's eyes were searching though kindly. Roger Brooke belonged to the same family as that of Roger Brooke Taney, then chief justice of the United States. His advice, opinion, arbitration, were sought for in all that region. Despite antislavery and rationalistic convictions, he leavened all Montgomery County with tolerance.² One morning as I was riding off from the Quaker meeting, a youth overtook me and said uncle Roger wished to speak to me. I turned and approached the old gentleman's carriole. He said, "I have



seen thee at one or two of our meetings. If thee can find it convenient to go home with us to dinner, we shall be glad to have thee." The faces of his wife and daughter-in-law beamed their welcome, and I accepted the invitation. The old mansion, "Brooke Grove," contained antique furniture, and the neatness bespoke good housekeeping. So also did the dinner, for these Maryland Quakers knew the importance of good living to high thinking.

There was nothing sanctimonious about this home of the leading Quaker. Uncle Roger had a delicate humour, and the ladies beauty and wit. The bonnet and shawl laid aside, there appeared the perfectly fitting "mouse-colour" gown, of rich material, with unfigured lace folded over the neck: at a fancy ball it might be thought somewhat coquettish.

They were fairly acquainted with current literature, and though not yet introduced to Emerson, were already readers of Carlyle. I gained more information about the country, about the interesting characters, about people in my own congregations, than I had picked up in my circuit-riding. After dinner uncle Roger and I were sitting alone on the veranda, taking our smoke, — he with his old-fashioned pipe, — and he mentioned that one of his granddaughters had rallied him on having altered a Scripture text in the meeting. "In the simplicity of my heart I said what came to me, and answered her that if it was not what is written in the Bible I hope it is none the less true." I afterwards learned that he had added in his reply, "Perhaps it was the New Testament writer who did not get the words quite right." I asked him what was the difference between "Hicksite" and "Orthodox Quakers; but he turned it off with an anecdote of one of his neighbours who, when asked the same question, had replied, "Well, you see, the orthodox Quakers will insist that the Devil has horns, while we say the Devil is an ass." I spoke of the Methodist ministers being like the Quakers "called by the Spirit" to preach, and he said, with a smile, "But when you go to an appointment what if the Spirit does n't move you to say anything?"

Uncle Roger had something else on his mind to talk to me about. He inquired my impression of the Quaker neighbourhood generally. I said he was the first Quaker I had met, but the assembly I had seen in their meeting had made an impression on me of intelligence and refinement. For the rest their houses were pretty and their farms bore witness to better culture than those in other parts of the county. "That I believe is generally conceded to us," he answered; "and how does thee explain this superiority of our farms?" I suggested that it was probably due to their means, and to the length of time their farms had been under culture. The venerable man was silent for a minute, then fixed on me his shrewd eyes and said, "Has it ever occurred to

2. Helen Clark, daughter of the Right Hon. John Bright, showed me a diary written by Mr. Bright's grandmother, Rachel Wilson, while travelling in America in 1768-69. She was a much esteemed Quaker preacher, and gives a pleasant account of her visit to the Friends at Sandy Spring, where she was received in the home of Roger Brooke. This was the grandfather of "uncle Roger."



thee that it may be because of our paying wages to all who work for us?"

For the first time I found myself face to face with an avowed abolitionist! My interest in politics had lessened, but I remained a Southerner, and this economic arraignment of slavery came with some shock. He saw this and turned from the subject to talk of their educational work, advising me to visit Fairhill, the Friends' school for young ladies.

The principal of the school was [William Henry Farquhar](#), and on my first visit there I heard from him an admirable lecture in his course on History. He had adopted the novel method of beginning his course with the present day and travelling backward. He had begun with the World's Fair and got as far as Napoleon I, – subject of the lecture I heard. It was masterly. And the whole school – the lovely girls in their tidy Quaker dresses, their sweet voices and manners, the elegance and order everywhere – filled me with wonder. By this garden of beauty and culture I had been passing for six months, never imagining the scene within.

The lecture closed the morning exercises, and I had an opportunity for addressing the pupils. I was not an intruder, but taken there by Mrs. Charles Farquhar, daughter of Roger Brooke and sister-in-law of the principal, so I did not have the excuse that it would not be "in season" to try and save some of these sweet sinners from the flames of hell. It was the obvious duty of the Methodist preacher on Rockville Circuit to cry, – "O ye fair maids of Fair Hill, this whited sepulchre of unbelief, – not one of you aware of your depravity, nor regenerate through the blessed bloodshed – your brilliant teacher is luring you to hell!" Those soft eyes of yours will be lifted in torment, those rosebud mouths call for a drop of water to cool your parched tongues; all your affection, gentleness, and virtues are but filthy rags, unless you believe in the Trinity, the blood atonement, and in the innate corruption of every heart in this room!"

But when the junior preacher is made, the susceptible youth is not unmade. According to Lucian, Cupid was reproached by his mother Venus for permitting the Muses to remain single, and invisibly went to their abode with his arrows; but when he discovered the beautiful arts with which the Muses were occupied, he had not the heart to disturb them, and softly crept away. This "pagan" parable of a little god's momentary godlessness may partly suggest why no gospel arrows were shot that day in Fairhill school; but had I to rewrite Lucian's tale I should add that Cupid went off himself stuck all over with arrows from the Muses' eyes.

However, Cupid had nothing to do with the softly feathered and imperceptible arrows that were going into my Methodism from the Quakers, in their homes even more than in this school. I found myself introduced to a circle of refined and cultivated ladies whose homes were cheerful, whose charities were constant, whose manners were attractive, whose virtues were recognized by their



most orthodox neighbours; yet *what I was preaching as the essentials of Christianity were unknown among them*. These beautiful homes were formed without terror of hell, without any cries of what shall we do to be saved? How had these lovely maidens and young men been trained to every virtue, to domestic affections and happiness? I never discussed theology with them; but their lives, their beautiful spirit, their homes, did away with my moral fears, and as the dogmas paled, creedless freedom began to flush with warm life. These good and sweet women, who said no word against my dogmas, unconsciously to themselves or me charmed me away from the dogmatic habitat.

When I left the Baltimore Conference, the Quakers were given by many Methodists the discredit of having undermined my faith, but their only contribution to my new faith was in enabling me to judge the unorthodox tree by its fruits of culture and character. If theology were ever discussed by them, it was I who introduced the subject. They had no proselyting spirit. I thought of joining the Quaker Society, but Roger Brooke advised me not to do so. "Thee will find among us," he said, "a good many prejudices, for instance, against music, of which thou art fond, and while thou art mentally growing would it be well to commit thyself to any organized society?"³

How often have I had to ponder those words of Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Men do not forsake their God, he forsakes them. It is the God of the creeds that first forsakes us. More and more the dogmas come into collision with plain truth: every child's clear eyes contradict the guilty phantasy of inherited depravity, every compassionate sentiment abhors the notions of hell and salvation by human sacrifice. Yet our tender associations, our affections, are intertwined with these falsities, and we cling to them till they forsake us. For more than a year I was like one flung from a foundered ship holding on to a raft till it went to pieces, then to a floating log till buffeted off, — to every stick, every straw. One after another the gods forsake us, — forsake our common sense, our reason, our justice, our humanity.

In the autumn of my first ministerial year I had to take stock of what was left me that could honestly be preached in Methodist pulpits. About the Trinity I was not much concerned; the morally repulsive dogmas, and atrocities ascribed to the deity in the Bible became impossible. What, then, was "salvation"? I heard from Roger Brooke this sermon, "He shall save the people from their sins, — not *in* them." It is the briefest sermon I ever heard, but it gave me a Christianity for one year, for it was sustained by my affections. They were keen, and the thought of turning my old home in Falmouth into a house of mourning, and grieving the hearts of my friends in Carlisle, and congregations that so trusted me, appeared worse than death. My affections

3. When Benjamin Hallowell, the eminent teacher in Alexandria, Va., came to reside at Sandy Spring, I had many interesting talks with him, but found that even his philosophical mind could not free itself from the prejudice against musical culture. The musical faculty, he admitted, had some uses — e.g., that mothers might sing lullabies.



were at times rack and thumbscrew.

I had no friend who could help me on the intellectual, moral, and philosophical points involved. Roger Brooke and William Henry Farquhar were rationalists by birthright; they had never had any dogmas to unlearn, nor had they to suffer the pain of being sundered from relatives and friends. In my loneliness I stretched appealing hands to Emerson. After his death my friend Edward Emerson sent me my letters to his father, and the first is dated at Rockville, November 4, 1851. Without any conventional opening (how could I call my prophet "Dear Sir"!) my poor trembling letter begins with a request to know where the "[Dial](#)" can be purchased, and proceeds: -

I will here take the liberty of saying what nothing but a concern as deep as Eternity should make me say. I am a minister of the Christian Religion, - the only way for the world to reënter Paradise, in my earnest belief. I have just commenced that office at the call of the Holy Ghost, now in my twentieth year. About a year ago I commenced reading your writings. I have read them all and studied them sentence by sentence. I have shed many burning tears over them; because you gain my assent to Laws which, when I see how they would act on the affairs of life, I have not courage to practise. By the Law sin revives and I die. I sometimes feel as if you made for me a second Fall from which there is no redemption by any atonement.

To this there came a gracious response: -

Concord, Mass., 13th November, 1851.

Dear Sir, - I fear you will not be able, except at some chance auction, to obtain any set of the "[Dial](#)." In fact, smaller editions were printed of the later and latest numbers, which increases the difficulty.

I am interested by your kind interest in my writings, but you have not let me sufficiently into your own habit of thought, to enable me to speak to it with much precision. But I believe what interests both you and me most of all things, and whether we know it or not, is the morals of intellect; in other words, that no man is worth his room in the world who is not commanded by a legitimate object of thought. The earth is full of frivolous people, who are bending their whole force and the force of nations on trifles, and these are baptized with every grand and holy name, remaining, of course, totally inadequate to occupy any mind; and so sceptics are made. A true soul will disdain to be moved except by what natively commands it, though it should go sad and solitary in search of its master a thousand years. The few superior persons in each community are so by their steadiness to reality and their neglect of appearances. This is the euphrasy and rue that purge the



intellect and ensure insight. Its full rewards are slow but sure; and yet I think it has its reward in the instant, inasmuch as simplicity and grandeur are always better than dapperness. But I will not spin out these saws farther, but hasten to thank you for your frank and friendly letter, and to wish you the best deliverance in that contest to which every soul must go alone.

Yours, in all good hope,

R.W. EMERSON.

This letter I acknowledged with a longer one (December 12, 1851), in which I say: "I have very many correspondents, but I might almost say yours is the only Letter that was ever written to me."

Early in 1852 Kossuth visited Washington, and enthusiasm for him and his cause carried me there. The Washington pulpits had not yet said anything about slaves at our own doors, but it was easy to be enthusiastic for liberty as far away as Hungary, and so the preachers all paid homage to Kossuth. I stopped at the house of Rev. Lyttleton Morgan, whose wife was an authoress, and her sister, Carrie Dallam, the most attractive friend I had in Washington. With her I went to the New Year "levee" at the White House, and also to call on the widow of President John Quincy Adams, a handsome and entertaining old lady. I also think it was then and by her that I was taken to see the widow of Alexander Hamilton. Mayor Seaton entered, and in courtly style took her hand in both of his and kissed it, bending low. She was still (her ninety-fifth year) a cheerful and handsome lady, gracious and dignified. Her narratives of society in that city, as she remembered it, sounded like ancient legends. I remember particularly her account of a president's drawing-room in the time of President Jackson. Mrs. Hamilton was, I believe, the first to introduce ices into the country. At any rate, she told me that President Jackson, having tasted ices at her house, resolved to have some at his next reception, - for in those days so simple and small were the receptions that refreshments were provided. Mrs. Hamilton related that at the next reception the guests were seen melting each spoonful of ice-cream with their breath preparatory to swallowing it! The reception itself was, she said, more like a large tea-party than anything else.

Kossuth was a rather small man with a pale face, a soft eye, a poetic and pathetic expression, and a winning voice. He spoke English well, and his accent added to his eloquence by reminding us of his country, for which he was pleading. I followed him about Washington, to the Capitol, the White House, the State Department, etc., listening with rapt heart to his speeches, and weeping for Hungary. I find this note (undated): "Kossuth received to-day a large number of gentlemen and ladies, to whom he discoursed eloquently of the wrongs of Hungary. Many were moved to tears, and some ladies presented their rings and other trinkets for the cause of the oppressed. A large slave-auction took place at Alexandria just across the river on the same day."⁴



But, alas, I presently had a tragedy of my own to weep for, the death of my elder brother, Peyton. He had long suffered from the sequelæ of scarlatina, but, nevertheless, had studied law and begun practice. During the summer of 1851 he visited me on my circuit (Rockville) and accompanied me to St. James Camp-meeting. He was deeply affected on hearing me preach, and approached the "mourner's bench." No "conversion" occurred, and he returned home (Falmouth) in a sad mood. Then there arose in him the abhorrence of dogmas and the ideal of a church of pure reason, absolutely creedless and uneclesiastical, uniting all mankind. Alas, little did he know that his brother, even myself, was at that moment in mortal inward struggle with a creed! But this I learned only after his death. For at that critical moment he died of typhoid fever, - March 18, 1852, fourteen days after his twenty-second birthday. There was bequeathed to my later years the miserable reflection that possibly he might have survived the attack but for the lowering of his strength by agitation under my preaching at the camp-meeting.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY VOLUME II



April 28, Wednesday: I scarcely know why I am excited when in M. Huc's Book I read of the country of the Mongol Tartars on the "Land of Grass", but I am as much as if I were a cow.

2 1/2 Pm to Cliffs & Heywood's Brook.

Are not the flowers which appear earliest in the spring the most primitive & simplest? They have been in this town thus far, as I have observed them this spring, putting them down in the order in which I think they should be named.

Using Grays names-


Table listing plant species and their observation dates: Symplocarpus Foetidus, Alnus Incana, Acer Rubrum, Willow earliest, Ulmus Americana, Populus Tremuloides, Corylus Americana, Carex Pennsylvanica, Caltha Palustris, Stellaria Media, Capsella Bursa Pastoris, Taraxacum Dens-leonis, Equisetum Arvense, Gnaphalium Purpureum.

4. When this entry was written no word had reached me of the vain efforts of abolitionists to get from Kossuth an expression of sympathy with their cause. The "independence" pleaded for by Kossuth had no more to do with personal freedom than this had to do with the "independence" fought for in 1776 by American slaveholders, who forced Jefferson to strike out of the Declaration its antislavery section.





Saxifraga Virginiensis 27
Antennaria Plantaginifolia 27
Ranunculus Fascicularis 28 only 2

All but the 3d 8th 11th 12th observed in the **very best** season. & these within a day (?) of their flowering. I observe that the first six are decidedly water or water-loving plants & the 10, 13th, & 14th were found in the water – & are equally if not more confined to that element. – – – – The 7th & 8th belong to the cooler zones of the earth – the 7th ac. to Emerson as far N as 64° – & comes up (is it this?) on burnt lands first & will grow in dry cool dreary places. – – – – The 9th on a dry warm rocky hill-side the earliest(?) grass to blossom also the 18th – the 11th & 12 in cold damp gardens – like the earth first made dry land. – – – the 15th & 17 on dry (scantly clad with grass) fields & hills – hardy – – – the 16th sunny bare rocks – in seams on moss where also in a day or two the columbine will bloom. The 18th is also indebted to the warmth of the rocks – This may perhaps be nearly the order of the world's creation – Thus we have in the spring of the year the spring of the world represented – Such were the first localities afforded for plants – Water-bottoms – bare rocks – & scantily clad lands – & land recently bared of water.

The spotted tortoise is spotted on shell head – tail – & legs. Fresh leaves of a Neottia pale & not distinctly veined. Red solomon seal berries on their short stems prostrate on the dead leaves, some of them plump still. One man has turned his cows out to pasture. Have not seen the Slate col. snowbird [**Dark-eyed Junco**  **Junco hyemalis**] for a few days. I am getting my greatcoat off, but it is a cold & wintry day – with snow clouds appearing to draw water, but cold water surely or out of the north side of the well. a few flakes in the air – drawing snow as well as water. From fair Haven the landscape all in shadow apparently to the base of the mts – but the Peterboro hills are in sun shine and unexpectedly are white with snow (no snow here unless in some hollows in the woods) reflecting the sun – more obvious for the sun shine – I never saw them appear so near. It is startling thus to look into winter.

How suddenly the flowers bloom – 2 or 3 days ago I could not or did not find the leaves of the crowfoot. Today not knowing it well I looked in vain. – till at length in the very warmest nook in the grass above the rocks of the Cliff – I found 2 bright yellow blossoms which betrayed the inconspicuous leaves & all. The spring flowers wait not to perfect their leaves before they expand their blossoms. The blossom in so many cases precedes the leaf so with poetry? – they flash out. In the most favorable locality you will find flowers earlier than the May goers will believe. This year at least one flower (of several) hardly precedes another – but as soon as the storms were over & pleasant weather came – all bloomed at once. having been retarded so long. – This **appears** to be particularly true of the herbaceous flowers. How much does this happen every year?

There is no important change in the color of the **woods** yet – There are fewer dry leaves – buds color the maples – and perhaps the bark on some last year's shoots as the willows are brighter & some **willows** covered with catkins – & even alders maples elms & poplars show at a distance. The earth has now a greenish tinge – & the ice of course has universally given place to water for a long time past. These are general aspects – The Veratrum Viride at Well meadow is 15 or 16 inches high – the most of a growth this year. The angelica? at the Corner Spring is pretty near it.

I suppose the geese [**Canada Goose**  **Branta canadensis**] are all gone. And the ducks? Did the Snow birds [**Dark-eyed Junco**  **Junco hyemalis**] go off with the pleasant weather. Standing above the 1st little pond E of Fair Haven – This bright reflecting water surface is seen plainly at a higher level than the distant pond – It has a singular but pleasant effect on the beholder to see considerable sheets of water standing at different levels. – Pleasant to see lakes like platters full of water. Found a large cockle (?) shell by the shore of this little pond – It reminds me that all the earth is sea-shore –. The sight of these little shells inland It is a beach I stand on. Is the male willow on the E End of this pondlet – catkins about 3/4 inch long & just bursting commonly on the side & all before any leaves, the Brittle Gray W. S. grisea.

That small flat downy gnaphalium in sandy paths – is it the fragrant life-everlasting.

The Andromeda requires the sun – It is now merely a dull reddish brown – with light (greyish?) from the upper surface of the leaves.

Frogspawn a mass of transparent jelly bigger than the two fists composed of contiguous globules or eyes with each a little squirming pollywog? in the centre 1/3 inch long Walden is yellowish (apparently) next the shore where you see the sand – then green in still shallow water – then or generally deep blue. This as well under the R.R. and now that the trees have not leaved out – as under pines.

That last long storm brought down a coarse elephantine sand foliage in the Cut. Slumbrous ornaments for a cave or subterranean temple, such as at Elephantium? I see no willow leaves yet – A maple by Heywood's meadow



THOREAU'S

BIRDS

has opened its sterile blossoms – why is this (and maples generally) so much later than the Red Bridge one?
A week or more ago I made this list of **early** willows in Mass according to Gray putting Emerson in brackets—
Salix tristis. Sage Willow

- S. humilis (Low Bush Willow) S. Muhlenbergiensiis. S Conifera.
- S. discolor (Glaucus Willow) [2 Colored Willow.–Bog Willow] S. Sensitiva.
- S. eriocephala (Silky Headed Willow) S. Prinoides?
S crassa. “closely resembles the last” i.e. S. discolor [Wolly Headed Swamp]
- S. sericea (Silky-leaved Willow) S. Grisea. [Brittle-Gray]

1853



March 28, 1853: The woods ring with the cheerful jingle of the *F. hyemalis*. This is a very trig and compact little bird, and appears to be in good condition. The straight edge of slate on their breasts contrasts remarkably with the white from beneath; the short, light-colored bill is also very conspicuous amid the dark slate: and when they fly from you, the two white feathers in their tails are very distinct at a good distance. They are very lively, pursuing each other from bush to bush.

1854

April 1, Saturday: [Dr. Thaddeus William Harris](#)'s “Larvae of the Crane Fly” was appearing in this month's issue of the New England Farmer.


Having found prospecting for gold to involve a whole lot of hard work in what looked suspiciously like dirt, and being of the personal attitude that to do hard work was to be suspected of the dreadfully slavish and contemptible “strong back weak mind” syndrome, Hinton Rowan Helper had abandoned the gold fields of California. On this date he arrived at a port on the Caribbean coast of Central America and embarked for the final legs of his journey home to North Carolina. Did he remember the dirt of North Carolina as being less dirty, the work of North Carolina as being less hard? Well, but maybe he could make some easy clean money by writing to warn others that the streets of California were not exactly paved with gold. Note carefully how his attitude about writing correlated with his attitude about labor correlated with his attitude about persons of color. For Helper, to be pro-slavery was to be pro-Negro and to be pro-Negro was to be pro-slavery. Because these loathsome blacks were being used for manual labor, manual labor itself had acquired an irremovable taint, and even a white man, if he was so situated as to need to work for his living, was being treated “as if he was a loathsome beast, and shunned with the utmost disdain.” Writing about the loathsome black man and how he is wronging us became for Helper a way of avoiding being condemned as equally loathsome on account of his unrelenting poor-boy need to obtain money in order to live.

In the afternoon Henry Thoreau went on the Assabet River to Dodge's Brook and thence to Jacob B. Farmer's.



Ap. 1st The tree sparrows — hyemalis — & song sparrows are particularly lively & musical in the yard this rainy & truly April day. The air rings with them. The robin *now* begins to sing sweet powerfully—
Pm up Assabet to Dodge's Brook — thence to Farmer's.
April has begun like itself. It is warm & showery — while I sail away with a light SW wind toward the Rock—

ALPHABETICAL
BIRDS

Sometimes the sun seems just ready to burst out — yet I know it will not— The meadow is becoming bare. It resounds with the sprayey notes of blackbirds— The birds sing this warm showery day after a fortnight's cold (yesterday was wet too), with a universal burst & flood of melody. Great flocks of *hyemalis* [**Dark-eyed Junco**  *Junco hyemalis*] &c pass overhead like schools of fishes in the water many abreast. The white maple stamens are beginning to peep out from the wet & weather-beaten buds. The earliest alders are just ready to bloom — to show their yellow — on the first decidedly warm & sunny day. The water is smooth at last and dark. Ice no longer forms on the oars. It is pleasant to paddle under the dripping hemlocks this dark day. They make more of a wilderness impression than pines. The lines of saw dust from Barrets mill at different heights on the steep wet bank under the hemlocks — rather enhance the impression of freshness & wildness, as if it were a new country. Saw a painted tortoise on the bottom— The bark of Poplar boughs which have been held in the ice along the sides of the river the past winter are gnawed probably by muskrats. Saw floating a good-sized rooster without a head the red stump sticking out — probably killed by an owl. Heard a bird whose note was very much like that of the purple finch — loud & clear. First *smelled* the musk-rat.

Yesterday & to-day I hear the cackle of the flicker so agreeable from association. It brings the year about. From afar, on some blasted tree, it makes all the vale ring its swelling flicker (?). Saw at farmer his snow-grubs (the same I had seen v. back) **Haris** in this weeks NE Farmer thinks on comparing them with *Eng.* plates, that they are the larvae of one of the species of Crane-fly *Tipula*. I saw some — still in F's pasture. Did they not come out from the roots of the grass prematurely in the winter & so become food for birds? The ground in Farmer's garden was in some places whitened with the droppings of the snowbirds after seeds of weeds — *F. hyemalis* & others. The *hyemalis* is in the largest flocks of any at this season— You see them come drifting over a rising ground just like snowflakes before a north-east wind.


I was surprised to see how Farmers young pears 3 or 4 feet high on quince stocks had been broken down by the snow-drifts broken over & over apparently the snow freezing over them and then at last by its weight breaking them down.




I hear the jingle of the *hyemalis* from within the house — sounding like a trill.

1855



April 4 [1855]. A fine morning, still and bright, with smooth water and singing of song and tree sparrows [**Fox Sparrow**  *Passerella iliaca*], all over the town, and their imperfect strains are occasionally heard. Their clear, fox-colored backs are very handsome. I get quite near to them. Stood quite near to what I called a hairy woodpecker — but, seeing the downy afterward, I am in doubt about it. Its body certainly as big as a robin. It is a question of size between the two kinds. The rows of white spots near the end of the wings of the downy remind me of the lacings on the skirts of a soldier's coat. Talked with Daniel Garfield near the old house on Conantum. He was going to see if his boat was in order for fishing. Said he had been a-fishing as early as this and caught perch, etc., with a worm. He had often caught shiners in Fair Haven Pond through the ice in March, and once a trout in deep water off Baker's steep hill, which weighed two pounds, his lines having been left in over night. He had also often caught the little perch in White Pond in midwinter for bait. Sees trout and sucker running up brooks at this season and earlier, and thinks they go out of them in the fall, but not out of the river. Does not know where they go to.

P.M. — To Clematis Brook *via* Lee's.

A pleasant day, growing warmer; a slight haze. Now the hedges and apple trees are alive with fox-colored sparrows [**Fox Sparrow**  *Passerella iliaca*], all over the town, and their imperfect strains are occasionally heard. Their clear, fox-colored backs are very handsome. I get quite near to them. Stood quite near to what I called a hairy woodpecker — but, seeing the downy afterward, I am in doubt about it. Its body certainly as big as a robin. It is a question of size between the two kinds. The rows of white spots near the end of the wings of the downy remind me of the lacings on the skirts of a soldier's coat. Talked with Daniel Garfield near the old house on Conantum. He was going to see if his boat was in order for fishing. Said he had been a-fishing as early as this and caught perch, etc., with a worm. He had often caught shiners in Fair Haven Pond through the ice in March, and once a trout in deep water off Baker's steep hill, which weighed two pounds, his lines having been left in over night. He had also often caught the little perch in White Pond in midwinter for bait. Sees trout and sucker running up brooks at this season and earlier, and thinks they go out of them in the fall, but not out of the river. Does not know where they go to.

I am surprised to [find] the pond, *i.e.* Fair Haven Pond, not yet fully open. There is [a] large mass of ice in the eastern bay, which will hardly melt tomorrow. [Footnote: "The rain of the 5th, P.M., must have finished it."]

It is a fine air, but more than tempered by the snow in the northwest. All the earth is bright; the very pines glisten, and the water is a bright blue. A gull is circling round Fair Haven Pond, seen white against the woods and hillsides, looking as if it would dive for a fish every moment, and occasionally resting on the ice. The water

above Lee's Bridge is all alive with ducks. There are many flocks of eight or ten together, their black heads and white breasts seen above the water, — more of them than I have seen before this season, — and a gull with its whole body above the water, perhaps standing where it was shallow. Not only are the evergreens brighter, but the pools, as that upland one behind Lee's, the ice as well as snow about their edges being now completely melted, have a peculiarly warm and bright April look, as if ready to be inhabited by frogs.

I can now put a spade into the garden anywhere. The rain of April 1st and the warmth of to-day have taken out the frost there; but I cannot put a spade into banks by the meadow where there is the least slope to the north.


Returning from Mt. Misery, the pond and river-reach presented a fine, warm view. The slight haze, which on a warmer day at this season softens the rough surfaces which the winter has left and fills the copses seemingly with life, — makes them appear to teem with life, — made the landscape remarkably fair. It would not be called a warm, but a pleasant day; but the water has crept partly over the meadows, and the broad border of button-bushes, etc., etc., off Wheeler's cranberry meadow, low and nearly flat, though sloping regularly from an abrupt curving edge on the riverside several rods into the meadow till it is submerged — this is isolated, but at this distance and through this air it is remarkably soft and elysian. There is a remarkable variety in the view at present from this summit. The sun feels as warm is in June on my ear. Half a mile off in front is this elysian water, high over which two wild ducks are winging their rapid flight eastward through the bright air; on each side and beyond, the earth is clad with a warm russet, more pleasing perhaps than green; and far beyond all, in the northwestern horizon, my eye rests on a range of snow-covered mountains, glistening in the sun.



December 1, 1855: P.M. —By path to Walden. Slate-colored snowbirds flit before me in the path, feeding on the seeds on the snow, the countless little brown seeds that begin to be scattered over the snow, so much more obvious to bird and beast. A hundred kinds of indigenous grain are harvested now, broadcast upon the surface of the snow. Thus at a critical season these seeds are shaken down on to a clean white napkin, unmixed with dirt and rubbish, and off this the little pensioners pick them. Their clean table is thus spread a few inches or feet above the ground. Will wonder become extinct in me? Shall I become insensible as a fungus?

1858



January 3, Sunday: I see a flock of *F. hyemalis* [Dark-eyed Junco  *Junco hyemalis*] this afternoon, the weather is hitherto so warm.

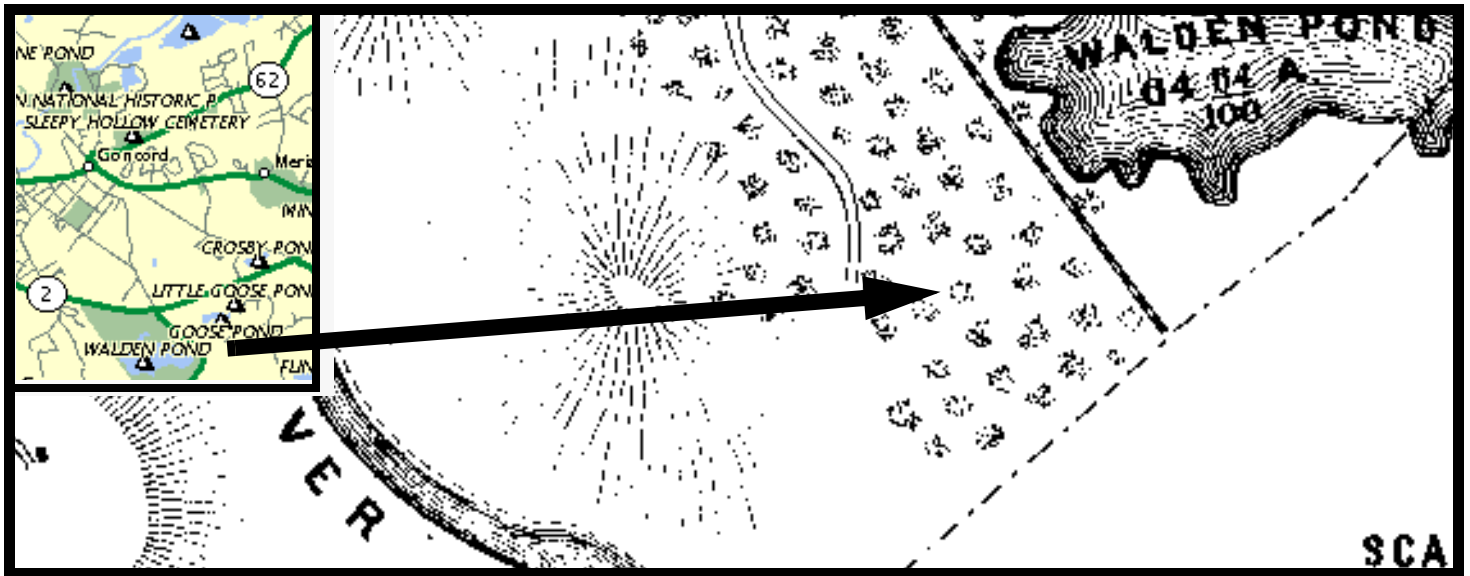
About, in his lively "Greece and the Greeks," says, "These are the most exquisite delights to be found in Greece, next to, or perhaps before, the pleasure of admiring the masterpieces of art, — a little cool water under a genial sun." I have no doubt that this is true.

Why, then, travel so far when the same pleasures may be found near home?

GREECE AND THE GREEKS

The slosh on Walden had so much water in it that it has now frozen perfectly smooth and looks like a semitransparent marble. Being, however, opaque, it reminds one the more of some vast hall or corridor's floor, yet probably not a human foot has trodden it yet. Only the track-repairers and stokers have cast stones and billets of wood on to it to prove it.

Going to the Andromeda Ponds, I was greeted by the warm brown-red glow of the andromeda calyculata toward the sun. I see where I have been through, the more reddish under sides apparently being turned up. It is long since a human friend has met me with such a glow.



1861

December: Abolitionist lecturers began at this point to dominate the annual lecture course of the Smithsonian Institution sponsored by the Washington Lecture Association, which was the leading lectern in Washington DC, paving the way for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and pushing the US President toward issuance of an Emancipation Proclamation. What had happened was that the head of the Institution, Henry, had become so suspected of sympathy to the Southern cause, that he had become unable to resist the pressure to allow the lectures. Pierpont had eased Henry's concerns by limiting the course to twelve lectures and by inviting scholars such as Edward Everett, a former Whig politician and ex-president of Harvard College; Orestes A. Brownson; Oliver Wendell Holmes; James Russell Lowell; Ralph Waldo Emerson; and Cornelius C. Felton, president of Harvard College, to counterbalance abolitionists such as Horace Greeley, editor of the New-York Tribune; Henry Ward Beecher, minister at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York; Galusha Anderson, pastor at the Second Baptist Church of St. Louis; Wendell Phillips, an immediate abolitionist from Boston; and the Reverend George Barrell Cheever (1807-1890), a Congregational minister from New-York. To keep out troublemakers, high ticket prices were set and tickets could only be purchased several hours in advance of the lecture. A ticket for a single lecture cost twenty-five cents. A ticket for the entire course of lectures cost three dollars for a lady and a gentleman, two dollars for a gentleman, and a dollar and a half for a lady. The organization, however, had not been able to secure many of the lecturers Pierpont had promised Henry and invited Radical replacements for them. Moreover, it doubled the course from twelve to twenty-four lectures to accommodate the great interest in abolition circles to speak in Washington. Of those with a literary reputation, only Brownson and Emerson accepted Pierpont's invitation, and they were instructed to lecture on politics rather than literature. The association had hoped to have Everett, the leading

American orator, open the course, but he was unavailable. The lectures offered by Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, the Reverend George B. Cheever, and other abolitionists from this point until April 1862 offer a case study of radical antislavery Christian political activity and its clash with American science. The lectures aroused among these establishment scientists great fears of mob violence and roiled their Institution in popular disputes. Joseph Henry, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, believing that black people could live with white people only in a state of servitude, would close the course in April 1862 by forbidding further lectures on partisan topics.

At some point during this month the Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson had a last conversation with his failing friend Thoreau:

[H]e mentioned most remarkable facts [about the local distribution of bird species], which had fallen under his unerring eyes.

- The Hawk most common in Concord, the Red-Tailed species [Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*], is not known near the sea-shore, twenty miles off, – or at Boston or Plymouth.
- The White-Breasted Sparrow is rare in Concord [does the Rev. intend the White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*?]: but the Ashburnham woods, thirty miles away, are full of it.
- The Scarlet Tanager's [Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*'s] is the commonest note in Concord, except the Red-Eyed Flycatcher's [is the Rev. referring to the Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus borealis* that Thoreau called the "Pe-pe"?]; yet one of the best field-ornithologists in Boston had never heard it.
- The Rose-Breasted Grosbeak [Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*] is seen not infrequently at Concord, though its nest is rarely found; but in Minnesota Thoreau found it more abundant than any other bird, far more so than the Robin [American Robin *Turdus migratorius*].



- But his most interesting statement, to my fancy, was, that, during a stay of ten weeks on Mount Monadnock, he found that



the Snow-Bird [Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*] built its nest on the top of the mountain, and probably never came down through the season. That was its Arctic; and it would probably yet be found, he predicted, on Wachusett and other Massachusetts peaks.

(We don't know of an occasion on which Thoreau lived atop Monadnock for ten weeks. His longest stay of which we now have record would have been the summer of 1844, when he also hiked in the Catskills, and that entire summer itinerary could not possibly have begun before May 1st and could not possibly have continued past August 14th, for a total "window of opportunity" of some 15 weeks. That was before our guy had become greatly preoccupied with birdwatching. Any remarks that Thoreau made about birds and this mountain would likely have been based on observations made during his four-day-and-five-night trip there in August 1860, by which point he had learned the difference between a hawk and a handsaw. However, had the Rev. learned something through direct conversation, about the trip Thoreau had made as a youth in 1844, that would indicate an extended mountain camping experience of which we do not now have record?)



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