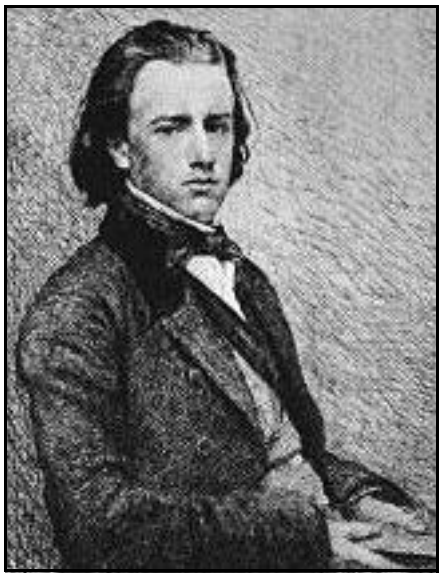
JOHN "DON'T OGLE IT THROUGH A GLASS–SHOOT IT"

BURROUGHS[1]



1.John Burroughs John Burroughs lived at a time of altering natural aesthetic sensitivities, and was of the old school. His sort of naturalist shot first and asked questions afterwards, accumulating far more kills than they actually needed for their work. There were even, at the turn of the 20th Century, gun clubs named after the venerable John James Audubon. Faced with this increasing sensitivity to the lives of other species, Burroughs was needing to urge on his reluctant acolytes: "Don't ogle it through a glass, shoot it."

1824

September 2, Thursday: The *Marquis de Lafayette* breakfasted in Newburyport on yet another rainy day, and William Lloyd Garrison was among the hundreds of townspeople who obtained his handshake at the Tracy mansion on State Street (a building which now houses the town's public library) prior to his departure for Concord.

When the illustrious *citoyen* reached Concord, Squire Samuel Hoar, on behalf of all, rose to deliver the welcome.

> ***Lafayette, nous sommes ici!***
>
> —General "Black Jack" Pershing,
> arriving with US troops in France
> at the very end of the WWI trench warfare.

Unfortunately, Squire Hoar did this in a manner which would begin a long and bitter controversy with Lexington over which town's militia had been the first to fire upon the colonial army in America, by pointing out in his speech of welcome that it had been at the Old North Bridge over the Concord River rather than during the prior slaughter on the green in Lexington town that "the first forcible resistance" had been offered by the militia to the army. Before this visit by the *marquis*, there had in fact been very little note taken either in Concord or in Lexington of the anniversary of the April 19th dustup between the militia and the army. This invidious discrimination between two outbreaks of smallarms fire would produce a "storm of protest" from indignant Lexingtonians. Major Elias Phinney of Lexington would begin to pull together the depositions of survivors, none of whom had forgotten any details of the "battle" and some of whom were finding that they were able to recall details that hadn't actually happened.

When Mary Moody Emerson was introduced to the general, she coquettishly told him that since she had been at the time a newborn infant, she also could lay claims to having been "'in arms' at the Concord fight."[2]

John Shepard Keyes would later preserve a dim memory of having been pulled by a sister out of the way of the horses that drew *Lafayette* through Concord, and of the pageantry of that very special day.

2. I don't know whether this presentation of Mary Moody Emerson to Lafayette occurred earlier during this day, in Newburyport, or later, in Concord.

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn would later allege that Henry Thoreau had been able to summon a childhood memory of this event, which would have occurred subsequent to his 7th birthday, but Thoreau's memory of the event would have been rather more like the trace memory of Keynes (John Shepard Keyes) and nothing like Walt Whitman's — for Walt's memory much later (a memory produced for the amazement of his friend John Burroughs), was that somehow he had obtained for himself a manly kiss:

> On the visit of General Lafayette to this country, in 1824, he came over to Brooklyn in state, and rode through the city. The children of the schools turn'd out to join in the welcome. An edifice for a free public library for youths was just then commencing, and Lafayette consented to stop on his way and lay the corner-stone. Numerous children arriving on the ground, where a huge irregular excavation for the building was already dug, surrounded with heaps of rough stone, several gentlemen assisted in lifting the children to safe or convenient spots to see the ceremony. Among the rest, Lafayette, also helping the children, took up the five-year-old Walt Whitman, and pressing the child a moment to his breast, and giving him a kiss, handed him down to a safe spot in the excavation.
>
> — John Burroughs.

Abba Alcott would love to recount, in her old age, how her aunt Dorothy Sewall Quincy met the *marquis* at the ball held in his honor. We may be able to judge the nature of the reception and ball at which Dorothy Sewall Quincy "met her *marquis*" –presumably in Boston rather than in Concord where there would not have been an adequate infrastructure of edifices, servants, and the paraphernalia of privilege– by considering that the visit of this distinguished "friend of America," who had been declared a guest of the nation by President James Monroe and by the federal Congress, was our nation's chief social excitement of this year.

In Philadelphia, for instance, the celebrations had occupied several days, with the good general Lafayette bowing with grace of manner and greeting each lady and gentleman presented to him with "How do you do?"

in very careful English, and the following account subsequently appeared in Niles' Weekly Register:

THE NATION'S GUEST

On Monday morning, the 4th inst., about three hundred children of both sexes, from the different schools in Philadelphia, were arranged in the State House yard to receive General La Fayette: the spectacle was most beautiful and highly interesting.

In the evening he attended a grand ball at the theatre: the lobby of which was converted into a magnificent saloon, adorned with beautiful rose, orange and lemon trees, in full bearing, and a profusion of shrubbery, pictures, busts, banners with classical inscriptions, etc., all illuminated with a multitude of lamps. For the dancers there were two compartments, the house and the stage; the upper part of the former was hung with scarlet drapery, studded with golden stars, while the great chandelier, with two additional ones, and a row of wax tapers, arranged over the canopy, shed down a blaze of light. The first and second tiers of boxes were crowded with ladies in the richest apparel, as spectators of the dazzling array. Beyond the proscenium the stage division wore the appearance of an Eastern pavilion in a garden, terminating with a view of an extended sea and landscape, irradiated by the setting sun, and meant to typify the Western world. The company began to assemble soon after seven o'clock, and consisted of two thousand or more persons, of whom 600 or 700 were invited strangers. Twenty-two hundred tickets had been issued. No disorder occurred in the streets, with the arrival and departure of the carriages, which formed a line along the adjoining squares.

General La Fayette appeared at nine o'clock and was received at the door by the managers of the ball. He was conducted the whole length of the apartments through an avenue formed by the ladies to the bottom of the stage, where Mrs. Morris, Governor Shulze, and the Mayer waited to greet him in form: the full band playing an appropriate air during his progress. As soon as he was seated, the dancers were called, and at least four hundred were immediately on the floor. The dancing did not cease until near five o'clock, though the company began to retire about three. At twelve, one of the managers, from an upper box, proclaimed a toast "to the nation's guest," which was hailed with enthusiasm and accompanied by the descent of a banner from the ceiling. Behind this was suddenly displayed a portrait of the general, with allegorical figures.

A short while later, churning this topic, Niles' Weekly Register offered information about the sexual overtones of toasts which had been offered at a similar upscale bash in Baltimore, and the manner in which such

gallantries had been offered and received:

> When the music for the dancing ceased, the military band of the first rifle regiment played the most pleasing and fashionable airs.... Just before the ladies of the first tables retired, General La Fayette requested permission to give the following toast, which was received in a manner that reflected credit on the fair objects of it: "The Baltimore ladies — the old gratitude of a young soldier mingles with the respectful sense of new obligation conferred on a veteran." The ladies rose and saluted the general, and the sensation and effect is not to be described; when he sat down there was a burst of applause from all the gentlemen present.

Need we explore the overtones of this toast? The old French general is relying upon the national stereotypes according to which Frenchmen in tights are "gallant," and is reminiscing about when he and his fellows were young and horny, traveling around in magnificent uniforms diddling the lovely young colonial maidens. He is saying to these ladies at the banquet "Maybe it was you I swived with when you were much younger, and you will remember but not I, or consider that maybe it was your mama," and he was saying to their husbands as well, "Maybe it was your wife I swived with when we were so much younger, and she will remember but not I and she will most certainly not tell you about it, or maybe it was your mama, or your wife's mama." He remembers youthful delights and is grateful. Lafayette says all this in the most careful innuendo, "and the sensation and effect is not to be described." What could the American males do but applaud wildly? –They couldn't very well rush the main table and shove this codger's head into his soup, could they?

In Newport, Rhode Island Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> *5th day Morng - called a little while at Jos Anthonys, then came on board the Packet & got home in about five hours - This little jant [jaunt] to Providence has been attended with depression on account of the inconvenience of leaving home when I have considerable of my own to attend too, & my outward circumstances require my attention - yet I have (I trust) humbly to acknowledge an evidence of divine favour & even an enlargement of my views & exercises which is worth sacrifice & even suffering for & as to my spiritual condition I have returned refreshed & enlivened, with renew'd desires for myself & the society of which I am a member, that I may grow in grace, & there by become increasingly usefull to the latter*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

To the Inhabitants of Concord.

THE *Concord Gazette & Middlesex Yeoman*, of Sept. 4th, notices the reception of Gen. LA FAYETTE in this town. This notice is understood to have received the sanction of some of the extensive Committee, who planned the arrangements for the day. Some have said that an active committee-man wrote the account to suit himself. But, by some, this is denied. Yet all admit, that the *majority* of the Committee adopted the account as *true*. Still, this account, though it contains no single assertion which is really false, conveys a wrong impression to the reader. It intimates, if it does not say, that the "Ladies who prepared and set out the refreshments of the bower" *gave* them as a voluntary tribute to the Hero. It also leaves one to suppose, that the whole expenses of the occasion were defrayed by a few public-spirited persons of both sexes who had *placed themselves in the front ranks, and contrived to show themselves to no small advantage in presence of the illustrious Guest.*

To correct these mistakes this sheet is written. It is intended to state the *truth*; and it is the common wish that the truth, without varnish or colouring should be told; and with the truth the Citizens will rest satisfied. To receive Gen. LA FAYETTE in *Concord* with appropriate ceremonies and respect, a Committee of fifteen was appointed, by a considerable meeting of their townsmen. This Committee served, and no address to the General by their Chairman, spoke the feelings and gratitude of the people with ability, and gave universal satisfaction. Yet in some parts of the committee's doings, there was a strange spirit discovered. In selecting persons to appear in the presence of the Hero, there was a singular display of—judgment shall it be called? No, it was not judgment; it was preference and caprice.—This was noticed at the time, but called out no peculiar expression of disapprobation. But, this reception, parade, or entertainment had a *tail* to it. There was a bill to be paid; or, to speak more emphatically, there were an infinite number of bills to be met. The refreshments *voluntarily furnished by the Ladies* were to be *paid for* by the public. An ounce of tea, a slice of bacon, a quarter of sugar, or a shilling's worth of cinnamon, wherever bought or by whoever *furnished*, had not been furnished without being charged in a *bill*, and was now to be paid for. The persons who were for excluding their neighbors *from joining* in making ready the ceremonies, were now not so very anxious to exclude the same neighbors *from* paying the bill or bills. They who received the General as if they themselves constituted the whole town, and were resolved to appear as *the only persons of consequence* at his reception, were not so very desirous to exclude others from the privilege of bearing the *expense*. These remarks it is thought apply not to the *whole* of the Committee. Some of their number would have preferred a liberal course; and these liberal minds were now averse to inflicting a tax on the town, to bear the expense, *incurred, to enable a few persons to display their own personal consequence to advantage.*

The warrent for town-meeting on Nov. 1st, contained an article "to see if the town will defray the expense of the reception of Gen. La Fayette." When this was known it produced a strong excitement. There were numbers in town, who had been *excluded from aiding* in the reception, who were yet so zealous and enthusiastic for the companion of Washington, that they voluntarily contributed enough to defray the whole of these expenses, and would not let it be said, that in Concord it was necessary to lay a town-tax for the reception of the General; they would not suffer it to be said, that this *town* had not liberal minded citizens enough to pay eighty dollars for the honour of seeing and welcoming Gen. LA FAYETTE, without the infliction of a TAX.

Let it be remembered that most of these men, are the very persons whom a majority of the Committee excluded from the ceremonies, when Gen. La Fayette was here. They find no fault with the reception, except that *so few* were allowed to share in it. With parts of it they are much pleased. The military parade was an honour to the town and County; they are proud of it. Indeed had the whole business been conducted on a liberal scale; had all the citizens been allowed to aid in conducting it, no dissatisfaction would have been felt. As it is, many are not pleased. Many have had injustice done them by being excluded; while it is conceived that *some individuals have had great injustice done them* by being allowed to make themselves seen *too much*. Be this as it may, it concerns every one to have the matter rightly understood in this town; and beyond this town of Con-cons let not these things be told.

The following is a Statement of the Expenses incurred at the reception of Gen. LA FAYETTE, *September*, 1824.

E. THORNTON'S Bill for Refreshment furnished the troops on duty that day, viz.

60 Mugs of drink before his arrival, at 1*c*	$13 33	
*13 Bottles of Spirit after his arrival, at 46	12 00	$25 33

JONATHAN BUTTRICK, Jr's. Bill.

To his expense in going to Boston after a Bugle player,	3 75

SAMUEL BURR'S Bill.

For Powder & Flannel to make cartridges for artillery,	13 17

JOSIAH DAVIS' Bill;

For Sundries furnished the Bower, viz.

6 lb. Coffee, at 20 cts.	1 20	
3 doz. Eggs, 14 cts.	42	
1 lb. Butter,	17	
27 lb. Ham, at 12½ cts.	3 38	
5 Bottles Wine of Davenport, at 6*s*.	5 00	
Making Bower by G. Proctor,	5 00	
Abel Conant's attendance of himself and boy,	1 00	
Bread of Jarvis,	1 00	
9 lb. Loaf Sugar, 1*s*.	1 35	13 50

DANIEL SHATTUCK'S Bill.

7 lb. Currants, at 25 cts.	1 75	
7 lb. Sugar,	75	
6 lb. White Sugar, at 14 cts.	84	
¼ lb. Cloves,	40	
7 lb. Box Raisins, at 20 cts.	1 40	
¾ lb. Nutmegs,	63	
7 lb. 12 oz. Loaf Sugar, at 1*s*.	1 29	
Crockery lost and broken,	95	
Expense in notifying Capt. DAVIS, of *Acton* by *William Whiting,*	63	
Damage of Lumber,	1 20	9 84

MOSES DAVIS' Bill.

4 doz. Eggs, at 1*s*.	67	
¼ lb. HYSON TEA,	28	95

WILLIAM WHITING'S Bill.

8 lb. Butter at 1*s*.	1 33	
6 doz. Eggs, 12½ cts.	75	
Cash paid for attendence at Table,	1 25	3 33
		$79 07

The above items are copied exactly from the bill given in, and which was laid before the town. † There was another item of $2, which made the whole bill $81 07; This amount was received and receipted for by Col. DANIEL SHATTUCK, in behalf of the Committee of Arrangements.

* Eight dollars of this item were refunded by the commanders of the Concord Independent Companies.

† This charge is now omitted in the bill, because it was made without the consent of the person for whom it was kindly set down by the *liberality of friends.* This money too was refunded, as having been paid unasked.

1825

Our national birthday, the 4th of July:[3] In Washington DC, taking part in a 4th-of-July parade that included a stage representing 24 states, mounted on wheels, President John Quincy Adams marched from the White House to the Capitol building.

In Boston, members of the military shared breakfast at the Exchange Coffee House (which must be what war is all about, unless you have a need to offer some alternate explanation).

Construction began on Connecticut's Farmington Canal, from Massachusetts to Paumanok Long Island Sound, along the Connecticut River.

New York governor De Witt Clinton and Ohio governor Jeremiah Morrow presided at the groundbreaking for the Ohio and Erie Canal at Licking Summit, Ohio.

The geriatric general Lafayette came to Brooklyn to lay the cornerstone for the Apprentices' Library, and 6-year-old Walt Whitman was present along with other children. Some of the children were lifted to spots where they could see, and 36 years later Whitman would reminisce that it had been the general himself who had lifted him: "It is one of the dearest of the boyish memories of the writer, that he now only saw, but was touched by the hands, and taken a moment to the breast of the immortal old Frenchman." Young Whitman was so impressed by this event that he would write it up a total of three times (on one occasion he produced

3. Nathaniel Hawthorne's 21st birthday.

this memory of a manly kiss for the amazement of his buddy John Burroughs). No story such as this loses anything in the retelling, and by the time he would get to the 3d version he would not be merely handled at that 4th-of-July dedication long ago — but bussed as well:

> On the visit of General Lafayette to this country, in 1824, he came over to Brooklyn in state, and rode through the city. The children of the schools turn'd out to join in the welcome. An edifice for a free public library for youths was just then commencing, and Lafayette consented to stop on his way and lay the corner-stone. Numerous children arriving on the ground, where a huge irregular excavation for the building was already dug, surrounded with heaps of rough stone, several gentlemen assisted in lifting the children to safe or convenient spots to see the ceremony. Among the rest, Lafayette, also helping the children, took up the five-year-old Walt Whitman, and pressing the child a moment to his breast, and giving him a kiss, handed him down to a safe spot in the excavation.
>
> — John Burroughs.

So who cares what actually happened?

Walt would be learning his letters in a Quaker school in Brooklyn which taught according to the system pioneered in England by Friend Joseph Lancaster. The class size was a hundred and the children were seated at desks in groups of ten. Some of the older children were assigned as monitors and gave instruction, while the room was supervised by a single adult.

1830

By about this point the writings of the naturalist Reverend Gilbert White had become so popular in England, that what has been termed "the cult of Gilbert White" was beginning to reach even into America. The steady stream of visitors to Selborne, England would eventually include both Charles Darwin and John Burroughs, and the money that was being made off the sale of such books would eventually draw even the American editor and critic wannabee James Russell Lowell.

> The rise of the natural history essay in the latter half of the nineteenth century was an essential legacy of the Selborne cult. It was more than a scientific-literary genre of writing, modeled after White's pioneering achievement. A constant theme of the nature essayists was the search for a lost pastoral haven, for a home in an inhospitable and threatening world.... [N]atural history was the vehicle that brought readers to the quiet peace of hay barns, orchards, and mountain valleys. These virtuosi of the nature essay were among the best selling writers of their age.

In this regard, here is a quote from Professor Lawrence Buell's analysis of the manner in which Henry Thoreau has entered the American canon:

> A generation after Henry Thoreau, John Burroughs, America's leading nature essayist at the turn of the twentieth century, wrote about Thoreau in somewhat the same way eighteenth-century and romantic poets tended to write about John Milton: as the imposing precursor figure whose shadow he must disown or destroy in order to establish his own legitimacy.

1837

April 3, Monday: David Henry Thoreau passed the final exams in German and in Italian at Harvard College (he took the Italian exam along with 13 other students who also had been brought forward by Pietro Bachi).

After this slam-dunk he checked out Waldo Emerson's NATURE from the library of his debating club, "Institute of 1770" (soon he would purchase a copy for himself).

Thoreau supplemented his borrowings by at the same time checking out from his club's library the 1st and 2d of the dozen volumes of Edward Gibbon's THE HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (London 1807, 1820, 1821),[4]

GIBBON, DECLINE & FALL I

GIBBON, DECLINE & FALL II

and the 1st of the three volumes of Thomas Carlyle's translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel WILHELM MEISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP (Edinburgh, 1824) (Thoreau would have in his personal library the edition that had been printed in Boston by Wells and Lilly in 1828).

WILHELM MEISTER I

WILHELM MEISTER II

WILHELM MEISTER III

4. We have reason to believe that this was as far as Thoreau got into the famous or infamous "Decline & Fall," before becoming so distressed with Gibbon that he would switch over entirely to other historical sources having to do with the Roman Empire, and this of course brings to mind the Duke of Gloucester's remark to Edward Gibbon, upon being presented in 1787 with this 2d volume: "Another damned thick square book! Always scribble scribble scribble — eh, Mr. Gibbon?"

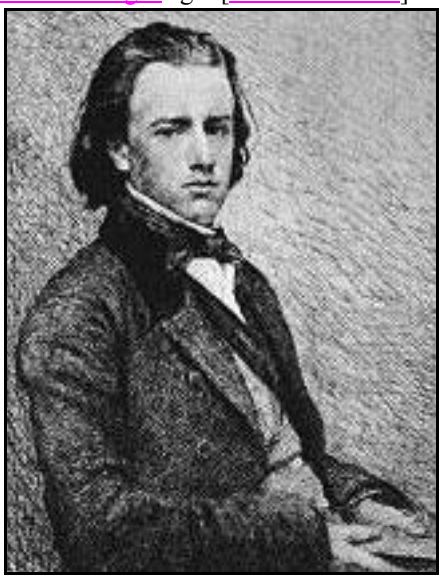
John Burroughs was born near Roxbury, New York.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> *2nd day 3rd of 4 M / This day, I believe this day, I have paid all my debts of a pecuniary nature, which I owe on my own account - it is a comfortable thing to feel clear of the World & I believe I am truly thankful therefor — My God has been very good to me all my life long*

1857

It was at about this time that John Burroughs "got [Waldo Emerson] in my blood."

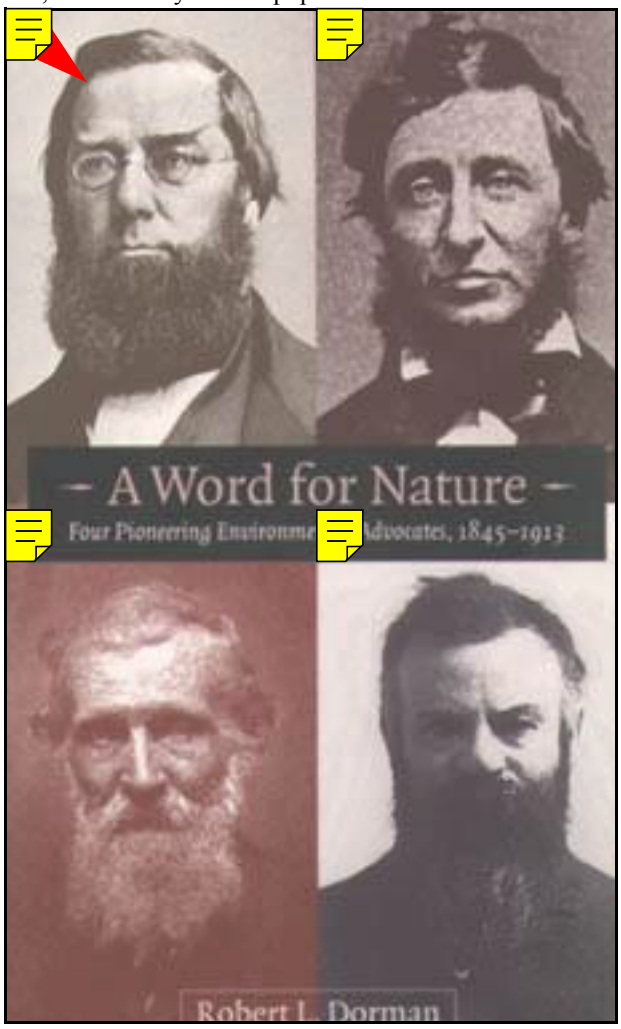


He would indicate later that reading them aloud to himself was what determined him to become a writer. Not only did these essays, such as NATURE and the "Divinity School Address," supply Burroughs with something he needed in regard to natural religion, so that he went into what he described as "a state of ecstasy," but also, the attitude Emerson took was helpfully different from the attitude that had been taken by Burroughs's own father. His first literary products would be imitation-Emerson essays, which he would mainly submit to the little literary journals of New York. One essay in particular, titled "Expression," that he submitted to James Russell Lowell at the new The Atlantic Monthly, was so Emersonian that the editor suspected plagiarism. Well, the editor who was never at a loss published it anyway, anonymously (what's a little plagiarism when the attitude's righteous?), and the readership of this magazine promptly presumed that this was a new Emerson piece and actually sent in Letters to the Editor under that presumption.

James Russell Lowell published an article in The Crayon calling for the establishment of a society to protect American trees such as the recently "discovered" California redwoods.

Samuel H. Hammond published WILD NORTHERN SCENES; OR, SPORTING ADVENTURES WITH THE RIFLE AND ROD, an important book in the nascent tradition of the hunter-conservationist, which celebrated the beauty and beneficence of the Adirondack wilds and advocated preservation of limited wilderness areas as resources for recreation and rejuvenation.

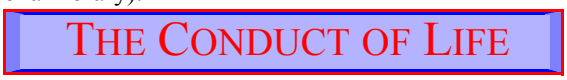
In an early example of the growing public concern with fish conservation through fish culture, especially at the state level, George Perkins Marsh published a REPORT, MADE UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE LEGISLATURE OF VERMONT, ON THE ARTIFICIAL PROPAGATION OF FISH, in which he also explored the effects of deforestation, agriculture, and industry on fish populations.[5]



1860

The Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson's OUT-DOOR PAPERS, which would eventually take John Burroughs out of his track of Emerson-essay-imitation and set him on his track of nature writing.[6]

Waldo Emerson's "The Conduct of Life" was published by Ticknor & Fields in Boston (a copy would be found in Henry Thoreau's personal library).

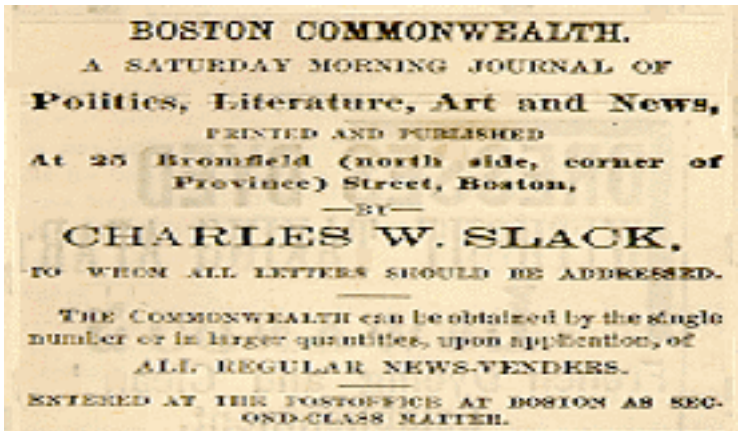


5. The conservation movement was little more than a shabby fraud. From the historical record, these early environmental technocrats were intent not on solving our ecological crisis but on destroying the earth as quickly as possible. Their net impact has been negative: we would have been better off had we never had a conservation movement, to teach us how to manage our looting so that we looted with greater and greater effectiveness and economy. According to Samuel P. Hays's EXPLORATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: ESSAYS BY SAMUEL P. HAYS (Pittsburgh PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1998), these men were mere pawns of the powers that be, careerists bought by their careers:

> Conservation, above all, was a scientific movement, and its role in history arose from the implications of science and technology in modern society. Conservation leaders sprang from such fields as hydrology, forestry, agrostology, geology, and anthropology. Vigorously active in professional circles in the national capital, these leaders brought the ideals and practices of their crafts into federal resource policy. Loyalty to these professional ideals, not close association with the grass-roots public, set the tone of the Theodore Roosevelt conservation movement. Its essence was rational planning to promote efficient development and use of all natural resources. The idea of efficiency drew these federal scientists from one resource task to another, from specific programs to comprehensive concepts. It molded the policies which they proposed, their administrative techniques, and their relations with Congress and the public. It is from the vantage point of applied science, rather than of democratic protest, that one must understand the historic role of the conservation movement. The new realms of science and technology, appearing to open up unlimited opportunities for human achievement, filled conservation leaders with intense optimism. They emphasized expansion, not retrenchment; possibilities, not limitations.... They displayed that deep sense of hope which pervaded all those at the turn of the century for whom science and technology were revealing visions of an abundant future.... Conflicts between competing resource users, especially, should not be dealt with through the normal processes of politics. Pressure group action, logrolling in Congress, or partisan debate could not guarantee rational and scientific decisions. Amid such jockeying for advantage with the resulting compromise, concern for efficiency would disappear. Conservationists envisaged, even though they did not realize their aims, a political system guided by the ideal of efficiency and dominated by the technicians who could best determine how to achieve it.

1866

November 10: John Burroughs reviewed, on the first two pages of the Boston Commonwealth, Walt Whitman's LEAVES OF GRASS.



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ALL REGULAR NEWS-VENDERS.

ENTERED AT THE POSTOFFICE AT BOSTON AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER.

1867

John Burroughs accessed his having chummed around with his buddy Walt in Washington DC for purposes of NOTES ON WALT WHITMAN AS POET AND PERSON.[7]

1868

April: John Burroughs placed a comment about Henry Thoreau in The Galaxy magazine, in an article titled "Before Genius":

> Thoreau occupies a niche by himself; but Thoreau was not a great personality; far from it; yet his writings have a strong characteristic flavor. There is a real electric discharge into the mind from every page. He is anti-scorbutic, like leeks and onions. He has reference, also, to the highest truths.

6. During the civil war John Burroughs was chumming around with Walt Whitman in Washington DC.
7. You should understand this very clearly: for some people the legitimations offered during periods of warfare can be turned toward a whole lot of personal fun and games, and then these personal highs can later in life be transformed into "war stories." Yes, this is shameful, but no, this is not so shameful that it is not done — instead, we simply resist perceiving its shamefulness.

1871

John Burroughs's WAKE-ROBIN, the 1st of many volumes of his extraordinarily popular nature essays.

1873

John Burroughs relocated to a farm at Esopus-on-Hudson, in the Hudson River valley.

June: John Burroughs placed a comment about Henry Thoreau in The Galaxy magazine, in an article titled "Exhilarations of the Road":

> When you get into a railway car you want a continent, the man in his carriage requires a township; but a walker like Thoreau finds as much and more along the shores of Walden Pond.

1875

John Burroughs's WINTER SUNSHINE.

1876

October: John Burroughs placed a comment about Henry Thoreau in Scribner's Monthly magazine, in an article titled "Autumn Tides":

> Thoreau, I believe, was the first to remark upon the individuality of trees of the same species with respect to their foliage, — some maples ripening their leaves early and some late, and some being of one tint and some of another; and moreover, that each tree held to the same characteristics, year after year.

1877

John Burroughs's BIRDS AND POETS.

September 29, day: A verbatim extract by Walt Whitman from a letter to him from his friend John Burroughs at Esopus-on-Hudson, in the Hudson River valley, in regard to the death of Charles Caswell:

"Specimen Days"

... S. was away when your picture came, attending his sick brother, Charles — who has since died — an event that has sadden'd me much. Charlie was younger than S., and a most attractive young fellow. He work'd at my father's, and had done so for two years. He was about the best specimen of a young country farm-hand I ever knew. You would have loved him. He was like one of your poems. With his great strength, his blond hair, his cheerfulness and contentment, his universal good will, and his silent manly ways, he was a youth hard to match. He was murder'd by an old doctor. He had typhoid fever, and the old fool bled him twice. He lived to wear out [Page 813] the fever, but had not strength to rally. He was out of his head nearly all the time. In the morning, as he died in the afternoon, S. was standing over him, when Charlie put up his arms around S.'s neck, and pull'd his face down and kiss'd him. S. said he knew then the end was near. (S. stuck to him day and night to the last.) When I was home in August, Charlie was cradling on the hill, and it was a picture to see him walk through the grain. All work seem'd play to him. He had no vices, any more than Nature has, and was belov'd by all who knew him.

I have written thus to you about him, for such young men belong to you; he was of your kind. I wish you could have known him. He had the sweetness of a child, and the strength and courage and readiness of a young Viking. His mother and father are poor; they have a rough, hard farm. His mother works in the field with her husband when the work presses. She has had twelve children.

1878

July 21, day: A report from Walt Whitman:

"Specimen Days"

HAPPINESS AND RASPBERRIES

Here I am, on the west bank of the Hudson, 80 miles north of New York, near Esopus, at the handsome, roomy, honeysuckle-and-rose-embower'd cottage of John Burroughs. The place, the perfect June days and nights, (leaning toward crisp and cool,) the hospitality of J. and Mrs. B., the air, the fruit, (especially my favorite dish, currants and raspberries, mixed, sugar'd, fresh and ripe from the bushes — I pick 'em myself) — the room I occupy at night, the perfect bed, the window giving an ample view of the Hudson and the opposite shores, so wonderful toward sunset, and the rolling music of the RR. trains, far over there — the peaceful rest — the early Venus-heralded dawn — the noiseless splash of sunrise, the light and warmth indescribably glorious, in which, (soon as the sun is well up,) I have a capital rubbing and rasping with the flesh-brush — with an extra scour on the back by Al. J., who is here with us — all inspiriting my invalid frame with new life, for the day. Then, after some whiffs of morning air, the delicious coffee of Mrs. B., with the cream, strawberries, and many substantials, for breakfast.

1879

John Burroughs's LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY.

Noting how one eye seconds and reinforces the other, I have often amused myself by wondering what the effect would be if one could go on opening eye after eye to the number say of a dozen or more. What would he see? Perhaps not the invisible, — not the odors of flowers or the fever germs in the air, — not the infinitely small of the microscope or the infinitely distant of the telescope. This would require, not more eyes so much as an eye constructed with more and different lenses; but would he not see with augmented power within the natural limits of vision? At any rate, some persons seem to have opened more eyes than others, they see with such force and distinctness; their vision penetrates the tangle and obscurity where that of others fails like a spent or impotent bullet. How many eyes did Gilbert White open? how many did Henry Thoreau? how many did Audubon? how many does the hunter, matching his sight against the keen and alert sense of a deer or a moose, or fox or a wolf? Not outward eyes, but inward. We open another eye whenever we see beyond the first general features or outlines of things, — whenever we grasp the

special details and characteristic markings that this mask covers. Science confers new powers of vision. Whenever you have learned to discriminate the birds, or the plants, or the geological features of a country, it is as if new and keener eyes were added....

I have never yet heard of a frog coming down chimney in a shower. Some circumstantial evidence may be pretty conclusive, Thoreau says, as when you find a trout in the milk; and if you find a frog or toad behind the fire-board immediately after a shower, you may well ask him to explain himself....

To make my portrait of the shrike more complete, I will add another trait of his described by an acute observer who writes me from western New York. He saw the bird on a bright midwinter morning when the thermometer stood at zero, and by cautious approaches succeeded in getting under the apple-tree upon which he was perched. The shrike was uttering a loud, clear note like *clu-eet, clu-eet, clu-eet,* and, on finding he had a listener who was attentive and curious, varied his performance and kept it up continuously for fifteen minutes. He seemed to enjoy having a spectator, and never took his eye off him. The observer approached within twenty feet of him. "As I came near," he says, "the shrike began to scold at me, a sharp, buzzing, squeaking sound not easy to describe. After a little he came out on the end of the limb nearest me, then he posed himself, and, opening his wings a little, began to trill and warble under his breath, as it were, with an occasional squeak, and vibrating his half-open wings in time with his song." Some of his notes resembled those of the bluebird, and the whole performance is described as pleasing and melodious.

This account agrees with Thoreau's observation, where he speaks of the shrike "with heedless and unfrozen melody bringing back summer again." Sings Thoreau: —

> "His steady sails he never furls
> At any time o' year,
> And perching now on winter's curls,
> He whistles in his ear."

But his voice is that of a savage, — strident and disagreeable. I have often wondered how this bird was kept in check; in the struggle for existence it would appear to have greatly the advantage of other birds. It cannot, for instance, be beset with one tenth of the dangers that threaten the robin, and yet apparently there are a thousand robins to every shrike. It builds a warm, compact nest in the mountains and dense woods, and lays six eggs, which would indicate a rapid increase. The pigeon lays but two eggs, and is preyed upon by both man and beast, millions of them meeting a murderous death every year; yet always some part of the country is swarming with untold numbers of them.[8] But the shrike is one of our rarest birds. I myself seldom see more than two each year, and before I became an observer of birds I never saw any.

In size the shrike is a little inferior to the blue jay, with

8. Footnote added in 1895: "This is no longer the case. The passenger pigeon [American Passenger Pigeons *Ectopistes migratorius*] now seems on the verge of extinction."

much the same form. If you see an unknown bird about your orchard or fields in November or December of a bluish grayish complexion, with dusky wings and tail that show markings of white, flying rather heavily from point to point, or alighting down in the stubble occasionally, it is pretty sure to be the shrike.

1881

Houghton, Mifflin was touting its editions of

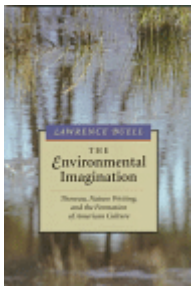
- Charles Dudley Warner's IN THE WILDERNESS which would be found to be "as fresh and fragrant of the woods as anything that Thoreau ever wrote," and
- Frank Bolles's THE LAND OF LINGERING SNOW which revealed "a power of minute observation as remarkable as Thoreau's."

(Meanwhile this corporation was promoting John Burroughs as "the same breed as Gilbert White of Selborne, as John James Audubon, as Thoreau" and John Muir as "the Thoreau of the Far West."

Houghton, Mifflin's Horace Scudder began to anthologize their properties in Henry Thoreau's literary corpus, in AMERICAN PROSE. They included "Sounds" and "Brute Neighbors" from WALDEN and "The Highland Light" from CAPE COD, pieces of descriptive portraiture characterized by a noncombatative authorial persona. (The comparable materials included from their Waldo Emerson properties were "Behavior" and "Books.") Also, Thoreau's "A Winter Walk" was positioned as one of their "Emerson Little Classics" volumes. Lawrence

Buell comments, on page 347 of THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION, that

> In short, Houghton, Mifflin used its name-droppable authors to market the works of newer authors, who if all went well became name-droppable themselves. The publishers thereby built the image of an emerging canon of literary nature writing with Thoreau at its head.



Burroughs would attempt to distance himself from this advertising, by pointing out that "There is really little or no resemblance between us," by pointing out for instance that "Thoreau's aim is mainly ethical, as much so as Emerson's is," by pointing out that "The aim of White of Selbourne [*sic*] was mainly scientific" whereas his own aim "so far as I have any, is entirely artistic. I care little for the merely scientific aspects of things, and nothing for the ethical. I will not preach one word. I will have a pure result, or nothing. I paint the bird, or the trout, or the scene, for its own sake." "I do not take readers to nature to give them a lesson, but to have a good time." Characterizing Henry Thoreau, whom he had never met, as having been "grim, uncompromising, almost heartless," he proclaimed "I don't owe him any great debt." Why should he owe him any great debt? – "Thoreau was not a great philosopher, he was not a great naturalist, he was not a great poet … His philosophy begins and ends with himself, or is entirely subjective, and is frequently fantastic, and nearly always illogical … There are crudities in his writings that make the conscientious literary craftsman shudder; there are mistakes of observation that make the serious naturalist wonder; and there is often an expression of contempt for his fellow countrymen, and the rest of mankind, and their aims in life, that make the judicious grieve." "To the last, his ornithology was not quite sure, not quite trustworthy." The problem as he saw it was that Thoreau had for some inane or self-absorbed reason been "more intent on the natural history of his own thought than on that of the bird." Under guidance by Walt Whitman, he proclaimed, his agenda was merely to "liberate the birds from the scientists." A man after a publisher's heart!

1882

July: John Burroughs placed an article "Henry D. Thoreau" in this month's The Century magazine **(for full text, click here)** in which he opinioned that the solution to "the mythical hound and horse and turtle-dove" would be that Henry Thoreau would never abandon his search for "some clew to his lost treasures, to the effluence that so provokingly eludes him."

WALDEN: In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.

To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself! How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.

What is this "effluence"? Burroughs referred us to the statement in Thoreau's JOURNAL, that:

> The ultimate expression or fruit of any created thing is a fine effluence, which only the most ingenuous worshipper perceives at a reverent distance from its surface even.

(The interest of this is, of course, that it furthers the inquiry not at all, and yet touts itself as a solution.)

Is this a picture of Thoreau selling paradox by the quart?

One of his chief weapons is a kind of restrained extravagance of statement, a compressed exaggeration of metaphor. The hyperbole is big, but it is gritty and is firmly held. Sometimes it takes the form of paradox, as when he tells his friend that he needs his hate as much as his love:

> "Indeed, indeed, I cannot tell,
> Though I ponder on it well,
> Which were easier to state,
> All my love or all my hate."

Or when he says, in WALDEN: "Our manners have been corrupted by communication with the saints," and the like. Sometimes it becomes downright brag, as when he says, emphasizing his own preoccupation and indifference to events: "I would not run around the corner to see the world blow up"; or again: "Methinks I would hear with indifference if a trustworthy messenger were to inform me that the sun drowned himself last night." Again it takes an impish, ironical form, as when he says: "In heaven I hope to bake my own bread and clean my own linen." Another time it assumes a half-quizzical, half-humorous turn, as when he tells one of his correspondents that he was so warmed up in getting his winters wood that he considered, after he got it housed, whether he should not dispose of it to the ash-man, as if he had extracted all its heat. Often it gives only an added emphasis to his expression, as when he says: "A little thought is sexton to all the world"; or, "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk"; but its best and most constant office is to act as a kind of fermenting, expanding gas that lightens, if it sometimes inflates, his page. His exaggeration is saved by its wit, its unexpectedness. It gives a wholesome jostle and shock to the mind. Thoreau was not a racy writer, but a trenchant; not nourishing so much as stimulating; not convincing, but wholesomely exasperating and

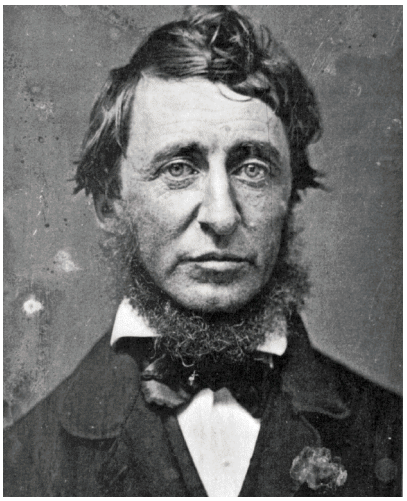
arousing, which, in some respects, is better. There is no heat in him, and yet in reading him one understands what he means when he says that, sitting by his stove at night, he sometimes had thoughts that kept the fire warm. I think the mind of his reader always reacts healthfully and vigorously from his most rash and extreme statements. The blood comes to the surface and to the extremities with a bound. He is the best of counter-irritants when he is nothing else. There is nothing to reduce the tone of your moral and intellectual systems in Thoreau. Such heat as there is in refrigeration, as he himself might say, you are always sure of that in his books.

His literary art, like that of Emerson's, is in the unexpected turn of his sentences. Shakespeare says:

> "It is the witness still of excellency
> To put a strange face on his own perfection."

This "strange face" Thoreau would have at all hazards, even if it was a false face. If he could not state a truth he would state a paradox, which, however, is not always a false face.

"I would not run round a corner
to see the world blow up."
— Henry Thoreau,
"LIFE WITHOUT PRINCIPLE"



Note, please, that already in 1882 Burroughs was commenting upon the freedom with which Thoreau manipulated Mosleh Od-Din Sa'di's THE *GULISTAN*, OR ROSE-GARDEN in WALDEN. He deployed the conceit "pretends to quote" to point up the fact that Thoreau was discovering the meaning he needed to derive "not in, but under, Sadi's lines." –Evidently, then, it has been clear for a long time, to those of us who have been paying attention, that Thoreau, as he accessed another language and another culture, was tweaking his materials somewhat.

PEOPLE OF WALDEN

WALDEN: I read in the Gulistan, or Flower Garden, of Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, that "They asked a wise man, saying; Of the many celebrated trees which the Most High God has created lofty and umbrageous, they call none azad, or free, excepting the cypress, which bears no fruit; what mystery is there in this? He replied; Each has its appropriate produce, and appointed season, during the continuance of which it is fresh and blooming, and during their absence dry and withered; to neither of which states is the cypress exposed, being always flourishing; and of this nature are the azads, or religious independents. –Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory; for the Dijlah, or Tigris, will continue to flow through Bagdad after the race of caliphs is extinct: if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress."

CYPRESS
ANDROMEDA
MOSLEH OD-DIN SA'DI

1884

John Burroughs's FRESH FIELDS.

1886

John Burroughs's SIGNS AND SEASONS.

1889

Houghton, Mifflin and Company of Boston presented THE WRITINGS OF JOHN BURROUGHS. The following take on the parable that Thoreau constructed in WALDEN, of the hound, the bay horse, and the turtle-dove, is to be found in Burroughs's Volume VIII, "Indoor Studies":

JOHN BURROUGHS

He [Henry Thoreau] did not love Nature for her own sake ... but for what he could make out of them. He says: "The ultimate expression or fruit of any created thing is a fine effluence which only the most ingenious worshiper perceives at a reverent distance from its surface even." This "fine effluence" he was always reaching after, and often grasping or inhaling. This is the mythical hound and horse and turtle-dove which he says in Walden he long ago lost, and has been on their trail ever since. He never abandons the search, and in every woodchuck hole or muskrat den, in retreat of bird, or squirrel, or mouse, or fox that he pries into, in every walk and expedition to the fields or swamps or to distant woods, in every spring note and call that he listens to so patiently, he hopes to get some clew to his lost treasures, to the effluence that so provokingly eludes him.

The WALDEN parable | The other analyses

1890

According to Lawrence Buell, Henry Thoreau was just another of those cranky hermits in just another of those secluded nooks (the evidence for this would be pages 146, 153, and 479 of the Professor's THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION: THOREAU, NATURE WRITING, AND THE FORMATION OF AMERICAN CULTURE, as instanced below). Buell alleges, in addition, that by this point in time John Burroughs had become "aware of Thoreau's shadow," aware, that is, that in resorted to a cabin in a secluded nook, "Slabsides," even though his cabin and its locale were rather unlike Henry's Walden Woods shack, he was running a risk of becoming like his mentor a cranky hermit:

> [O]ne of WALDEN's first enthusiastic readers, Friend Daniel Ricketson, had serendipitously built a cabin retreat for himself on his New Bedford property. Thoreau and Ricketson were but two variants of a long-publicized type of American eccentric: the cranky hermit, who for a variety of possible reasons retreated to his (or her) secluded nook. [Continuing in an endnote: For an amusing bestiary of profiles, see Carl Sifakis, AMERICAN ECCENTRICS (New York and Bicester, England: Facts on File, 1984). His roster includes Francis Phyle, "the hermit of Mount Holly"; Sarah Bishop, "the atrocity hermitess"; Albert Large, "the hermit amidst the wolves"; and many more.]... [Henry Thoreau] elevates the Horatian and Virgilian love of rural retirement, a neoclassical motif of great resonance to the Anglo-American squierarchy, a motif on which Thoreau had written a college essay, to the level of a lifework. ...Some readers will resist this side of Thoreau's genius.... Thus we normalize the Walden sojourn by imagining it as an efficient way to get a lot of writing done, or normalize WALDEN by positing a firm aesthetic structure or ideational commitment. This tends to suppress both the worst and the best about Thoreau.... In the early 1870s, John Muir probably built his shack over a Yosemite sawmill without thinking about Thoreau, even though he already had begun to read him. By the 1890s, John Burroughs was far more aware of Thoreau's shadow, often evincing a prickly, hypersensitive anxiety of influence; but Burroughs probably was not copying Thoreau when he built his cabin, Slabsides. In modern times, however, the commemoration of Muir and Burroughs as naturist prophets has been cross-pollinated by the myth of a Thoreauvian tradition.

January 22: Here are samples from Walt Whitman's common-place book "down at the creek":

"Specimen Days"

Victor Hugo makes a donkey meditate and apostrophize thus:

> My brother, man, if you would know the truth,
> We both are by the same dull walls shut in;
> The gate is massive and the dungeon strong.
> But you look through the key-hole out beyond,
> And call this knowledge; yet have not at hand
> The key wherein to turn the fatal lock.

"William Cullen Bryant surprised me once," relates a writer in a New York paper,
"by saying that prose was the natural language of composition,
and he wonder'd how anybody came to write poetry."

> Farewell! I did not know thy worth;
> But thou art gone, and now 'tis prized:
> So angels walk'd unknown on earth,
> But when they flew were recognized.
> — Hood.

John Burroughs, writing of Thoreau, says:

> "He improves with age — in fact requires age to take off a little of his asperity, and fully ripen him.
> The world likes a good hater and refuser almost as well as it likes a good lover and accepter
> — only it likes him farther off."

Louise Michel at the burial of Blanqui, (1881)

> Blanqui drill'd his body to subjection to his grand conscience and his noble passions, and commencing as a young man, broke with all that is sybaritish in modern civilization. Without the power to sacrifice self, great ideas will never bear fruit.

> Out of the leaping furnace flame
> A mass of molten silver came;
> Then, beaten into pieces three,
> Went forth to meet its destiny.
> The first a crucifix was made,
> Within a soldier's knapsack laid;
> The second was a locket fair,
> Where a mother kept her dead child's hair;
> The third — a bangle, bright and warm,
> Around a faithless woman's arm.
> A mighty pain to love it is,
> And 'tis a pain that pain to miss;
> But of all pain the greatest pain,
> It is to love, but love in vain.
> Maurice F. Egan on De Gurin.
> A pagan heart, a Christian soul had he,
> He follow'd Christ, yet for dead Pan he sigh'd,
> Till earth and heaven met within his breast:
> As if Theocritus in Sicily
> Had come upon the Figure crucified,
> And lost his gods in deep, Christ-given rest.

1893

January 4: Edward S. Burgess wrote a short manuscript of "Notes on Concord People," which is now on deposit in the Concord Free Public Library (this document mentions Henry Thoreau, his brother John Thoreau, Jr., his sister Sophia Elizabeth Thoreau, Edward Sherman Hoar, and John Burroughs):

> *Thoreau's brother John was of practical rather than literary bent. Singular, it is that there is so little of him in Henry's book Week on Concord when he too was bred in our schools & had the same adventures Henry had. He was frightened to death. He cut his finger, lockjaw followed. Henry held him in his arms when he died. Henry told me for 2 or 3 days after that he felt the lockjaw tightening on him too — so great was his sympathy. Henry was very affectionate; he had a great deal of sympathy that people did not know; during his last illness he received a great deal of attention; people were constantly coming & sending him flowers &c. He came to feel very differently toward people, & said if he had known he wouldn't have been so offish. He had got into his head before that people didn't mean what they said....*

LOCKJAW

> *From Mr. Edward Hoar. Dec. 30,'92.*
> *I have just finished reading Thoreau's "Winter." There is not so much natural history in it as in some other works, not so much as there is of matter addressed to man's moral nature. I have greatly regretted that I did not know Thoreau better. Did you not often go out with him? Yes, I did; I was one of the few to whom he granted that favor. I was shown that side of his nature to the full, the natural history side, the minute observer. But there were other sides to him, and I was wholly unaware then of the moral side that appears so strongly in his books. He did not show me that in our walks. Thoreau was intensely a moralist, to him everything was valuable according as it appealed to the moral sentiment & he would lose no opportunity to intone a moral sentiment. Nor would he lose any opportunity for observing nature, even if it was to get up in dark night and watch for hours the lightning and a rotten log in Maine. He was ready to open that side of himself to any one who would pay the price. But that meant, to go with him in his walk; to walk long & far; to have wet feet & go so for hours; to pull a boat all day & to come home late at night after many miles. If you would do that with him, he would take you with him. If you flinched at anything, he had no more use for you. Thoreau was of a very fine-grained family. He knew he had not long to live & he determined to make the most of it. How to observe and acquire knowledge & secure the [word?] aspects of life without much expenditure of money was his great study. He would not wait as most men, to acquire a competence before settling down to realize the ends of life. He would show how they could be secured without money; or with very little. This was the object of his Walden Pond.*

Thoreau's family had a scrofulous tendency; his sister Sophia, a very fine-grained nature, died of consumption and so did his brother; he died in Thoreau's arms & that nearly killed Henry....
I could not become a good ornithologist. When I was young I was a good shot, & could hit a bird on the wing at 200 yards. But when I became acquainted with Henry Thoreau, he persuaded me out of it. He would never shoot a bird, & I think his method greatly preferable to that of Mr. John Burroughs. Thoreau would lie & watch the movements of a bird for hours & also get the [word?] *he wanted. He used to say that if you shot the bird, you got only a dead bird anyway; you could make out a few parts in anatomy or plumage just such as all Dr. Coues' work is; but you couldn't see how the bird lives & acts. Since then I have never shot a bird....*
I think Thoreau has suffered in his editing. I think many things have been published which should not have been, notes & hints in [word?] *to guide himself in future observations which are of no use to the public.*

1894

A book of essays THROUGH GLACE AND MEAD opinioned that whereas "among men who have loved Nature" only "a hundred persons" had read Henry Thoreau during his lifetime, "a thousand have now learned to look forward with pleasure to a new outdoor book by John Burroughs."[9]

1895

John Burroughs built his cabin "Slabsides" in the hills of West Park, about a mile from his home near Esopus, New York, where he would be visited by Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and Walt Whitman.

1896

John Burroughs's WHITMAN: A STUDY.

9. For a related piece of news: in this same year the first amusement park built around mechanical amusements opened for business, in Chicago.

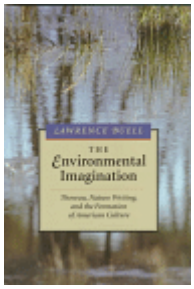
JOHN BURROUGHS

JOHN BURROUGHS

1899

Houghton, Mifflin was promoting John Burroughs as "the same breed as Gilbert White of Selborne, as John James Audubon, as Henry Thoreau" and John Muir as "the Henry Thoreau of the Far West." Lawrence Buell comments, on page 347 of THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION, that:

> In short, Houghton, Mifflin used its name-droppable authors to market the works of newer authors, who if all went well became name-droppable themselves. The publishers thereby built the image of an emerging canon of literary nature writing with Thoreau at its head.



March: John Burroughs placed a comment about Henry Thoreau in The Atlantic Monthly magazine, in an article titled "The Vital Touch in Literature":

> Readers fancy that in the works of Thoreau ... some new charm or quality of nature is disclosed, that something hidden in field or wood is brought to light. They do not see that what they are in love with is the mind or spirit of the writer himself. Thoreau does not interpret nature, but nature interprets him. The new thing disclosed in bird and flower is simply a new sensibility to these objects in the beholder.

1905

John Burroughs's WAYS OF NATURE.

1906

John Burroughs's BIRD AND BOUGH.

1911

August: Charles Ephraim Burchfield had graduated from the Salem, Ohio high school in this year as the valedictorian of his class and had begun to file automobile parts at the factory of the local W.H. Mullins Company, until in this month he contracting typhoid fever. During this illness he began Henry Thoreau's WALDEN and journal selections but as an 18-year-old apparently could not as yet really get into them, becoming preoccupied instead with the writings of, you guessed it, John Burroughs. When young Burchfield was able to return to the factory he was shifted to be an accountant in its cost department.

1912

John Burroughs's TIME AND CHANGE. The automobile this author considered to be a "demon" machine, since it allowed its riders to enter "even the most secluded nook or corner of the forest and befoul it with noise and smoke." Reading this, Henry Ford would send him a Ford motorcar: "His sole motive," the nature-writer then proclaimed, "is his admiration for me and my work — there shall be no publicity in connection with it."

1913

John Burroughs's THE SUMMIT OF THE YEARS.

January: Henry Ford's present of a motorcar arrived. In order to ensure that "there shall be no publicity in connection with" this gift, a number of photographs were taken of John Burroughs sitting with Henry Ford in the gift vehicle. Burroughs would never again write a negative word about the automobile. The nature writer had been bought and paid for.

Fall: John Burroughs and Henry Ford traveled in a fleet of cars through New England, stopping off in Concord MA for the obligatory pilgrimage to Walden Pond. The newsreel cameras happened to catch the pair standing smiling in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, next to a small plain headstone engraved only with the name HENRY.[10]

1915

John Burroughs's THE BREATH OF LIFE.

1916

John Burroughs's UNDER THE APPLE TREES.

1919

John Burroughs's FIELD AND STUDY.

1921

March 29, Tuesday: John Burroughs died while en route from CA to NY, I would suppose by Ford motorcar. The last words he wrote came out as "let us make pilgrimages to Concord...." No, it seems that he did not add "...by Ford motorcar." Encyclopædia Britannica now has the following *post-mortem* to deliver to the unwary peruser of its pages, in regard to Burroughs:

"essayist and naturalist who lived and wrote after the manner of Henry Thoreau, studying and celebrating nature."

1922

John Burroughs's posthumous THE LAST HARVEST. "Not that I love Thoreau less, but that I love truth more," he wrote as he took Thoreau to task for certain irregularities: If shortcomings were to be pointed out in this favorite, he considered himself to be the one to do it.

Here are the Thoreau shortcomings which got pointed out:

10. What sort of conduct was it that you were expecting from a panderer?

The Journals of Emerson and Thoreau are largely made up of left-overs from their published works, and hence as literary material, when compared with their other volumes, are of secondary importance. You could not make another "Walden" out of Thoreau's Journals, nor build up another chapter on "Self-Reliance," or on "Character," or on the "Over-Soul," from Emerson's, though there are fragments here and there in both that are on a level with their best work.

Emerson records in 1835 that his brother Charles wondered that he did not become sick at the stomach over his poor Journal: "Yet is obdurate habit callous even to contempt. I must scribble on...." Charles evidently was not a born scribbler like his brother. He was clearly more fond of real life and of the society of his fellows. He was an orator and could not do himself justice with the pen. Men who write Journals, as I have said, are usually men of solitary habits, and their Journal largely takes the place of social converse. Amiel, Emerson, and Thoreau were lonely souls, lacking in social gifts, and seeking relief in the society of their own thoughts. Such men go to their Journals as other men go to their clubs. They love to be alone with themselves, and dread to be benumbed or drained of their mental force by uncongenial persons. To such a man his Journal becomes his duplicate self and he says to it what he could not say to his nearest friend. It becomes both an altar and a confessional. Especially is this true of deeply religious souls such as the men I have named. They commune, through their Journals, with the demons that attend them. Amiel begins his Journal with the sentence, "There is but one thing needful—to possess God," and Emerson's Journal in its most characteristic pages is always a search after God, or the highest truth....

The name that recurs the most often [in Emerson's journals] is that of his friend and neighbor Thoreau. There are ninety-seven paragraphs in which the Hermit of Walden is the main or the secondary figure. He discusses him and criticizes him, and quotes from him, always showing an abiding interest in, and affection for, him. Thoreau was in so many ways so characteristically Emersonian that one wonders what influence it was in the place or time that gave them both, with their disparity of ages, so nearly the same stamp. Emerson is by far the more imposing figure, the broader, the wiser, the more tolerant, the more representative; he stood four-square to the world in a sense that Thoreau did not. Thoreau presented a pretty thin edge to the world. If he stood broadside to anything, it was to nature. He was undoubtedly deeply and permanently influenced by Emerson both in his mental habits and in his manner of life, yet the main part of him was original and unadulterated Thoreau. His literary style is in many respects better than that of Emerson; its logical texture is better; it has more continuity, more evolution, it is more flexible and adaptive; it is the medium of a lesser mind, but of a mind more thoroughly imbued with the influence of the classical standards of modern literature. I believe "Walden" will last as long as anything Emerson has written, if not longer. It is the fruit of a sweeter solitude and detachment from the world than Emerson ever knew, a private view of nature, and has a fireside and campside quality

that essays fashioned for the lecture platform do not have. Emerson's pages are more like mosaics, richly inlaid with gems of thought and poetry and philosophy, while Thoreau's are more like a closely woven, many-colored textile.

Thoreau's "Maine Woods" I look upon as one of the best books of the kind in English literature. It has just the right tone and quality, like Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast"—a tone and quality that sometimes come to a man when he makes less effort to write than to see and feel truly. He does not aim to exploit the woods, but to live with them and possess himself of their spirit. The Cape Cod book also has a similar merit; it almost leaves a taste of the salt sea spray upon your lips. Emerson criticizes Thoreau freely, and justly, I think. As a person he lacked sweetness and winsomeness; as a writer he was at times given to a meaningless exaggeration.

> Henry Thoreau sends me a paper with the old fault of unlimited contradiction. The trick of his rhetoric is soon learned: it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical antagonist. He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air; snow and ice for their warmth; villagers and wood-choppers for their urbanity, and the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. With the constant inclination to dispraise cities and civilization, he yet can find no way to know woods and woodmen except by paralleling them with towns and townsmen. Channing declared the piece is excellent: but it makes me nervous and wretched to read it, with all its merits.
>
> I told Henry Thoreau that his freedom is in the form, but he does not disclose new matter. I am very familiar with all his thoughts,—they are my own quite originally drest. But if the question be, what new ideas has he thrown into circulation, he has not yet told what that is which he was created to say. I said to him what I often feel, I only know three persons who seem to me fully to see this law of reciprocity or compensation—himself, Alcott, and myself: and 't is odd that we should all be neighbors, for in the wide land or the wide earth I do not know another who seems to have it as deeply and originally as these three Gothamites.

A remark of Emerson's upon Thoreau calls up the image of John Muir to me: "If I knew only Thoreau, I should think coöperation of good men impossible. Must we always talk for victory, and never once for truth, for comfort, and joy?" Then, after crediting Thoreau with some admirable gifts,—centrality, penetration, strong understanding,—he proceeds to say, "all his resources of wit and invention are lost to me, in every experiment, year after year, that I make to hold intercourse with his mind. Always some weary captious paradox to fight you with, and the time and temper wasted."...

But in Emerson's later work there is, as geologists say, nonconformity between the strata which make up his paragraphs. There is only juxtaposition. Among his later papers the one on

"Wealth" flows along much more than the one on "Fate." Emerson believed in wealth. Poverty did not attract him. It was not suited to his cast of mind. Poverty was humiliating. Emerson accumulated a fortune, and it added to his self-respect. Thoreau's pride in his poverty must have made Emerson shiver....
In his chapter called "Considerations by the Way," Emerson strikes this curious false note in his rhetoric: "We have a right to be here or we should not be here. We have the same right to be here that Cape Cod and Sandy Hook have to be there." As if Cape Cod or Cape Horn or Sandy Hook had any "rights"! This comparison of man with inanimate things occurs in both Emerson and Thoreau. Thoreau sins in this way at least once when he talks of the Attic wit of burning thorns and briars....
After Emerson, the name of no New England man of letters keeps greener and fresher than that of Thoreau. A severe censor of his countrymen, and with few elements of popularity, yet the quality of his thought, the sincerity of his life, and the nearness and perennial interest of his themes, as well as his rare powers of literary expression, win recruits from each generation of readers. He does not grow stale any more than Walden Pond itself grows stale. He is an obstinate fact there in New England life and literature, and at the end of his first centennial his fame is more alive than ever.
Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts, July, 1817, and passed most of his life of forty-five years in his native town, minding his own business, as he would say, which consisted, for the most part, in spending at least the half of each day in the open air, winter and summer, rain and shine, and in keeping tab upon all the doings of wild nature about him and recording his observations in his Journal.
The two race strains that met in Thoreau, the Scottish and the French, come out strongly in his life and character. To the French he owes his vivacity, his lucidity, his sense of style, and his passion for the wild; for the French, with all their urbanity and love of art, turn to nature very easily. To the Scot he is indebted more for his character than for his intellect. From this source come his contrariness, his combativeness, his grudging acquiescence, and his pronounced mysticism. Thence also comes his genius for solitude. The man who in his cabin in the woods has a good deal of company "especially the mornings when nobody calls," is French only in the felicity of his expression. But there is much in Thoreau that is neither Gallic nor Scottish, but pure Thoreau.
The most point-blank and authoritative criticism within my knowledge that Thoreau has received at the hands of his countrymen came from the pen of Lowell about 1864, and was included in "My Study Windows." It has all the professional smartness and scholarly qualities which usually characterize Lowell's critical essays. Thoreau was vulnerable, both as an observer and as a literary craftsman, and Lowell lets him off pretty easily—too easily—on both counts.
The flaws he found in his nature lore were very inconsiderable: "Till he built his Walden shack he did not know that the hickory grew near Concord. Till he went to Maine he had never seen phosphorescent wood—a phenomenon early familiar to most country

boys. At forty he spoke of the seeding [i.e., flowering][11] of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold-dust of blowing pollen might have earlier caught his eye."

As regards his literary craftsmanship, Lowell charges him only with having revived the age of concetti while he fancied himself going back to a preclassical nature, basing the charge on such a far-fetched comparison as that in which Thoreau declares his preference for "the dry wit of decayed cranberry-vines and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds" over the wit of the Greek sages as it comes to us in the "Banquet" of Xenophon—a kind of perversity of comparison all too frequent with Thoreau.

But though Lowell lets Thoreau off easily on these specific counts, he more than makes up by his sweeping criticism, on more general grounds, of his life and character. Here one feels that he overdoes the matter.

It is not true, in the sense which Lowell implies, that Thoreau's whole life was a search for the doctor. It was such a search in no other sense than that we are all in search of the doctor when we take a walk, or flee to the mountains or to the seashore, or seek to bring our minds and spirits in contact with "Nature's primal sanities." His search for the doctor turns out to be an escape from the conditions that make a doctor necessary. His wonderful activity, those long walks in all weathers, in all seasons, by night as well as by day, drenched by rain and chilled by frost, suggest a reckless kind of health. A doctor might wisely have cautioned him against such exposures. Nor was Thoreau a valetudinarian in his physical, moral, or intellectual fiber.

It is not true, as Lowell charges, that it was his indolence that stood in the way of his taking part in the industrial activities in which his friends and neighbors engaged, or that it was his lack of persistence and purpose that hindered him. It is not true that he was poor because he looked upon money as an unmixed evil. Thoreau's purpose was like adamant, and his industry in his own proper pursuits was tireless. He knew the true value of money, and he knew also that the best things in life are to be had without money and without price. When he had need of money, he earned it. He turned his hand to many things—land-surveying, lecturing, magazine-writing, growing white beans, doing odd jobs at carpentering, whitewashing, fence-building, plastering, and brick-laying.

Lowell's criticism amounts almost to a diatribe. He was naturally antagonistic to the Thoreau type of mind. Coming from a man near his own age, and a neighbor, Thoreau's criticism of life was an affront to the smug respectability and scholarly attainments of the class to which Lowell belonged. Thoreau went his own way, with an air of defiance and contempt which, no doubt, his contemporaries were more inclined to resent than we are at our distance. Shall this man in his hut on the shores of Walden Pond assume to lay down the law and the gospel to his elders and betters, and pass unrebuked, no matter on what intimate terms he claims to be with the gods of the woods and mountains? This seems to be Lowell's spirit.

11. See "Walking" in Excursions. He was under thirty-three when he made these observations (June, 1850).

"Thoreau's experiment," says Lowell, "actually presupposed all that complicated civilization which it theoretically abjured. He squatted on another man's land; he borrows an axe; his boards, his nails, his bricks, his mortar, his books, his lamp, his fish-hooks, his plough, his hoe, all turn state's evidence against him as an accomplice in the sin of that artificial civilization which rendered it possible that such a person as Henry D. Thoreau should exist at all." Very clever, but what of it? Of course Thoreau was a product of the civilization he decried. He was a product of his country and his times. He was born in Concord and early came under the influence of Emerson; he was a graduate of Harvard University and all his life availed himself, more or less, of the accumulated benefits of state and social organizations. When he took a train to Boston, or dropped a letter in, or received one through, the post office, or read a book, or visited a library, or looked in a newspaper, he was a sharer in these benefits. He made no claims to living independently of the rest of mankind. His only aim in his Walden experiment was to reduce life to its lowest terms, to drive it into a corner, as he said, and question and cross-question it, and see, if he could, what it really meant. And he probably came as near cornering it there in his hut on Walden Pond as any man ever did anywhere, certainly in a way more pleasing to contemplate than did the old hermits in the desert, or than did Diogenes in his tub, though Lowell says the tub of the old Greek had a sounder bottom.

Lowell seemed to discredit Thoreau by attacking his philosophy and pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies of a man who abjures the civilization of which he is the product, overlooking the fact that man's theories and speculations may be very wide of the truth as we view it, and yet his life be noble and inspiring. Now Thoreau did not give us a philosophy, but a life. He gave us fresh and beautiful literature, he gave us our first and probably only nature classic, he gave us an example of plain living and high thinking that is always in season, and he took upon himself that kind of noble poverty that carries the suggestion of wealth of soul.

No matter how much Thoreau abjured our civilization, he certainly made good use of the weapons it gave him. No matter whose lands he squatted on, or whose saw he borrowed, or to whom or what he was indebted for the tools and utensils that made his life at Walden possible,—these things were the mere accidents of his environment,—he left a record of his life and thoughts there which is a precious heritage to his countrymen. The best in his books ranks with the best in the literature of his times. One could wish that he had shown more tolerance for the things other men live for, but this must not make us overlook the value of the things he himself lived for, though with some of his readers his intolerance doubtless has this effect. We cannot all take to the woods and swamps as Thoreau did. He had a genius for that kind of a life; the most of us must stick to our farms and desks and shops and professions.

Thoreau retired to Walden for study and contemplation, and because, as he said, he had a little private business with himself. He found that by working about six weeks in the year

he could meet all his living expenses, and then have all his winter and most of his summers free and clear for study. He found that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship, but a pastime, if one will live simply and wisely. He said, "It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow unless he sweats easier than I do." Was not his experiment worth while?

"Walden" is a wonderful and delightful piece of brag, but it is much more than that. It is literature; it is a Gospel of the Wild. It made a small Massachusetts pond famous, and the Mecca of many devout pilgrims.

Lowell says that Thoreau had no humor, but there are many pages in "Walden" that are steeped in a quiet but most delicious humor. His humor brings that inward smile which is the badge of art's felicity. His "Bean-Field" is full of it. I venture to say that never before had a hermit so much fun with a field of white beans.

Both by training and by temperament Lowell was disqualified from entering into Thoreau's character and aims. Lowell's passion for books and academic accomplishments was as strong as was Thoreau's passion for the wild and for the religion of Nature. When Lowell went to Nature for a theme, as in his "Good Word for Winter," his "My Garden Acquaintance," and the "Moosehead Journal," his use of it was mainly to unlock the treasures of his literary and scholarly attainments; he bedecked and be jeweled Nature with gems from all the literatures of the world. In the "Journal" we get more of the flavor of libraries than of the Maine woods and waters. No reader of Lowell can doubt that he was a nature-lover, nor can he doubt that he loved books and libraries more. In all his nature writings the poverty of the substance and the wealth of the treatment are striking. The final truth about Lowell's contributions is that his mind was essentially a prose mind, even when he writes poetry. Emerson said justly that his tone was always that of prose. What is his "Cathedral" but versified prose? Like so many cultivated men, he showed a talent for poetry, but not genius; as, on the other hand, one may say of Emerson that he showed more genius for poetry than talent, his inspiration surpassed his technical skill.

One is not surprised when he finds that John Brown was one of Thoreau's heroes; he was a sort of John Brown himself in another sphere; but one is surprised when one finds him so heartily approving of Walt Whitman and traveling to Brooklyn to look upon him and hear his voice. He recognized at once the tremendous significance of Whitman and the power of his poetry. He called him the greatest democrat which the world had yet seen. With all his asceticism and his idealism, he was not troubled at all with those things in Whitman that are a stumbling-block to so many persons. Evidently his long intercourse with Nature had prepared him for the primitive and elemental character of Whitman's work. No doubt also his familiarity with the great poems and sacred books of the East helped him. At any rate, in this respect, his endorsement of Whitman adds greatly to our conception of the mental and spiritual stature of Thoreau.

I can hold my criticism in the back of my head while I say with my forehead that all our other nature writers seem tame and insipid beside Thoreau. He was so much more than a mere student and observer of nature; and it is this surplusage which gives the extra weight and value to his nature writing. He was a critic of life, he was a literary force that made for plain living and high thinking. His nature lore was an aside; he gathered it as the meditative saunterer gathers a leaf, or a flower, or a shell on the beach, while he ponders on higher things. He had other business with the gods of the woods than taking an inventory of their wares. He was a dreamer, an idealist, a fervid ethical teacher, seeking inspiration in the fields and woods. The hound, the turtle-dove, and the bay horse which he said he had lost, and for whose trail he was constantly seeking, typified his interest in wild nature. The natural history in his books is quite secondary. The natural or supernatural history of his own thought absorbed him more than the exact facts about the wild life around him. He brings us a gospel more than he brings us a history. His science is only the handmaid of his ethics; his wood-lore is the foil of his moral and intellectual teachings. His observations are frequently at fault, or wholly wide of the mark; but the flower or specimen that he brings you always "comes laden with a thought." There is a tang and a pungency to nearly everything he published; the personal quality which flavors it is like the formic acid which the bee infuses into the nectar he gets from the flower, and which makes it honey.

I feel that some such statement about Thoreau should precede or go along with any criticism of him as a writer or as an observer. He was, first and last, a moral force speaking in the terms of the literary naturalist.

Thoreau's prayer in one of his poems—that he might greatly disappoint his friends—seems to have been answered. While his acquaintances went into trade or the professions, he cast about to see what he could do to earn his living and still be true to the call of his genius. In his Journal of 1851 he says: "While formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experiences in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice, so little capital is required, so little distraction from my wonted thoughts." He could range the hills in summer and still look after the flocks of King Admetus. He also dreamed that he might gather the wild herbs and carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods. But he soon learned that trade cursed everything, and that "though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business." The nearest his conscience would allow him to approach any kind of trade was to offer himself to his townsmen as a land-surveyor. This would take him to the places where he liked to be; he could still walk in the fields and woods and swamps and earn his living thereby. The chain and compass became him well, quite as well as his bean-field at Walden, and the little money they brought him was not entirely sordid.

In one of his happy moods in "Walden" he sets down in a half-

facetious, half-mystical, but wholly delightful way, his various avocations, such as his self-appointment as inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and surveyor of forest paths and all across-lot routes, and herdsman of the wild stock of the town. He is never more enjoyable than in such passages. His account of going into business at Walden Pond is in the same happy vein. As his fellow citizens were slow in offering him any opening in which he could earn a living, he turned to the woods, where he was better known, and determined to go into business at once without waiting to acquire the usual capital. He expected to open trade with the Celestial Empire, and Walden was just the place to start the venture. He thought his strict business habits acquired through years of keeping tab on wild Nature's doings, his winter days spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, and his early spring mornings before his neighbors were astir to hear the croak of the first frog, all the training necessary to ensure success in business with the Celestial Empire. He admits, it is true, that he never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but doubted not that it was of the last importance only to be present at it. All such fooling as this is truly delightful. When he goes about his sylvan business with his tongue in his cheek and a quizzical, good-humored look upon his face in this way, and advertises the hound, the bay horse, and the turtle-dove he lost so long ago, he is the true Thoreau, and we take him to our hearts.

One also enjoys the way in which he magnifies his petty occupations. His brag over his bean-field is delightful. He makes one want to hoe beans with him:

> When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans; and I remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city to attend the oratorios. The nighthawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons—for I sometimes made a day of it—like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the top of hills, where few have found them; graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens; such kindredship is in nature. The hawk is aërial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea. Or sometimes I watched a pair of hen-hawks circling high in the sky, alternately soaring and descending, approaching and leaving one another, as if they were the embodiment of my own thoughts. Or I was attracted by the passage of wild pigeons from this wood to that, with a slight quivering

> winnowing sound and carrier haste; or from under a rotten stump my hoe turned up a sluggish portentous and outlandish salamander, a trace of Egypt and the Nile, yet our contemporary. When I paused to lean on my hoe, these sounds and sights I heard and saw anywhere in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers.

All this is in his best style. Who, after reading it, does not long for a bean-field? In planting it, too what music attends him!

> Near at hand, upon the topmost spray of a birch, sings the brown thrasher—or red mavis, as some love to call him—all the morning, glad of your society, that would find out another farmer's field if yours were not here. While you are planting the seed he cries,— "Drop it, drop it,—cover it up, cover it up,—pull it up, pull it up, pull it up." But this was not corn, and so it was safe from such enemies as he. You may wonder what his rigmarole, his amateur Paganini performances on one string or on twenty, have to do with your planting, and yet prefer it to leached ashes or plaster. It was a cheap sort of top dressing in which I had entire faith.

What lessons he got in botany in the hoeing!

> Consider the intimate and curious acquaintance one makes with various kinds of weeds,—it will bear some iteration in the account, for there was no little iteration in the labor,—disturbing their delicate organizations so ruthlessly, and making such invidious distinctions with his hoe, levelling whole ranks of one species, and sedulously cultivating another. That's Roman worm-wood,—that's pigweed,—that's sorrel,—that's pipergrass,—have at him, chop him up, turn his roots upward to the sun, don't let him have a fibre in the shade, if you do he'll turn himself t' other side up and be as green as a leek in two days. A long war, not with cranes, but with weeds, those Trojans who had sun and rain and dews on their side. Daily the beans saw me come to their rescue armed with a hoe, and thin the ranks of their enemies, filling up the trenches with weedy dead. Many a lusty crest-waving Hector, that towered a whole foot above his crowding comrades, fell before my weapon and rolled in the dust.
>
> I have occasional visits in the long winter evenings, when the snow falls fast and the wind howls in the wood, from an old settler and original proprietor, who is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods; who tells me stories of old time and of new eternity; and between us we manage to pass a cheerful evening with social mirth and pleasant views of things, even without apples or cider,—a most wise and humorous friend, whom I love much, who keeps himself more secret than ever did Goffe or Whalley; and though he is thought to be dead, none can show where he

> is buried. An elderly dame, too, dwells in my neighborhood, invisible to most persons, in whose odorous herb garden I love to stroll sometimes, gathering simples and listening to her fables; for she has a genius of unequalled fertility, and her memory runs back farther than mythology, and she can tell me the original of every fable, and on what fact every one is founded, for the incidents occurred when she was young. A ruddy and lusty old dame, who delights in all weathers and seasons, and is likely to outlive all her children yet.

Thoreau taxed himself to find words and images strong enough to express his aversion to the lives of the men who were "engaged" in the various industrial fields about him. Everywhere in shops and offices and fields it appeared to him that his neighbors were doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways:

> What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach"; or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars,—even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness.... I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of.

Surely this disciple of the Gospel of the Wild must have disappointed his friends. It was this audacious gift which Thoreau had for making worldly possessions seem ignoble, that gives the tang to many pages of his writings.

Thoreau became a great traveler—in Concord, as he says—and made Walden Pond famous in our literature by spending two or more years in the woods upon its shore, and writing an account of his sojourn there which has become a nature classic. He was a poet-naturalist, as his friend Channing aptly called him, of untiring industry, and the country in a radius of seven or eight miles about Concord was threaded by him in all seasons as probably no other section of New England was ever threaded and scrutinized by any one man. Walking in the fields and woods, and recording what he saw and heard and thought in his Journal, became the business of his life. He went over the same ground endlessly, but always brought back new facts, or new impressions, because he was so sensitive to all the changing features of the day and the season in the landscape about him.

Once he extended his walking as far as Quebec, Canada, and once he took in the whole of Cape Cod; three or four times he made excursions to the Maine woods, the result of which gave the name

to one of his most characteristic volumes; but as habitually as the coming of the day was he a walker about Concord, in all seasons, primarily for companionship with untamed Nature, and secondarily as a gleaner in the fields of natural history.

II

Thoreau was not a great philosopher, he was not a great naturalist, he was not a great poet, but as a nature-writer and an original character he is unique in our literature. His philosophy begins and ends with himself, or is entirely subjective, and is frequently fantastic, and nearly always illogical. His poetry is of the oracular kind, and is only now and then worth attention. There are crudities in his writings that make the conscientious literary craftsman shudder; there are mistakes of observation that make the serious naturalist wonder; and there is often an expression of contempt for his fellow countrymen, and the rest of mankind, and their aims in life, that makes the judicious grieve. But at his best there is a gay symbolism, a felicity of description, and a freshness of observation that delight all readers.

As a person he gave himself to others reluctantly; he was, in truth, a recluse. He stood for character more than for intellect, and for intuition more than for reason. He was often contrary and inconsistent. There was more crust than crumb in the loaf he gave us.

He went about the business of living with his head in the clouds, or with an absolute devotion to the ideal that is certainly rare in our literary history. He declared that he aimed to crow like chanticleer in the morning, if only to wake his neighbors up. Much of his writings have this chanticleerian character; they are a call to wake up, to rub the film from one's eyes, and see the real values of life. To this end he prods with paradoxes, he belabors with hyperboles, he teases with irony, he startles with the unexpected. He finds poverty more attractive than riches, solitude more welcome than society, a sphagnum swamp more to be desired than a flowered field.

Thoreau is suggestive of those antibodies which modern science makes so much of. He tends to fortify us against the dry rot of business, the seductions of social pleasures, the pride of wealth and position. He is antitoxic; he is a literary germicide of peculiar power. He is too religious to go to church, too patriotic to pay his taxes, too fervent a humanist to interest himself in the social welfare of his neighborhood.

Thoreau called himself a mystic, and a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot. But the least of these was the natural philosopher. He did not have the philosophic mind, nor the scientific mind; he did not inquire into the reason of things, nor the meaning of things; in fact, had no disinterested interest in the universe apart from himself. He was too personal and illogical for a philosopher. The scientific interpretation of things did not interest him at all. He was interested in things only so far as they related to Henry Thoreau. He interpreted Nature entirely in the light of his own idiosyncrasies.

Science goes its own way in spite of our likes and dislikes, but Thoreau's likes and dislikes determined everything for him. He was stoical, but not philosophical. His intellect had no free play outside his individual predilection. Truth as philosophers use the term, was not his quest but truth made in Concord.

Thoreau writes that when he was once asked by the Association for the Advancement of Science what branch of science he was especially interested in, he did not reply because he did not want to make himself the laughing-stock of the scientific community, which did not believe in a science which deals with the higher law—his higher law, which bears the stamp of Henry Thoreau.

He was an individualist of the most pronounced type. The penalty of this type of mind is narrowness; the advantage is the personal flavor imparted to the written page. Thoreau's books contain plenty of the pepper and salt of character and contrariness; even their savor of whim and prejudice adds to their literary tang. When his individualism becomes aggressive egotism, as often happens, it is irritating; but when it gives only that pungent and personal flavor which pervades much of "Walden," it is very welcome.

Thoreau's critics justly aver that he severely arraigns his countrymen because they are not all Thoreaus—that they do not desert their farms and desks and shops and take to the woods. What unmeasured contempt he pours out upon the lives and ambitions of most of them! Need a nature-lover, it is urged, necessarily be a man-hater? Is not man a part of nature?—averaging up quite as good as the total scheme of things out of which he came? Cannot his vices and shortcomings be matched by a thousand cruel and abortive things in the fields and the woods? The fountain cannot rise above its source, and man is as good as is the nature out of which he came, and of which he is a part. Most of Thoreau's harsh judgments upon his neighbors and countrymen are only his extreme individualism gone to seed.

An extremist he always was. Extreme views commended themselves to him because they were extreme. His aim in writing was usually "to make an extreme statement." He left the middle ground to the school committees and trustees. He had in him the stuff of which martyrs and heroes are made. In John Brown he recognized a kindred soul. But his literary bent led him to take his own revolutionary impulses out in words. The closest he came to imitation of the hero of Harper's Ferry and to defying the Government was on one occasion when he refused to pay his poll-tax and thus got himself locked in jail overnight. It all seems a petty and ignoble ending of his fierce denunciation of politics and government, but it no doubt helped to satisfy his imagination, which so tyrannized over him throughout life. He could endure offenses against his heart and conscience and reason easier than against his imagination.

He presents that curious phenomenon of a man who is an extreme product of culture and civilization, and yet who so hungers and thirsts for the wild and the primitive that he is unfair to the forces and conditions out of which he came, and by which he is at all times nourished and upheld. He made his excursions into the Maine wilderness and lived in his hut by Walden Pond as a

scholar and philosopher, and not at all in the spirit of the lumbermen and sportsmen whose wildness he so much admired. It was from his vantage-ground of culture and of Concord transcendentalism that he appraised all these types. It was from a community built up and sustained by the common industries and the love of gain that he decried all these things. It was from a town and a civilization that owed much to the pine tree that he launched his diatribe against the lumbermen in the Maine woods: "The pine is no more lumber than man is; and to be made into boards and houses no more its true and highest use than the truest use of man is to be cut down and made into manure." Not a happy comparison, but no matter. If the pine tree had not been cut down and made into lumber, it is quite certain that Thoreau would never have got to the Maine woods to utter this protest, just as it is equally certain that had he not been a member of a thrifty and industrious community, and kept his hold upon it, he could not have made his Walden experiment of toying and coquetting with the wild and the non-industrial. His occupations as land-surveyor, lyceum lecturer, and magazine writer attest how much he owed to the civilization he was so fond of decrying. This is Thoreau's weakness—the half-truths in which he plumes himself, as if they were the whole law and gospel. His Walden bean-field was only a pretty piece of play-acting; he cared more for the ringing of his hoe upon the stones than for the beans. Had his living really depended upon the product, the sound would not have pleased him so, and the botany of the weeds he hoed under would not have so interested him.

Thoreau's half-truths titillate and amuse the mind. We do not nod over his page. We enjoy his art while experiencing an undercurrent of protest against his unfairness. We could have wished him to have shown himself in his writings as somewhat sweeter and more tolerant toward the rest of the world, broader in outlook, and more just and charitable in disposition—more like his great prototype, Emerson, who could do full justice to the wild and the spontaneous without doing an injustice to their opposites; who could see the beauty of the pine tree, yet sing the praises of the pine-tree State House; who could arraign the Government, yet pay his taxes; who could cherish Thoreau, and yet see all his limitations. Emerson affirmed more than he denied, and his charity was as broad as his judgment. He set Thoreau a good example in bragging, but he bragged to a better purpose. He exalted the present moment, the universal fact, the omnipotence of the moral law, the sacredness of private judgment; he pitted the man of to-day against all the saints and heroes of history; and, although he decried traveling, he was yet considerable of a traveler, and never tried to persuade himself that Concord was an epitome of the world. Emerson comes much nearer being a national figure than does Thoreau, and yet Thoreau, by reason of his very narrowness and perversity, and by his intense local character, united to the penetrating character of his genius, has made an enduring impression upon our literature.

III

Thoreau's life was a search for the wild. He was the great disciple of the Gospel of Walking. He elevated walking into a religious exercise. One of his most significant and entertaining chapters is on "Walking." No other writer that I recall has set forth the Gospel of Walking so eloquently and so stimulatingly. Thoreau's religion and his philosophy are all in this chapter. It is his most mature, his most complete and comprehensive statement. He says:

> I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks—who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering, which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going à la Sainte Terre," to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a Sainte-Terrer,"—a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean.... For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.

Thoreau was the first man in this country, or in any other, so far as I know, who made a religion of walking—the first to announce a Gospel of the Wild. That he went forth into wild nature in much the same spirit that the old hermits went into the desert, and was as devout in his way as they were in theirs, is revealed by numerous passages in his Journal. He would make his life a sacrament; he discarded the old religious terms and ideas, and struck out new ones of his own:

> What more glorious condition of being can we imagine than from impure to become pure? May I not forget that I am impure and vicious! May I not cease to love purity! May I go to my slumbers as expecting to arise to a new and more perfect day! May I so live and refine my life as fitting myself for a society ever higher than I actually enjoy!
>
> To watch for and describe all the divine features which I detect in nature! My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature, to know his lurking-place, to attend all the oratorios, the operas, in nature.
>
> Ah! I would walk, I would sit, and sleep, with natural piety. What if I could pray aloud or to myself as I went along the brooksides a cheerful prayer like the birds? For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it.
>
> I do not deserve anything. I am unworthy the least regard, and yet I am made to rejoice. I am impure and worthless, and yet the world is gilded for my delight and holidays are prepared for me, and my path is strewn with flowers. But I cannot thank the Giver; I cannot even whisper my thanks to the human friends I have.

In the essay on "Walking," Thoreau says that the art of walking "comes only by the grace of God. It requires a direct dispensation from Heaven to become a walker. You must be born into the family of the Walkers." "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least,—it is commonly more than that,—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements."

Thoreau made good his boast. He was a new kind of walker, a Holy-Lander. His walks yielded him mainly spiritual and ideal results. The fourteen published volumes of his Journal are mainly a record of his mental reactions to the passing seasons and to the landscape he sauntered through. There is a modicum of natural history, but mostly he reaps the intangible harvest of the poet, the saunterer, the mystic, the super-sportsman.

With his usual love of paradox Thoreau says that the fastest way to travel is to go afoot, because, one may add, the walker is constantly arriving at his destination; all places are alike to him, his harvest grows all along the road and beside every path, in every field and wood and on every hilltop.

All of Thoreau's books belong to the literature of Walking, and are as true in spirit in Paris or London as in Concord. His natural history, for which he had a passion, is the natural history of the walker, not always accurate, as I have pointed out, but always graphic and interesting.

Wordsworth was about the first poet-walker—a man of letters who made a business of walking, and whose study was really the open air. But he was not a Holy-Lander in the Thoreau sense. He did not walk to get away from people as Thoreau did, but to see a greater variety of them, and to gather suggestions for his poems. Not so much the wild as the human and the morally significant were the objects of Wordsworth's quest. He haunted waterfalls and fells and rocky heights and lonely tarns, but he was not averse to footpaths and highways, and the rustic, half-domesticated nature of rural England. He was a nature-lover; he even calls himself a nature-worshiper; and he appears to have walked as many, or more, hours each day, in all seasons, as did Thoreau; but he was hunting for no lost paradise of the wild; nor waging a war against the arts and customs of civilization. Man and life were at the bottom of his interest in Nature.

Wordsworth never knew the wild as we know it in this country—the pitilessly savage and rebellious; and, on the other hand, he never knew the wonderfully delicate and furtive and elusive nature that we know; but he knew the sylvan, the pastoral, the rustic-human, as we cannot know them. British birds have nothing plaintive in their songs; and British woods and fells but little that is disorderly and cruel in their expression, or violent in their contrasts.

Wordsworth gathered his finest poetic harvest from common nature and common humanity about him — the wayside birds and flowers and waterfalls, and the wayside people. Though he called himself a worshiper of Nature, it was Nature in her half-human moods that he adored — Nature that knows no extremes, and that has long been under the influence of man — a soft, humid, fertile, docile Nature, that suggests a domesticity as old and as

permanent as that of cattle and sheep. His poetry reflects these features, reflects the high moral and historic significance of the European landscape, while the poetry of Emerson, and of Thoreau, is born of the wildness and elusiveness of our more capricious and unkempt Nature.

The walker has no axe to grind; he sniffs the air for new adventure; he loiters in old scenes, he gleans in old fields. He only seeks intimacy with Nature to surprise her preoccupied with her own affairs. He seeks her in the woods, the swamps, on the hills, along the streams, by night and by day, in season and out of season. He skims the fields and hillsides as the swallow skims the air, and what he gets is intangible to most persons. He sees much with his eyes, but he sees more with his heart and imagination. He bathes in Nature as in a sea. He is alert for the beauty that waves in the trees, that ripples in the grass and grain, that flows in the streams, that drifts in the clouds, that sparkles in the dew and rain. The hammer of the geologist, the notebook of the naturalist, the box of the herbalist, the net of the entomologist, are not for him. He drives no sharp bargains with Nature, he reads no sermons in stones, no books in running brooks, but he does see good in everything. The book he reads he reads through all his senses—through his eyes, his ears, his nose, and also through his feet and hands—and its pages are open everywhere; the rocks speak of more than geology to him, the birds of more than ornithology, the flowers of more than botany, the stars of more than astronomy, the wild creatures of more than zoölogy.

The average walker is out for exercise and the exhilarations of the road, he reaps health and strength; but Thoreau evidently impaired his health by his needless exposure and inadequate food. He was a Holy-Lander who falls and dies in the Holy Land. He ridiculed walking for exercise—taking a walk as the sick take medicine; the walk itself was to be the "enterprise and adventure of the day." And "you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates while walking."

IV

Thoreau's friends and neighbors seem to have persuaded themselves that his natural-history lore was infallible, and, moreover, that he possessed some mysterious power over the wild creatures about him that other men did not possess. I recall how Emerson fairly bristled up when on one occasion while in conversation with him I told him I thought Thoreau in his trips to the Maine woods had confounded the hermit thrush with the wood thrush, as the latter was rarely or never found in Maine. As for Thoreau's influence over the wild creatures, Emerson voiced this superstition when he said, "Snakes coiled round his leg, the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them from the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters." Of course Thoreau could do nothing with the wild creatures that you or I could not do under the same conditions. A snake will coil around any man's leg if he steps on its tail, but it will not be an embrace of affection; and a fish will swim into his hands under

the same conditions that it will into Thoreau's. As for pulling a woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, the only trouble is to get hold of the tail. The 'chuck is pretty careful to keep his tail behind him, but many a farm boy, aided by his dog, has pulled one out of the stone wall by the tail, much against the 'chuck's will. If Thoreau's friends were to claim that he could carry Mephitis mephitica by the tail with impunity, I can say I have done the same thing, and had my photograph taken in the act. The skunk is no respecter of persons, and here again the trouble is to get hold of the tail at the right moment—and, I may add, to let go of it at the right moment.

Thoreau's influence over the wild creatures is what every man possesses who is alike gentle in his approach to them. Bradford Torrey succeeded, after a few experiments, in so dispelling the fears of an incubating red-eyed vireo that she would take insect food from his hand, and I have known several persons to become so familiar with the chickadees that they would feed from the hand, and in some instances even take food from between the lips. If you have a chipmunk for a neighbor, you may soon become on such intimate terms with him that he will search your pockets for nuts and sit on your knee and shoulder and eat them. But why keep alive and circulate as truth these animal legends of the prescientific ages?

Thoreau was not a born naturalist, but a born supernaturalist. He was too intent upon the bird behind the bird always to take careful note of the bird itself. He notes the birds, but not too closely. He was at times a little too careless in this respect to be a safe guide to the bird-student. Even the saunterer to the Holy Land ought to know the indigo bunting from the black-throated blue warbler, with its languid, midsummery, "Zee, zee, zee-eu."

Many of his most interesting natural-history notes Thoreau got from his farmer friends—Melvin, Minott, Miles, Hubbard, Wheeler. Their eyes were more single to the life around them than were his; none of them had lost a hound, a turtle-dove, and a bay horse, whose trail they were daily in quest of.

A haunter of swamps and river marshes all his life, he had never yet observed how the night bittern made its booming or pumping sound, but accepted the explanation of one of his neighbors that it was produced by the bird thrusting its bill in water, sucking up as much as it could hold, and then pumping it out again with four or five heaves of the neck, throwing the water two or three feet—in fact, turning itself into a veritable pump! I have stood within a few yards of the bird when it made the sound, and seen the convulsive movement of the neck and body, and the lifting of the head as the sound escaped. The bird seems literally to vomit up its notes, but it does not likewise emit water.

Every farmer and fox-hunter would smile if he read Thoreau's statement, made in his paper on the natural history of Massachusetts, that "when the snow lies light and but five or six inches deep, you may give chase and come up with the fox on foot." Evidently Thoreau had never tried it. With a foot and a half, or two feet of snow on the ground, and traveling on snowshoes, you might force a fox to take to his hole, but you would not come up to him. In four or five feet of soft snow

hunters come up with the deer, and ride on their backs for amusement, but I doubt if a red fox ever ventures out in such a depth of snow. In one of his May walks in 1860, Thoreau sees the trail of the musquash in the mud along the river-bottoms, and he is taken by the fancy that, as our roads and city streets often follow the early tracks of the cow, so "rivers in another period follow the trail of the musquash." As if the river was not there before the musquash was!

Again, his mysterious "night warbler," to which he so often alludes, was one of our common everyday birds which most school-children know, namely, the oven-bird, or wood-accentor, yet to Thoreau it was a sort of phantom bird upon which his imagination loved to dwell. Emerson told him he must beware of finding and booking it, lest life should have nothing more to show him. But how such a haunter of woods escaped identifying the bird is a puzzle.

In his walks in the Maine woods Thoreau failed to discriminate the song of the hermit thrush from that of the wood thrush. The melody, no doubt, went to his heart, and that was enough. Though he sauntered through orchards and rested under apple trees, he never observed that the rings of small holes in the bark were usually made by the yellow-bellied woodpecker, instead of by Downy, and that the bird was not searching for grubs or insects, but was feeding upon the milky cambium layer of the inner bark. But Thoreau's little slips of the kind I have called attention to count as nothing against the rich harvest of natural-history notes with which his work abounds. He could describe bird-songs and animal behavior and give these things their right emphasis in the life of the landscape as no other New England writer has done. His account of the battle of the ants in Walden atones an hundred-fold for the lapses I have mentioned.

One wonders just what Thoreau means when he says in "Walden," in telling of his visit to "Baker Farm": "Once it chanced that I stood in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tinging the grass and leaves around, and dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal." Is it possible, then, to reach the end of the rainbow? Why did he not dig for the pot of gold that is buried there? How he could be aware that he was standing at the foot of one leg of the glowing arch is to me a mystery. When I see a rainbow, it is always immediately in front of me. I am standing exactly between the highest point of the arch and the sun, and the laws of optics ordain that it can be seen in no other way. You can never see a rainbow at an angle. It always faces you squarely. Hence no two persons see exactly the same bow, because no two persons can occupy exactly the same place at the same time. The bow you see is directed to you alone. Move to the right or the left, and it moves as fast as you do. You cannot flank it or reach its end. It is about the most subtle and significant phenomenon that everyday Nature presents to us. Unapproachable as a spirit, like a visitant from another world, yet the creation of the familiar sun and rain!

How Thoreau found himself standing in the bow's abutment will always remain a puzzle to me. Observers standing on high mountains with the sun low in the west have seen the bow as a

complete circle. This one can understand.

We can point many a moral and adorn many a tale with Thoreau's shortcomings and failures in his treatment of nature themes. Channing quotes him as saying that sometimes "you must see with the inside of your eye." I think that Thoreau saw, or tried to see, with the inside of his eye too often. He does not always see correctly, and many times he sees more of Thoreau than he does of the nature he assumes to be looking at. Truly it is "needless to travel for wonders," but the wonderful is not one with the fantastic or the far-fetched. Forcible expression, as I have said, was his ruling passion as a writer. Only when he is free from its thrall, which in his best moments he surely is, does he write well. When he can forget Thoreau and remember only nature, we get those delightful descriptions and reflections in "Walden." When he goes to the Maine woods or to Cape Cod or to Canada, he leaves all his fantastic rhetoric behind him and gives us sane and refreshing books. In his walks with Channing one suspects he often let himself go to all lengths, did his best to turn the world inside out, as he did at times in his Journals, for his own edification and that of his wondering disciple.

To see analogies and resemblances everywhere is the gift of genius, but to see a resemblance to volcanoes in the hubs or gnarls on birch or beech trees, or cathedral windows in the dead leaves of the andromeda in January, or a suggestion of Teneriffe in a stone-heap, does not indicate genius. To see the great in the little, or the whole of Nature in any of her parts, is the poet's gift, but to ask, after seeing the andropogon grass, "Are there no purple reflections from the culms of thought in my mind?"—a remark which Channing quotes as very significant—is not to be poetical. Thoreau is full of these impossible and fantastic comparisons, thinking only of striking expressions and not at all about the truth. "The flowing of the sap under the dull rind of the trees" is suggestive, but what suggestion is there in the remark, "May I ever be in as good spirits as a willow"? The mood of the scrub oak was more habitual with him. Thoreau was in no sense an interpreter of nature; he did not draw out its meanings or seize upon and develop its more significant phases. Seldom does he relate what he sees or thinks to the universal human heart and mind. He has rare power of description, but is very limited in his power to translate the facts and movements of nature into human emotion. His passage on the northern lights, which Channing quotes from the Journals, is a good sample of his failure in this respect:

> Now the fire in the north increases wonderfully, not shooting up so much as creeping along, like a fire on the mountains of the north seen afar in the night. The Hyperborean gods are burning brush, and it spread, and all the hoes in heaven couldn't stop it. It spread from west to east over the crescent hill. Like a vast fiery worm it lay across the northern sky, broken into many pieces; and each piece, with rainbow colors skirting it, strove to advance itself toward the east, worm-like, on its own annular muscles. It has spread into their

> choicest wood-lots. Now it shoots up like a single solitary watch-fire or burning bush, or where it ran up a pine tree like powder, and still it continues to gleam here and there like a fat stump in the burning, and is reflected in the water. And now I see the gods by great exertions have got it under, and the stars have come out without fear, in peace.

I get no impression of the mysterious almost supernatural character of the aurora from such a description in terms of a burning wood-lot or a hay-stack; it is no more like a conflagration than an apparition is like solid flesh and blood. Its wonderful, I almost said its spiritual, beauty, its sudden vanishings and returnings, its spectral, evanescent character—why, it startles and awes one as if it were the draperies around the throne of the Eternal. And then his mixed metaphor—the Hyperborean gods turned farmers and busy at burning brush, then a fiery worm, and then the burning wood-lots! But this is Thoreau—inspired with the heavenly elixir one moment, and drunk with the brew in his own cellar the next.

V

Thoreau's faults as a writer are as obvious as his merits. Emerson hit upon one of them when he said, "The trick of his rhetoric is soon learned; it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought, its diametrical antagonist." He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air, snow and ice for their warmth, and so on. (Yet Emerson in one of his poems makes frost burn and fire freeze.) One frequently comes upon such sentences as these: "If I were sadder, I should be happier"; "The longer I have forgotten you, the more I remember you." It may give a moment's pleasure when a writer takes two opposites and rubs their ears together in that way, but one may easily get too much of it. Words really mean nothing when used in such a manner. When Emerson told Channing that if he (Emerson) could write as well as he did, he would write a great deal better, one readily sees what he means. And when Thoreau says of one of his callers, "I like his looks and the sound of his silence," the contradiction pleases one. But when he tells his friend that hate is the substratum of his love for him, words seem to have lost their meaning. Now and then he is guilty of sheer bragging, as when he says, "I would not go around the corner to see the world blow up."

He often defies all our sense of fitness and proportion by the degree in which he magnifies the little and belittles the big. He says of the singing of a cricket which he heard under the border of some rock on the hillside one mid-May day, that it "makes the finest singing of birds outward and insignificant." "It is not so wildly melodious, but it is wiser and more mature than that of the wood thrush." His forced and meaningless analogies come out in such a comparison as this: "Most poems, like the fruits, are sweetest toward the blossom end." Which is the blossom end of a poem?

Thoreau advised one of his correspondents when he made garden to plant some Giant Regrets—they were good for sauce. It is

certain that he himself planted some Giant Exaggerations and had a good yield. His exaggeration was deliberate. "Walden" is from first to last a most delightful sample of his talent. He belittles everything that goes on in the world outside his bean-field. Business, politics, institutions, governments, wars and rumors of wars, were not so much to him as the humming of a mosquito in his hut at Walden: "I am as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it." One wonders what he would have made of a blow-fly buzzing on the pane.

He made Walden Pond famous because he made it the center of the universe and found life rich and full without many of the things that others deem necessary. There is a stream of pilgrims to Walden at all seasons, curious to see where so much came out of so little—where a man had lived who preferred poverty to riches, and solitude to society, who boasted that he could do without the post office, the newspapers, the telegraph, and who had little use for the railroad, though he thought mankind had become a little more punctual since its invention.

Another conspicuous fault as a writer is his frequent use of false analogies, or his comparison of things which have no ground of relationship, as when he says: "A day passed in the society of those Greek sages, such as described in the Banquet of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry-vines, and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds." The word "wit" has no meaning when thus used. Or again where he says: "All great enterprises are self-supporting. The poet, for instance, must sustain his body by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill feeds its boilers with the shavings it makes." Was there ever a more inept and untruthful comparison? To find any ground of comparison between the two things he compared, he must make his poet sustain his body by the scraps and lines of his poem which he rejects, or else the steam planing-mill consume its finished product.

"Let all things give way to the impulse of expression," he says, and he assuredly practiced what he had preached.

One of his tricks of self-justification was to compare himself with inanimate objects, which is usually as inept as to compare colors with sounds or perfumes: "My acquaintances sometimes imply that I am too cold," he writes, "but each thing is warm enough of its kind. Is the stone too cold which absorbs the heat of the summer sun and does not part with it during the night? Crystals, though they be of ice are not too cold to melt.... Crystal does not complain of crystal any more than the dove of its mate."

He strikes the same false note when, in discussing the question of solitude at Walden he compares himself to the wild animals around him, and to inanimate objects, and says he was no more lonely than the loons on the pond, or than Walden itself: "I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or a sorrel, or a house-fly, or a humble-bee. I

am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weather-cock, or the North Star, or the South Wind, or an April Shower, or a January Thaw, or the first spider in a new house." Did he imagine that any of these things were ever lonely? Man does get lonely, but Mill Brook and the North Star probably do not.

If he sees anything unusual in nature, like galls on trees and plants, he must needs draw some moral from it, usually at the expense of the truth. For instance, he implies that the beauty of the oak galls is something that was meant to bloom in the flower, that the galls are the scarlet sins of the tree, the tree's Ode to Dejection, yet he must have known that they are the work of an insect and are as healthy a growth as is the regular leaf. The insect gives the magical touch that transforms the leaf into a nursery for its young. Why deceive ourselves by believing that fiction is more interesting than fact? But Thoreau is full of this sort of thing; he must have his analogy, true or false.

He says that when a certain philosophical neighbor came to visit him in his hut at Walden, their discourse expanded and racked the little house: "I should not dare to say how many pounds' weight there was above the atmospheric pressure on every circular inch; it opened its seams so that they had to be calked with much dulness thereafter to stop the consequent leak—but I had enough of that kind of oakum already picked." At the beginning of the paragraph he says that he and his philosopher sat down each with "some shingles of thoughts well dried," which they whittled, trying their knives and admiring the clear yellowish grain of the pumpkin pine. In a twinkling the three shingles of thought are transformed into fishes of thought in a stream into which the hermit and the philosopher gently and reverently wade, without scaring or disturbing them. Then, presto! the fish become a force, like the pressure of a tornado that nearly wrecks his cabin! Surely this is tipsy rhetoric, and the work that can stand much of it, as "Walden" does, has a plus vitality that is rarely equaled.

VI

In "Walden" Thoreau, in playfully naming his various occupations, says, "For a long time I was reporter to a journal, of no very wide circulation, whose editor has never yet seen fit to print the bulk of my contributions, and, as is too common with writers, I got only my labor for my pains. However, in this case my pains were their own reward." If he were to come back now, he would, I think, open his eyes in astonishment, perhaps with irritation, to see the whole bulk of them at last in print. His Journal was the repository of all his writings, and was drawn upon during his lifetime for all the material he printed in books and contributed to the magazines. The fourteen volumes, I venture to say, form a record of the most minute and painstaking details of what one man saw and heard on his walks in field and wood, in a single township, that can be found in any literature. It seems as though a man who keeps a Journal soon becomes its victim; at least that seems to have been the case with Thoreau. He lived for that Journal, he read for it, he walked for it; it

was like a hungry, omnivorous monster that constantly called for more. He transcribed to its pages from the books he read, he filled it with interminable accounts of the commonplace things he saw in his walks, tedious and minute descriptions of everything in wood, field, and swamp. There are whole pages of the Latin names of the common weeds and flowers. Often he could not wait till he got home to write out his notes. He walked by day and night, in cold and heat, in storm and sunshine, all for his Journal. All was fish that came to that net; nothing was too insignificant to go in. He did not stop to make literature of it, or did not try, and it is rarely the raw material of literature. Its human interest is slight, its natural history interest slight also. For upwards of twenty-five years Thoreau seemed to have lived for this Journal. It swelled to many volumes. It is a drag-net that nothing escapes. The general reader reads Thoreau's Journal as he does the book of Nature, just to cull out the significant things here and there. The vast mass of the matter is merely negative, like the things that we disregard in our walk. Here and there we see a flower, or a tree, or a prospect, or a bird, that arrests attention, but how much we pass by or over without giving it a thought! And yet, just as the real nature-lover will scan eagerly the fine print in Nature's book, so will the student and enthusiast of Thoreau welcome all that is recorded in his Journals.

Thoreau says that Channing in their walks together sometimes took out his notebook and tried to write as he did, but all in vain. "He soon puts it up again, or contents himself with scrawling some sketch of the landscape. Observing me still scribbling, he will say that he confines himself to the ideal, purely ideal remarks; he leaves the facts to me. Sometimes, too, he will say, a little petulantly, 'I am universal; I have nothing to do with the particular and definite.'" The truth was Channing had no Journal calling, "More, more!" and was not so inordinately fond of composition. "I, too," says Thoreau, "would fain set down something beside facts. Facts should only be as the frame to my pictures; they should be material to the mythology which I am writing." But only rarely are his facts significant, or capable of an ideal interpretation. Felicitous strokes like that in which he says, "No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an instep as the birch," are rare.

Thoreau evidently had a certain companionship with his Journal. It was like a home-staying body to whom he told everything on his return from a walk. He loved to write it up. He made notes of his observations as he went along, night or day. One time he forgot his notebook and so substituted a piece of birch-bark. He must bring back something gathered on the spot. He skimmed the same country over and over; the cream he was after rose every day and all day, and in all seasons.

He evidently loved to see the pages of his Journal sprinkled with the Latin names of the plants and animals that he saw in his walk. A common weed with a long Latin name acquired new dignity. Occasionally he fills whole pages with the scientific names of the common trees and plants. He loved also a sprinkling of Latin quotations and allusions to old and little known authors. The pride of scholarship was strong in him. Suggestions

from what we call the heathen world seemed to accord with his Gospel of the Wild.

Thoreau loved to write as well as John Muir loved to talk. It was his ruling passion. He said time never passed so quickly as when he was writing. It seemed as if the clock had been set back. He evidently went to Walden for subject-matter for his pen; and the remarkable thing about it all is that he was always keyed up to the writing pitch. The fever of expression was always upon him. Day and night, winter and summer, it raged in his blood. He paused in his walks and wrote elaborately. The writing of his Journal must have taken as much time as his walking.

Only Thoreau's constant and unquenchable thirst for intellectual activity, and to supply material for that all-devouring Journal, can, to me, account for his main occupation during the greater part of the last two years of his life, which consisted in traversing the woods and measuring the trees and stumps and counting their rings. Apparently not a stump escaped him—pine, oak, birch, chestnut, maple, old or new, in the pasture or in the woods; he must take its measure and know its age. He must get the girth of every tree he passed and some hint of all the local conditions that had influenced its growth. Over two hundred pages of his Journal are taken up with barren details of this kind. He cross-questions the stumps and trees as if searching for the clue to some important problem, but no such problem is disclosed. He ends where he begins. His vast mass of facts and figures was incapable of being generalized or systematized. His elaborate tables of figures, so carefully arranged, absolutely accurate, no doubt, are void of interest, because no valuable inferences can be drawn from them.

"I have measured in all eight pitch pine stumps at the Tommy Wheeler hollow, sawed off within a foot of the ground. I measured the longest diameter and then at right angles with that, and took the average, and then selected the side of the stump on which the radius was of average length, and counted the number of rings in each inch, beginning at the center, thus:" And then follows a table of figures filling a page. "Of those eight, average growth about one seventh of an inch per year. Calling the smallest number of rings in an inch in each tree one, the comparative slowness of growth of the inches is thus expressed." Then follows another carefully prepared table of figures. Before one is done with these pages one fairly suspects the writer is mad, the results are so useless, and so utterly fail to add to our knowledge of the woods. Would counting the leaves and branches in the forest, and making a pattern of each, and tabulating the whole mass of figures be any addition to our knowledge? I attribute the whole procedure, as I have said, to his uncontrollable intellectual activity, and the imaginary demands of this Journal, which continued to the end of his life. The very last pages of his Journal, a year previous to his death, are filled with minute accounts of the ordinary behavior of kittens, not one item novel or unusual, or throwing any light on the kitten. But it kept his mind busy, and added a page or two to the Journal.

In his winter walks he usually carried a four-foot stick, marked in inches, and would measure the depth of the snow over large

areas, every tenth step, and then construct pages of elaborate tables showing the variations according to locality, and then work out the average—an abnormal craving for exact but useless facts. Thirty-four measurements on Walden disclosed the important fact that the snow averaged five and one sixth inches deep. He analyzes a pensile nest which he found in the woods—doubtless one of the vireo's—and fills ten pages with a minute description of the different materials which it contained. Then he analyzes a yellow-bird's nest, filling two pages. That Journal shall not go hungry, even if there is nothing to give it but the dry material of a bird's nest.

VII

The craving for literary expression in Thoreau was strong and constant, but, as he confesses, he could not always select a theme. "I am prepared not so much for contemplation as for forceful expression." No matter what the occasion, "forceful expression" was the aim. No meditation, or thinking, but sallies of the mind. All his paradoxes and false analogies and inconsistencies come from this craving for a forceful expression. He apparently brought to bear all the skill he possessed of this kind on all occasions. One must regard him, not as a great thinker, nor as a disinterested seeker after the truth, but as a master in the art of vigorous and picturesque expression. To startle, to wake up, to communicate to his reader a little wholesome shock, is his aim. Not the novelty and freshness of his subject-matter concerns him but the novelty and unhackneyed character of his literary style. That throughout the years a man should keep up the habit of walking, by night as well as by day, and bring such constant intellectual pressure to bear upon everything he saw, or heard, or felt, is remarkable. No evidence of relaxation, or of abandonment to the mere pleasure of the light and air and of green things growing, or of sauntering without thoughts of his Journal. He is as keyed up and strenuous in his commerce with the Celestial Empire as any tradesman in world goods that ever amassed a fortune. He sometimes wrote as he walked, and expanded and elaborated the same as in his study. On one occasion he dropped his pencil and could not find it, but he managed to complete the record. One night on his way to Conantum he speculates for nearly ten printed pages on the secret of being able to state a fact simply and adequately, or of making one's self the free organ of truth—a subtle and ingenious discussion with the habitual craving for forceful expression. In vain I try to put myself in the place of a man who goes forth into wild nature with malice prepense to give free swing to his passion for forcible expression. I suppose all nature-writers go forth on their walks or strolls to the fields and woods with minds open to all of Nature's genial influences and significant facts and incidents, but rarely, I think, with the strenuousness of Thoreau—grinding the grist as they go along.

Thoreau compares himself to the bee that goes forth in quest of honey for the hive: "How to extract honey from the flower of the world. That is my everyday business. I am as busy as the bee

about it. I ramble over all fields on that errand and am never so happy as when I feel myself heavy with honey and wax." To get material for his Journal was as much his business as it was the bee's to get honey for his comb. He apparently did not know that the bee does not get honey nor wax directly from the flowers, but only nectar, or sweet water. The bee, as I have often said, makes the honey and the wax after she gets home to the swarm. She puts the nectar through a process of her own, adds a drop of her own secretion to it, namely, formic acid, the water evaporates, and lo! the tang and pungency of honey!

VIII

There can be little doubt that in his practical daily life we may credit Thoreau with the friendliness and neighborliness that his friend Dr. Edward W. Emerson claims for him. In a recent letter to me, Dr. Emerson writes: "He carried the old New England undemonstrativeness very far. He was also, I believe, really shy, prospered only in monologue, except in a walk in the woods with one companion, and his difficulties increased to impossibility in a room full of people." Dr. Emerson admits that Thoreau is himself to blame for giving his readers the impression that he held his kind in contempt, but says that in reality he had neighborliness, was dutiful to parents and sisters, showed courtesy to women and children and an open, friendly side to many a simple, uncultivated townsman.

This practical helpfulness and friendliness in Thoreau's case seems to go along with the secret contempt he felt and expressed in his Journal toward his fellow townsmen. At one time he was chosen among the selectmen to perambulate the town lines—an old annual custom. One day they perambulated the Lincoln line, the next day the Bedford line, the next day the Carlisle line, and so on, and kept on their rounds for a week. Thoreau felt soiled and humiliated. "A fatal coarseness is the result of mixing in the trivial affairs of men. Though I have been associating even with the select men of this and adjoining towns, I feel inexpressibly begrimed." How fragile his self-respect was! Yet he had friends among the surrounding farmers, whose society and conversation he greatly valued.

That Thoreau gave the impression of being what country folk call a crusty person—curt and forbidding in manner—seems pretty well established. His friend Alcott says he was deficient in the human sentiments. Emerson, who, on the whole, loved and admired him, says: "Thoreau sometimes appears only as a gendarme, good to knock down a cockney with, but without that power to cheer and establish which makes the value of a friend." Again he says: "If I knew only Thoreau, I should think coöperation of good men impossible. Must we always talk for victory, and never once for truth, for comfort, and joy? Centrality he has, and penetration, strong understanding, and the higher gifts,—the insight of the real, or from the real, and the moral rectitude that belongs to it; but all this and all his resources of wit and invention are lost to me, in every experiment, year after year, that I make, to hold intercourse with his mind. Always some weary captious paradox to fight you with, and the time and temper wasted." "It

is curious," he again says, "that Thoreau goes to a house to say with little preface what he has just read or observed, delivers it in a lump, is quite inattentive to any comment or thought which any of the company offer on the matter, nay, is merely interrupted by it, and when he has finished his report departs with precipitation."

It is interesting in this connection to put along-side of these rather caustic criticisms a remark in kind recorded by Thoreau in his Journal concerning Emerson: "Talked, or tried to talk, with R.W.E. Lost my time—nay, almost my identity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind—told me what I knew—and I lost my time trying to imagine myself somebody else to oppose him."

Evidently Concord philosophers were not always in concord.

More characteristic of Emerson is the incident Thoreau relates of his driving his own calf, which had just come in with the cows, out of the yard, thinking it belonged to a drove that was then going by. From all accounts Emerson was as slow to recognize his own thoughts when Alcott and Channing aired them before him as he was to recognize his own calf.

"I have got a load of great hardwood stumps," writes Thoreau, and then, as though following out a thought suggested by them, he adds: "For sympathy with my neighbors I might about as well live in China. They are to me barbarians with their committee works and gregariousness."

Probably the stumps were from trees that grew on his neighbors' farms and were a gift to him. Let us hope the farmers did not deliver them to him free of charge. He complained that the thousand and one gentlemen that he met were all alike; he was not cheered by the hope of any rudeness from them: "A cross man, a coarse man, an eccentric man, a silent man who does not drill well—of him there is some hope," he declares. Herein we get a glimpse of the Thoreau ideal which led his friend Alcott to complain that he lacked the human sentiment. He may or may not have been a "cross man," but he certainly did not "drill well," for which his readers have reason to be thankful. Although Thoreau upholds the cross and the coarse man, one would really like to know with what grace he would have put up with gratuitous discourtesy or insult. I remember an entry in his Journal in which he tells of feeling a little cheapened when a neighbor asked him to take some handbills and leave them at a certain place as he passed on his walk.

A great deal of the piquancy and novelty in Thoreau come from the unexpected turn he gives to things, upsetting all our preconceived notions. His trick of exaggeration he rather brags of: "Expect no trivial truth from me," he says, "unless I am on the witness stand." He even exaggerates his own tendency to exaggeration. It is all a part of his scheme to startle and wake people up. He exaggerates his likes, and he exaggerates his dislikes, and he exaggerates his indifference. It is a way he has of bragging. The moment he puts pen to paper the imp of exaggeration seizes it. He lived to see the beginning of the Civil War, and in a letter to a friend expressed his indifference in regard to Fort Sumter and "Old Abe," and all that, yet Mr. Sanborn says he was as zealous about the war as any soldier. The

John Brown tragedy made him sick, and the war so worked upon his feelings that in his failing state of health he said he could never get well while it lasted. His passion for Nature and the wild carried him to the extent of looking with suspicion, if not with positive dislike, upon all of man's doings and institutions. All civil and political and social organizations received scant justice at his hands. He instantly espoused the cause of John Brown and championed him in the most public manner because he (Brown) defied the iniquitous laws and fell a martyr to the cause of justice and right. If he had lived in our times, one would have expected him, in his letters to friends, to pooh-pooh the World War that has drenched Europe with blood, while in his heart he would probably have been as deeply moved about it as any of us were.

Thoreau must be a stoic, he must be an egotist, he must be illogical, whenever he puts pen to paper. This does not mean that he was a hypocrite, but it means that on his practical human side he did not differ so much from the rest of us, but that in his mental and spiritual life he pursued ideal ends with a seriousness that few of us are equal to. He loved to take an air-line. In his trips about the country to visit distant parts, he usually took the roads and paths or means of conveyance that other persons took, but now and then he would lay down his ruler on the map, draw a straight line to the point he proposed to visit, and follow that, going through the meadows and gardens and door-yards of the owners of the property in his line of march. There is a tradition that he and Channing once went through a house where the front and back door stood open. In his mental flights and excursions he follows this plan almost entirely; the hard facts and experiences of life trouble him very little. He can always ignore them or sail serenely above them.

How is one to reconcile such an expression as this with what his friends report of his actual life: "My countrymen are to me foreigners. I have but little more sympathy with them than with the mobs of India or China"? Or this about his Concord neighbors, as he looks down upon them from a near-by hill: "On whatever side I look off, I am reminded of the mean and narrow-minded men whom I have lately met there. What can be uglier than a country occupied by grovelling, coarse, and low-minded men?—no scenery can redeem it. Hornets, hyenas, and baboons are not so great a curse to a country as men of a similar character." Tried by his ideal standards, his neighbors and his countrymen generally were, of course, found wanting, yet he went about among them helpful and sympathetic and enjoyed his life to the last gasp. These things reveal to us what a gulf there may be between a man's actual life and the high altitudes in which he disports himself when he lets go his imagination.

IX

In his paper called "Life without Principle," his radical idealism comes out: To work for money, or for subsistence alone, is life without principle. A man must work for the love of the work. Get a man to work for you who is actuated by love for you

or for the work alone. Find some one to beat your rugs and carpets and clean out your well, or weed your onion-patch, who is not influenced by any money consideration. This were ideal, indeed; this suggests paradise. Thoreau probably loved his lecturing, and his surveying, and his magazine writing, and the money these avocations brought him did not seem unworthy, but could the business and industrial world safely adopt that principle?

So far as I understand him, we all live without principle when we do anything that goes against the grain, or for money, or for bread alone. "To have done anything by which you earned money is to have been truly idle or worse." "If you would get money as a writer or lecturer, you must be popular, which is to go down perpendicularly." Yet his neighbor Emerson was in much demand as a lecturer, and earned a good deal of money in that way. Truly idealists like Thoreau are hard to satisfy. Agassiz said he could not afford to give his time to making money, but how many Agassiz are there in the world at any one time? Such a man as our own Edison is influenced very little by the commercial value of his inventions. This is as it should be, but only a small fraction of mankind do or can live to ideal ends. Those who work for love are certainly the lucky ones, and are exceptionally endowed. It is love of the sport that usually sends one a-fishing or a-hunting, and this gives it the sanction of the Gospel according to Thoreau. Bradford Torrey saw a man sitting on a log down in Florida who told him, when he asked about his occupation, that he had no time to work! It is to be hoped that Thoreau enjoyed his surveying, as he probably did, especially when it took him through sphagnum swamps or scrub-oak thickets or a tangle of briers and thorns. The more difficult the way, the more he could summon his philosophy. "You must get your living by loving." It is a hard saying, but it is a part of his gospel. But as he on one occasion worked seventy-six days surveying, for only one dollar a day, the money he received should not be laid up against him.

As a matter of fact we find Thoreau frequently engaging in manual labor to earn a little money. He relates in his Journal of 1857 that while he was living in the woods he did various jobs about town—fence-building, painting, gardening, carpentering:

> One day a man came from the east edge of the town and said that he wanted to get me to brick up a fireplace, etc., etc., for him. I told him that I was not a mason, but he knew that I had built my own house entirely and would not take no for an answer. So I went.
>
> It was three miles off, and I walked back and forth each day, arriving early and working as late as if I were living there. The man was gone away most of the time, but had left some sand dug up in his cow-yard for me to make mortar with. I bricked up a fireplace, papered a chamber, but my principal work was whitewashing ceilings. Some were so dirty that many coats would not conceal the dirt. In the kitchen I finally resorted to yellow-wash to cover the dirt. I took my meals there, sitting down with my employer (when he got home) and his

> hired men. I remember the awful condition of the sink, at which I washed one day, and when I came to look at what was called the towel I passed it by and wiped my hands on the air, and thereafter I resorted to the pump. I worked there hard three days, charging only a dollar a day.
>
> About the same time I also contracted to build a wood-shed of no mean size, for, I think, exactly six dollars, and cleared about half of it by a close calculation and swift working. The tenant wanted me to throw in a gutter and latch, but I carried off the board that was left and gave him no latch but a button. It stands yet,—behind the Kettle house. I broke up Johnny Kettle's old "trow," in which he kneaded his bread, for material. Going home with what nails were left in a flower [sic!] bucket on my arm, in a rain, I was about getting into a hay-rigging, when my umbrella frightened the horse, and he kicked at me over the fills, smashed the bucket on my arm, and stretched me on my back; but while I lay on my back, his leg being caught under the shaft, I got up, to see him sprawling on the other side. This accident, the sudden bending of my body backwards, sprained my stomach so that I did not get quite strong there for several years, but had to give up some fence-building and other work which I had undertaken from time to time. I built the common slat fence for $1.50 per rod, or worked for $1.00 per day. I built six fences.

These homely and laborious occupations show the dreamer and transcendentalist of Walden in a very interesting light. In his practical life he was a ready and resourceful man and could set his neighbors a good example, and no doubt give them good advice. But what fun he had with his correspondents when they wrote him for practical advice about the conduct of their lives! One of them had evidently been vexing his soul over the problem of Church and State: "Why not make a very large mud pie and bake it in the sun? Only put no Church nor State into it, nor upset any other pepper box that way. Dig out a woodchuck—for that has nothing to do with rotting institutions. Go ahead."

Dear, old-fashioned Wilson Flagg, who wrote pleasantly, but rather tamely, about New England birds and seasons, could not profit much from Thoreau's criticism: "He wants stirring up with a pole. He should practice turning a series of summer-sets rapidly, or jump up and see how many times he can strike his feet together before coming down. Let him make the earth turn round now the other way, and whet his wits on it as on a grindstone; in short, see how many ideas he can entertain at once."

Expect no Poor Richard maxims or counsel from Thoreau. He would tell you to invest your savings in the bonds of the Celestial Empire, or plant your garden with a crop of Giant Regrets. He says these are excellent for sauce. He encourages one of his correspondents with the statement that he "never yet knew the sun to be knocked down and rolled through a mud puddle; he comes

out honor bright from behind every storm."

X

All Thoreau's apparent inconsistencies and contradictions come from his radical idealism. In all his judgments upon men and things, and upon himself, he is an uncompromising idealist. All fall short. Add his habit of exaggeration and you have him saying that the pigs in the street in New York (in 1843) are the most respectable part of the population. The pigs, I suppose, lived up to the pig standard, but the people did not live up to the best human standards. Wherever the ideal leads him, there he follows. After his brother John's death he said he did not wish ever to see John again, but only the ideal John—that other John of whom he was but the imperfect representative. Yet the loss of the real John was a great blow to him, probably the severest in his life. But he never allows himself to go on record as showing any human weakness.

"Comparatively," he says, "we can excuse any offense against the heart, but not against the imagination." Thoreau probably lived in his heart as much as most other persons, but his peculiar gospel is the work of his imagination. He could turn his idealism to practical account. A man who had been camping with him told me that on such expeditions he carried a small piece of cake carefully wrapped up in his pocket and that after he had eaten his dinner he would take a small pinch of this cake. His imagination seemed to do the rest.

The most unpromising subject would often kindle the imagination of Thoreau. His imagination fairly runs riot over poor Bill Wheeler, a cripple and a sot who stumped along on two clumps for feet, and who earned his grog by doing chores here and there. One day Thoreau found him asleep in the woods in a low shelter which consisted of meadow hay cast over a rude frame. It was a rare find to Thoreau. A man who could turn his back upon the town and civilization like that must be some great philosopher, greater than Socrates or Diogenes, living perhaps "from a deep principle," "simplifying life, returning to nature," having put off many things,— "luxuries, comforts, human society, even his feet,—wrestling with his thoughts." He outdid himself. He out-Thoreaued Thoreau: "Who knows but in his solitary meadow-hay bunk he indulges, in thought, only in triumphant satires on men? [More severe than those of the Walden hermit?] I was not sure for a moment but here was a philosopher who had left far behind him the philosophers of Greece and India, and I envied him his advantageous point of view—" with much more to the same effect. Thoreau's reaction from the ordinary humdrum, respectable, and comfortable country life was so intense, and his ideal of the free and austere life he would live so vivid, that he could thus see in this besotted vagabond a career and a degree of wisdom that he loved to contemplate.

One catches eagerly at any evidence of tender human emotions in Thoreau, his stoical indifference is so habitual with him: "I laughed at myself the other day to think that I cried while reading a pathetic story." And he excuses himself by saying, "It is not I, but Nature in me, which was stronger than I."

It was hard for Thoreau to get interested in young women. He once went to an evening party of thirty or forty of them, "in a small room, warm and noisy." He was introduced to two of them, but could not hear what they said, there was such a cackling. He concludes by saying: "The society of young women is the most unprofitable I have ever tried. They are so light and flighty that you can never be sure whether they are there or not."

XI

As a philosopher or expositor and interpreter of a principle, Thoreau is often simply grotesque. His passion for strong and striking figures usually gets the best of him. In discussing the relation that exists between the speaker or lecturer and his audience he says, "The lecturer will read best those parts of his lecture which are best heard," as if the reading did not precede the hearing! Then comes this grotesque analogy: "I saw some men unloading molasses-hogsheads from a truck at a depot the other day, rolling them up an inclined plane. The truckman stood behind and shoved, after putting a couple of ropes, one round each end of the hogshead, while two men standing in the depot steadily pulled at the ropes. The first man was the lecturer, the last was the audience." I suppose the hogshead stands for the big thoughts of the speaker which he cannot manage at all without the active coöperation of the audience. The truth is, people assemble in a lecture hall in a passive but expectant frame of mind. They are ready to be pleased or displeased. They are there like an instrument to be played upon by the orator. He may work his will with them. Without their sympathy his success will not be great, but the triumph of his art is to win their sympathy. Those who went to scoff when the Great Preacher spoke, remained to pray. No man could speak as eloquently to empty seats, or to a dummy audience, as to a hall filled with intelligent people, yet Thoreau's ropes and hogsheads and pulling and pushing truckmen absurdly misrepresent the true relation that exists between a speaker and his hearers. Of course a speaker finds it uphill work if his audience is not with him, but that it is not with him is usually his own fault. Thoreau's merits as a man and a writer are so many and so great that I have not hesitated to make much of his defects. Indeed, I have with malice aforethought ransacked his works to find them. But after they are all charged up against him, the balance that remains on the credit side of the account is so great that they do not disturb us.

There has been but one Thoreau, and we should devoutly thank the gods of New England for the precious gift. Thoreau's work lives and will continue to live because, in the first place, the world loves a writer who can flout it and turn his back upon it and yet make good; and again because the books which he gave to the world have many and very high literary and ethical values. They are fresh, original, and stimulating. He drew a gospel out of the wild; he brought messages from the wood gods to men; he made a lonely pond in Massachusetts a fountain of the purest and most elevating thoughts, and, with his great neighbor Emerson, added new luster to a town over which the muse of our colonial history

had long loved to dwell....

"The wings of time are black and white,
Pied with morning and with night."

Thus do we objectify that which has no objective existence, but is purely a subjective experience. Do we objectify light and sound in the same way? No. One can conceive of the vibrations in the ether that give us the sensation of light, and in the air that give us sound. These vibrations do not depend upon our organs. Time and tide, we say, wait for no man. Certainly the tide does not, as it has a real objective existence. But time does not wait or hurry. It neither lags nor hastens. Yesterday does not exist, nor to-morrow, nor the Now, for that matter. Before we can say the moment has come, it is gone. The only change there is is in our states of consciousness. How the hours lag when we are waiting for a train, and how they hurry when we are happily employed! Can we draw a line between the past and the present? Can you find a point in the current of the stream that is stationary? We speak of being lavish of time and of husbanding time, of improving time, and so on. We divide it into seconds and minutes, hours and days, weeks, and months, and years. Civilized man is compelled to do this; he lives and works by schedule, but it is his states of consciousness that he divides and measures. "Time is but a stream I go fishing in," says Thoreau. The stream goes by, but the fish stay. The river of Time, the tooth of Time—happy comparisons.
"I wasted time and now time wastes me," says Shakespeare. "I have no time." "You have all there is," replied the old Indian. If time, like money, could be hoarded up, we could get all our work done. Is there any time outside of man? The animals take no note of time.

[http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/8/9/0/18903/18903-h/18903-h.htm]

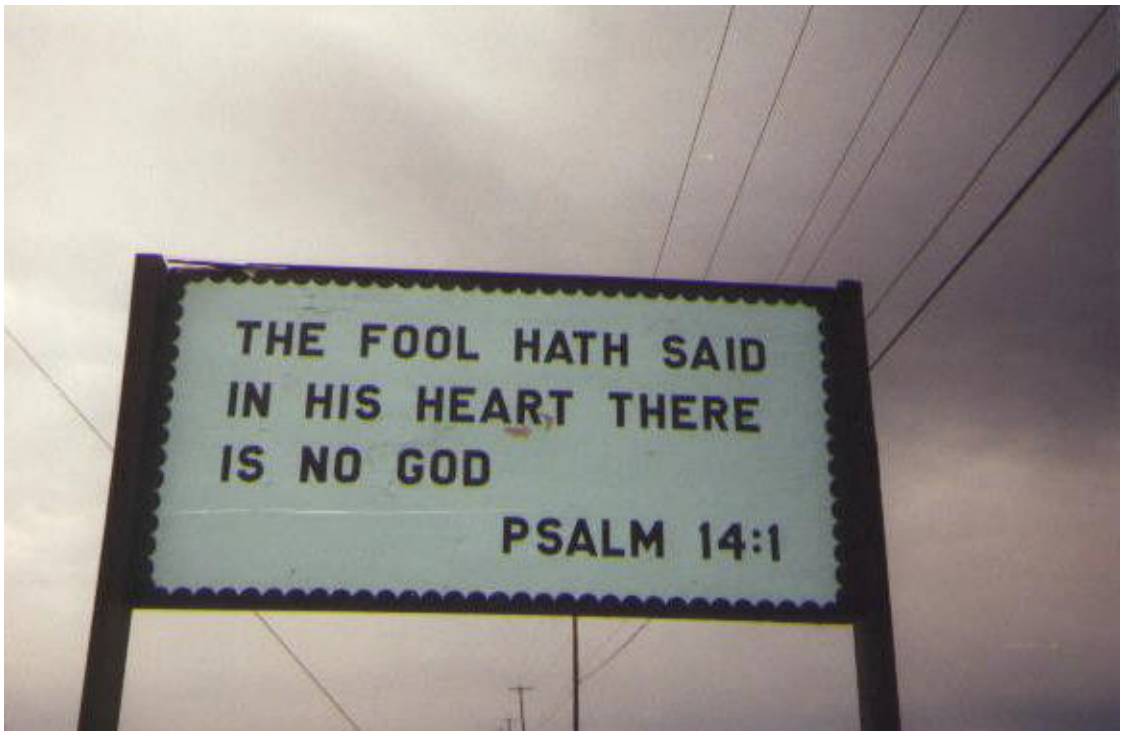
1993

Publication of a reassuring book entitled THE BOOK YOUR CHURCH DOESN'T WANT YOU TO READ, Tim C. Leedom editor, by "The Truth Seeker Company." Now from time to time we run into "village atheist" types, who define themselves in opposition to the hypocrisy of religion, and from time to time we hear Henry Thoreau disparaged as one of these types who define themselves in opposition, who know everything about

everything that is wrong with everybody else.

So I looked into this new volume with some trepidation, wondering to what use they would be attempting to turn the memory of Thoreau. In scanning through the 400+ glossy pages of this publication, I failed to note any citations, and then at the end I discovered an appendix which attempted to make a list of the "Freethinkers"

who are to be honored by these naysayers. And, glory be, Thoreau's name is **not** on that rather extensive list! Here are a few of the "Freethinkers," with the characterizations under which they have been selected out to be thus honored:



Freethinkers

Marlon Brando	**Movie actor; specializes in morally intense roles**
John Burroughs	**Nature lover and naturalist; biographer and close friend of Walt Whitman**
John Caldwell Calhoun	**American statesman of the early 19th century; favored states' rights**
Charles Darwin	**English naturalist, author of ORIGIN OF SPECIES**
Erasmus Darwin	**English botanist and physician, grandfather of Charles**
Charles Dickens	**Novelist**
Frederick Douglass	**Abolitionist**
Charles W. Eliot	**President of Harvard for over 40 years**
Waldo Emerson	**American philosopher and author**
Edward Everett	**Politician, minister, Harvard president**
Benjamin Franklin	**American writer, statesman, and inventor**
Mahatma Gandhi	**Nationalist leader, Hindu, organizer of non-violent resistance**
William Lloyd Garrison	**Abolitionist**
William Godwin	**English philosopher**

Freethinkers

Horace Greeley	Founder of the New-York Tribune
Oliver Wendell Holmes	American physician and author
Julia Ward Howe	Abolitionist and Suffragist
Thomas Jefferson	US President, lawyer, statesman, diplomat, philosopher
Immanuel Kant	german philosopher, considered by some to be one of the greatest of modern thinkers
John Locke	English philosopher
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	American Poet
James Madison	President and youngest of the Founding Fathers; helped bring about ratification of the Constitution and passage of the Bill of Rights
Horace Mann	American educator
Florence Nightingale	English nurse, philanthropist
Thomas Paine	Writer and political theorist. The mind behind the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence
Benjamin Pierce	Mathematician, astronomer
Jean Jacques Rousseau	French publisher and author
Arthur Schopenhauer	Philosopher
Percy Bysshe Shelley	English romantic poet, wrote THE NECESSITY OF ATHEISM, husband of Mary Wollstonecraft
B.F. Skinner	Behaviorist, psychologist, signed 1973 Humanist Manifesto
Herbert Spencer	Philosopher, psychologist, sociologist
Mark Twain	American author, humorist
Catherine Vogel	Burned in 1539 for being a Unitarian
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	German poet
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz	German philosopher
Alfred Russel Wallace	naturalist, devoted life to scientific entomology
Walt Whitman	American poet, true inheritor of Emersonian principles
Mary Wollstonecraft	Wrote VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN, friend of Thomas Paine, wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley

"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

– Remark by character "Garin Stevens" in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Prepared: May 16, 2013

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT GENERATION HOTLINE

This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.

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