ALMOST MENTIONED IN THE MAINE WOODS:

DR. WILLIAM FRANCIS CHANNING

"NARRATIVE HISTORY" AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY

THE MAINE WOODS: Ktaadn, whose name is an Indian word signifying highest land, was first ascended by white men in 1804. It was visited by Professor J.W. Bailey of West Point in 1836; by Dr. Charles T. Jackson, the State Geologist, in 1837; and by two young men from Boston in 1845. All these have given accounts of their expeditions. Since I was there, two or three other parties have made the excursion, and told their stories. Besides these, very few, even among backwoodsmen and hunters, have ever climbed it, and it will be a long time before the tide of fashionable travel sets that way. The mountainous region of the State of Maine stretches from near the White Mountains, northeasterly one hundred and sixty miles, to the head of the Aroostook River, and is about sixty miles wide. The wild or unsettled portion is far more extensive. So that some hours only of travel in this direction will carry the curious to the verge of a primitive forest, more interesting, perhaps, on all accounts, than they would reach by going a thousand miles westward.

CHARLES TURNER, JR.
JACOB WHITMAN BAILEY
DR. CHARLES T. JACKSON
EDWARD EVERETT HALE
WILLIAM FRANCIS CHANNING

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo" Project   People of Maine Woods: Dr. William Francis Channing
January 22, Saturday: William Francis Channing was born, a son of the Reverend William Ellery Channing.

Edward Bransfield, on a Royal Navy expedition aboard the *Williams*, landed on King George Island in the South Shetlands and claimed it for Britain.

In the diary of Thomas Nuttall we find: “This morning we were visited by three Choctaws in quest of whiskey. Their complexions were much fairer than most of the Indians we meet with on the Mississippi. Two of them were boys of about 18 or 19, and possessed the handsomest features I have ever seen among the natives, though rather too effeminate. About 20 miles below the Arkansa, in the Cypress bend, we saw the first appearance of Tillandsia or Long moss.”
Edward Everett Hale and William Francis Channing graduated from Harvard College. Channing would go on to study medicine at the University of Pennsylvania (although his practice as a physician would never extend beyond the administration of quack applications of electricity to the heads and feet of sufferers).

After leaving Harvard, Ellery Channing had spent almost five years living in the home of his father Dr. Walter Channing, withdrawing books from the Boston Athenæum and presumably educating himself in this manner — but otherwise not doing much of anything. In this year he determined that he was going to make something of himself, as a farmer on the frontier! (Meanwhile, in this year, Abraham Lincoln was beginning to travel through nine counties in central and eastern Illinois, as a lawyer on the 8th Judicial Circuit.)

1839

LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.
PEOPLE OF **MAINE WOODS**:  

**DR. WILLIAM FRANCIS CHANNING**

**1842**

Davis’s manual of magnetism: including also electromagnetism, magneto-electricity, and thermo-electricity. With a description of the electrotypes process. For the use of students and literary institutions. With 100 original illustrations (Boston: Published by Daniel Davis, Jr. Magnetical Instrument Maker, 428 Washington Street, Late 11 Cornhill). By Daniel Davis (jr.), William Francis Channing, Joseph Hale Abbot, and John Bacon (Jr.).

**MANUAL OF MAGNETISM**

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT

“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project  
People of **Maine Woods**: Dr. William Francis Channing
From about this point until about 1846, David Jones Peck, who would be the first black American to graduate from an American medical school, would be studying medicine under Dr. Joseph P. Gazzam, a white anti-slavery physician. (This medical student's father, John Peck, was one of the most prominent abolitionists, ministers, and businessmen in the Pittsburgh free black community.)

**William Francis Channing** received the medical diploma from the University of Pennsylvania (he would not establish a medical practice, although he would from time to time be able to make some coin by applying electric currents to the heads and feet of sufferers).

In 1831 a very rich man had died in Philadelphia and had been forced under the circumstances to leave all his assets behind. Richard Girard had therefore left his entire estate to create a foundation for the care of “poor male white orphan children.” A condition of the bequest, however, had been that no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of the gospel ever darken the door of that establishment, or darken the minds of the children it protected. This will had been trapped in litigation from that point forward, until a decision of the US Supreme Court in this year allowed Mr. Girard’s foundation to proceed.¹ It would begin in the year 1846 its charitable work on behalf of poor male orphan children, white only, whose minds were not to be contaminated with darkness.

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¹ The US Supreme Court ruled, in the case of Vidal vs. Girard: “Why may not the BIBLE and especially the NEW TESTAMENT be read and taught as a divine revelation in the schools? Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the NEW TESTAMENT?” Clearly, from the point of view of the nine black-robed justices of the Supreme Court of the United States of America, there was nothing in the Bible that might suggest to the worshipful reader that children of color and white children ought to be offered precisely the same life opportunities.
May 30, Friday: An article Dr. William Francis Channing placed in the Boston Daily Advertiser, his Harvard chum Edward Everett Hale’s dad’s gazette, described in general terms how he was intending to reduce fire losses by providing building occupants with an instant way to contact its fire stations — a fire alarm system, one based upon the new telegraph wire.
July 30, Wednesday: Edward Everett Hale and Dr. William Francis Channing climbed mount Katahdin (Henry Thoreau would make mention of that earlier expedition at the beginning of *The Maine Woods*).2

August 15, Friday: Frederick Douglass lectured at the Lyceum Hall of Lynn, Massachusetts.

Edward Everett Hale provided an account of his and Dr. William Francis Channing’s recent college-chums clamber up mount Katahdin to his dad’s gazette in Boston, the Daily Advertiser (Henry Thoreau would make mention of that earlier expedition at the beginning of *The Maine Woods*).

2. They were guided by local woodman John Jackins, and unfortunately it has not been entirely settled what particular route he selected in leading them up the peak, nor at which of the various elevations they arrived. (The spring now honored as “Thoreau Spring” had been originally designated “Governor’s Spring” in honor of Governor Ralph O. Brewster when in 1925 he made himself the initial Governor of the State of Maine to climb Katahdin while holding that office — it is a bit of hyperbole that does not imply that HDT himself ever came within sipping distance of the locale.)
August 15th  The sounds heard at this hour 8 1/2 are the distant rumbling of wagons over bridges –a sound farthest heard of any human at night –the baying of dogs –the lowing of cattle in distant yards.

What if we were to obey these fine dictates these divine suggestions which are addressed to the mind & not to the body –which are certainly true –not to eat meat –not to buy or sell or barter &c &c &c?

I will not plant beans another summer but sincerity –truth –simplicity –faith –trust –innocence –and see if they will not grow in this soil with such manure as I have, and sustain me. When a man meets a man –it should not be some uncertain appearance and falsehood –but the personification of great qualities. Here comes truth perchance personified along the road– Let me see how Truth behaves– I have not seen enough of her– He shall utter no foreign word –no doubtful sentence –and I shall not make haste to part with him.

I would not forget that I deal with infinite and divine qualities in my fellow. All men indeed are divine in their core of light but that is indistinct and distant to me, like the stars of the least magnitude –or the galaxy itself –but my kindred planets show their round disks and even their attendant moons to my eye.

Even the tired laborers I meet on the road, I really meet as travelling Gods, but it is as yet and must be for a long season, without speech.
PEOPLE OF **MAINE WOODS:**

**DR. WILLIAM FRANCIS CHANNING**

1847


**MANUAL OF MAGNETISM**
Our 1st female MD, Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910), graduated from Geneva Medical College in Syracuse, New York. She would go on to found the New York Infirmary in 1853 and, after moving to England in 1869, to found the London School of Medicine for Women.

**NOTES ON THE MEDICAL APPLICATION OF ELECTRICITY**, a treatise on “electrotherapeutics” by William Francis Channing (Printed in Boston by D. Davis, jr.).
Telegraph lines were in this year being extended across the Mississippi River. The term “science fiction” was coined.

A cultural crossover point was being approached: according to the superintendent of a telegraph line that had been installed between Wall Street and Boston, “The telegraph is used by commercial men to almost as great an extent as the mail.”

William Francis Channing presented a “Communication respecting a system of fire alarms” to the Boston City Council. The city government appropriated funds for the construction of a fire alarm system based upon the scheme he had devised in conjunction with a self-effacing telegraph engineer of Salem, Moses Gerrish Farmer.3

3. In 1859 at 11 Pearl Street in Salem, Massachusetts, the parlor of Moses Gerrish Farmer would be the 1st domestic living space in the world to be illuminated by means of incandescent lightbulbs in which the platinum filaments were powered by electricity (this inventor was singularly unsuited for the world of business, it being decidedly against his religion to seek any personal benefit from God-given talents such as inventiveness and creativity — but singularly well suited to be a working partner for a person such as Channing who stood ever ready to receive personal profit from anything whatever).
The third example from the left below is the actual telegraph-line insulator that was submitted by Charles Goodyear to the US patent office in this year, as manufactured by the Condam Company (the other examples have been collected from various telegraph lines strung across the American landscape):
April 28, Wednesday: Henry Thoreau commented in his journal about his reading either in Évariste Régis Huc’s 1850 work in French, *Souvenirs d’un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet et la Chine pendant les années 1844, 1845, et 1846*, or in William Hazlett’s translation *Huc and Gabet: Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, during the years 1844-5-6* which had appeared in 1851: “I scarcely know why I am excited when in M. Huc’s Book I read of the country of the Mongol Tartars as the “Land of Grass,” but I am as much as if I were a cow.”

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

At 12 o’clock noon a telegraphic fire alarm system, constructed on the basis of plans prepared by Dr. William Francis Channing and a self-effacing telegraphic engineer, Moses Gerrish Farmer, went into operation in Boston, with the fire alarm office being situated in the City Building at Court Square and Williams Court. Staff included a superintendent, fire alarm operators, and repairmen. The system consisted of a closed electrically supervised assembly of circuits, street fire alarm boxes with code wheels and key breaks determining the number of current interruptions which produced coded signals on local instruments at a central office, where an operator transmitted signals received over separate fire alarm circuits to the appropriate fire house. The system featured telegraphic communication by key and sounder between individual street boxes and the
central office. The system consisted of 40 street boxes connected into 3 box circuits, 3 bell circuits, 16 additional alarm bells for a total of 19, and a crude central office apparatus. The street fire alarm boxes were painted black and had an outside door that was kept locked. Each such box contained a manual crank (the sort of alarm device on which one merely pulled an arm downward would not be introduced, experimentally, until 1864).

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

My uncle Dr. John Henry Daniel said to me, when I was leaving home, “So you are going to be a journeyman soul-saver.” I did not begin life with that burden on me, and, when it came, was too young to question whether it was part of me — my hunch — or a pack of outside things like that strapped on Bunyan’s pilgrim. My pack was symbolized in my saddle-bags, where the Bible, Emerson’s “Essays,” Watson’s “Theology,” Carlyle’s “Latter Day Pamphlets,” Jeremy Taylor’s “Holy Living and Dying,” the Methodist Discipline, and Coleridge’s “Aids to Reflection” got on harmoniously, — for a time. Dr. Daniel’s label, “a journeyman soul-saver,” told true in a sense: it was really my own enmeshed soul I had to save. I was struggling at the centre of an invisible web of outer influences and hereditary forces. I was without wisdom. How many blunders I made in my sermons, with

4. A relative of the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, the Honorable Roger Brooke Taney, as our Southern correspondent does not hesitate to make clear.
which I took so much pains, I know not, but I remember a friendly hint from the wife of the Hon. Bowie Davis that a sermon was too "agrarian." In another case the recoil was more serious; it came through my presiding elder, who said, "From what I hear, a sermon of yours on the new birth was too profound." This troubled me deeply. I had supposed that Jesus meant to be profound, and put much study into the sermon, the only favourable response to which was from an aged negro woman who, long after I had left Methodism, laid her hand on my head, and said, "I never knew what the Lord meant by our being born again until I heard you preach about it, and bless the Lord, it's been plain ever since!"

My early training in law courts determined my method of preaching. In preparing a sermon I fixed on some main point which I considered of vital importance, and dealt with it as if I were pleading before judge and jury. This method was not Methodism. I was in continual danger of being "too profound," and though congregations were interested in my sermons, they brought me more reputation for eccentricity than for eloquence. This, however, was not a matter of concern to me. Ambition for fame and popularity was not among my faults. My real mission was personal, — to individuals. In each neighbourhood on my circuit there were some whom I came to know with a certain intimacy, aspiring souls whose confidences were given me. However far away I might be, they rose before me when I was preparing for that appointment; they inspired passages in the sermon. No general applause could give me the happiness felt when these guests of my heart met me with smiles of recognition, or clasped my hand with gratitude.

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

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

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

The preacher read out the query, and said, "All things are possible with God." Nothing more. It made a profound impression on me that a divine should take refuge in a phrase. The doctrine in question involved the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the "Apostles’ Creed."
I made a note of another thing at this camp-meeting. The Rev. Lyttleton Morgan, an accomplished preacher, declared that in his Passion and Crucifixion Christ suffered all that the whole human race must have suffered in hell to all eternity but for that sacrifice. At dinner some ministers demurred at this doctrine; I maintained that it appeared to be a logical deduction from our theory of the Atonement. But I soon recognized that it was a reductio ad absurdum.

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

On one of my visits to Washington I heard a sermon from the famous Asbury Roszel which lifted the vast audience to exultation and joy. His subject was the kingdom of God and triumphs of the Cross, and he began by declaring that it was universally agreed that ideal government was the rule of one supreme and competent individual head. This Carlylean sentiment uttered in the capital of the so-called Republic gave me some food for thought at the time; and I remembered it when I awakened to the anomaly of disowning as a republican the paraphernalia of royalty, while as a preacher I was using texts and hymns about thrones and Crowns and sceptres, and worshipping a king. My interest in party politics had declined; I began to study large human issues. One matter that I entered into in 1851 was International Copyright. On this subject I wrote an article which appeared in the "National Intelligencer." I took the manuscript to the office, and there saw the venerable Joseph Gales, who founded the paper, and W.W. Seaton, the editor. Mr. Seaton remarked that I was "a very young man to be in holy orders," and after glancing at the article said he was entirely in sympathy with it. In that article I appealed to Senator Sumner to take up the matter, and thenceforth he sent me his speeches. I little imagined how much personal interest I was to have some
years later in Gales and Seaton, who were among the founders of the Unitarian church in Washington. I used sometimes to saunter into the bookshop of Frank Taylor, or that of his brother Hudson Taylor, afterwards intimate Unitarian friends, before I knew that there was a Unitarian church in Washington. From one of them I bought a book that deeply moved me: “The Soul: her Sorrows and her Aspirations. By Francis William Newman.” I took this book to heart before I was conscious of my unorthodoxy, nothing in it then suggesting to me that the author was an unbeliever in supernaturalism. The setting given by Newman’s book to Charles Wesley’s hymn — “Come, 0 thou Traveller unknown” — made that hymn my inspiration, and it has been my song in many a night wherein I have wrestled with phantoms.

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

I remember that in reading Emerson repeatedly I seemed never to read the same essay as before: whether it was the new morning, or that I had mentally travelled to a new point of view, there was always something I had not previously entered into. His thoughts were mother-thoughts, to use Balzac’s word. Over the ideas were shining ideals that made the world beautiful to me; the woods and flowers and birds amid which I passed made a continuous chorus for all this poetry and wit and wisdom. And science also; from Emerson I derived facts about nature that filled me with wonder. On one of my visits to Professor Baird, at the Smithsonian Institution, I talked of these statements; he was startled that I should be reading Emerson, with whose writings he was acquainted. At the end of our talk Baird said, “Whatever may be thought of Emerson’s particular views of nature, there can be no question about the nature in him and in his writings: that is true and beautiful.”

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

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

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

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

Our most cultured congregation was at Brookville, a village named after the race of which Roger Brooke was at this time the chief. Our pretty Methodist church there was attended by some Episcopalian families — Halls, Magruders, Donalds, Coulters — who adopted me personally. The finest mansion was that of John Hall, who insisted on my staying at his house when I was in the neighbourhood. He was an admirable gentleman and so friendly with the Methodists that they were pleased at the hospitality shown their minister. Mrs. Hall, a grand woman intellectually and physically, was a daughter of Roger Brooke. She had been “disowned” by the Quakers for marrying “out of meeting,” but it was a mere formality; they all loved her just as much. Her liberalism had leavened the families around her. She was not interested in theology, and never went to any church, but encouraged her lovely little daughters (of ten and twelve years) to enjoy Sunday like any other day. After some months she discovered that some of my views resembled those of her father, and desired me to visit him.

There was a flourishing settlement of Hicksite Quakers at Sandy Spring, near Brookville, but I never met one of them, nor knew anything about them. “Hicksite” was a meaningless word to me. “Uncle Roger,” their preacher, was spoken of throughout Montgomery County as the best and wisest of men, and I desired to meet him. When I afterwards learned that “Hicksite” was equivalent to “unorthodox,” it was easy to understand why none of them should seek the acquaintance of a Methodist minister. The Quakers assembled twice a week, and happening one Wednesday to pass their meeting-house, I entered, — impelled by curiosity. Most of those present were in Quaker dress, which I did not find unbecoming for the ladies, perhaps because the wearers were refined and some of them pretty. After a half-hour’s silence a venerable man of very striking appearance, over six feet in height and his long head full of force, arose, laid aside his hat, and in a low voice, in strange contrast with his great figure, uttered these words: “Walk in the light while ye are children of the light, lest darkness come upon you.” Not a word more. He resumed his seat and hat, and after a few minutes’ silence shook hands with the person next him; then all shook
hands and the meeting ended.
I rode briskly to my appointment, and went on with my usual
duties. But this my first Quaker experience had to be digested.
The old gentleman, with his Solomonic face (it was Roger
Brooke), who had broken the silence with but one text, had given
that text, by its very insulation and modification, a mystical
suggestiveness.
After I had attended the Quaker meeting several times, it was
heard of by my Methodist friends. One of these, a worthy
mechanic, told me that Samuel Janney had preached in the Quaker
meeting, and once said that “the blood of Jesus could no more
save man than the blood of a bullock.” This brother’s eyes were
searching though kindly. Roger Brooke belonged to the same
family as that of Roger Brooke Taney, then chief justice of the
United States. His advice, opinion, arbitration, were sought for
in all that region. Despite antislavery and rationalistic
convictions, he leavened all Montgomery County with tolerance.
One morning as I was riding off from the Quaker meeting, a youth
overtook me and said uncle Roger wished to speak to me. I turned
and approached the old gentleman’s carriole. He said, “I have
seen thee at one or two of our meetings. If thee can find it
convenient to go home with us to dinner, we shall be glad to
have thee.” The faces of his wife and daughter-in-law beamed
their welcome, and I accepted the invitation. The old mansion,
“Brooke Grove,” contained antique furniture, and the neatness
bespoke good housekeeping. So also did the dinner, for these
Maryland Quakers knew the importance of good living to high
thinking.
There was nothing sanctimonious about this home of the leading
Quaker. Uncle Roger had a delicate humour, and the ladies beauty
and wit. The bonnet and shawl laid aside, there appeared the
perfectly fitting “mouse-colour” gown, of rich material, with
unfigured lace folded over the neck: at a fancy ball it might
be thought somewhat coquettish.
They were fairly acquainted with current literature, and though
not yet introduced to Emerson, were already readers of Carlyle.
I gained more information about the country, about the
interesting characters, about people in my own congregations,
than I had picked up in my circuit-riding. After dinner uncle
Roger and I were sitting alone on the veranda, taking our smoke,
— he with his old-fashioned pipe, — and he mentioned that one
of his granddaughters had rallied him on having altered a
Scripture text in the meeting. “In the simplicity of my heart I
said what came to me, and answered her that if it was not what
is written in the Bible I hope it is none the less true.” I
afterwards learned that he had added in his reply, “Perhaps it
was the New Testament writer who did not get the words quite
right.” I asked him what was the difference between “Hicksite”
and “Orthodox Quakers; but he turned it off with an anecdote
of one of his neighbours who, when asked the same question, had
replied, “Well, you see, the orthodox Quakers will insist that
the Devil has horns, while we say the Devil is an ass.” I spoke
of the Methodist ministers being like the Quakers “called by the
Spirit” to preach, and he said, with a smile, “But when you go

5. Helen Clark, daughter of the Right Hon. John Bright, showed me a diary written by Mr. Bright’s grandmother, Rachel Wilson,
while travelling in America in 1768-69. She was a much esteemed Quaker preacher, and gives a pleasant account of her visit to the
Friends at Sandy Spring, where she was received in the home of Roger Brooke. This was the grandfather of “uncle Roger.”
to an appointment what if the Spirit does n’t move you to say anything?"

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

For the first time I found myself face to face with an avowed abolitionist! My interest in politics had lessened, but I remained a Southerner, and this economic arraignment of slavery came with some shock. He saw this and turned from the subject to talk of their educational work, advising me to visit Fairhill, the Friends’ school for young ladies. The principal of the school was William Henry Farquhar, and on my first visit there I heard from him an admirable lecture in his course on History. He had adopted the novel method of beginning his course with the present day and travelling backward. He had begun with the World’s Fair and got as far as Napoleon I, — subject of the lecture I heard. It was masterly. And the whole school — the lovely girls in their tidy Quaker dresses, their sweet voices and manners, the elegance and order everywhere — filled me with wonder. By this garden of beauty and culture I had been passing for six months, never imagining the scene within.

The lecture closed the morning exercises, and I had an opportunity for addressing the pupils. I was not an intruder, but taken there by Mrs. Charles Farquhar, daughter of Roger Brooke and sister-in-law of the principal, so I did not have the excuse that it would not be “in season” to try and save some of these sweet sinners from the flames of hell. It was the obvious duty of the Methodist preacher on Rockville Circuit to cry, — “0 ye fair maids of Fair Hill, this whited sepulchre of unbelief, — not one of you aware of your depravity, nor regenerate through the blessed bloodshed — your brilliant teacher is luring you to hell!” Those soft eyes of yours will be lifted in torment, those rosebud mouths call for a drop of water to cool your parched tongues; all your affection, gentleness, and virtues are but filthy rags, unless you believe in the Trinity, the blood atonement, and in the innate corruption of every heart in this room!"

But when the junior preacher is made, the susceptible youth is not unmade. According to Lucian, Cupid was reproached by his mother Venus for permitting the Muses to remain single, and invisibly went to their abode with his arrows; but when he discovered the beautiful arts with which the Muses were occupied, he had not the heart to disturb them, and softly crept away. This “pagan” parable of a little god’s momentary godlessness may partly suggest why no gospel arrows were shot that day in Fairhill school; but had I to rewrite Lucian’s tale
I should add that Cupid went off himself stuck all over with arrows from the Muses’ eyes. However, Cupid had nothing to do with the softly feathered and imperceptible arrows that were going into my Methodism from the Quakers, in their homes even more than in this school. I found myself introduced to a circle of refined and cultivated ladies whose homes were cheerful, whose charities were constant, whose manners were attractive, whose virtues were recognized by their most orthodox neighbours; yet what I was preaching as the essentials of Christianity were unknown among them. These beautiful homes were formed without terror of hell, without any cries of what shall we do to be saved? How had these lovely maidens and young men been trained to every virtue, to domestic affections and happiness? I never discussed theology with them; but their lives, their beautiful spirit, their homes, did away with my moral fears, and as the dogmas paled, creedless freedom began to flush with warm life. These good and sweet women, who said no word against my dogmas, unconsciously to themselves or me charmed me away from the dogmatic habitat.

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

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

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

6. When Benjamin Hallowell, the eminent teacher in Alexandria, Va., came to reside at Sandy Spring, I had many interesting talks with him, but found that even his philosophical mind could not free itself from the prejudice against musical culture. The musical faculty, he admitted, had some uses — e.g., that mothers might sing lullabies.
grieving the hearts of my friends in Carlisle, and congregations that so trusted me, appeared worse than death. My affections were at times rack and thumbscrew.

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

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

To this there came a gracious response: —

Concord, Mass., 13th November, 1851.

Dear Sir, — I fear you will not be able, except at some chance auction, to obtain any set of the “Dial.” In fact, smaller editions were printed of the later and latest numbers, which increases the difficulty.

I am interested by your kind interest in my writings, but you have not let me sufficiently into your own habit of thought, to enable me to speak to it with much precision. But I believe what interests both you and me most of all things, and whether we know it or not, is the morals of intellect; in other words, that no man is worth his room in the world who is not commanded by a legitimate object of thought. The earth is full of frivolous people, who are bending their whole force and the force of nations on trifles, and these are baptized with every grand and holy name, remaining, of course, totally inadequate to occupy any mind; and so sceptics are made. A true soul will disdain to be moved except by what natively commands it, though it should go sad and solitary in search of its master a thousand years. The few superior persons in each community are so by their steadiness to reality and their neglect of appearances. This is the euphrasy and rue that purge the intellect and ensure insight. Its full rewards are slow but sure; and yet I think it has its reward in the instant, inasmuch as simplicity and grandeur are always better than dapperness. But I will not spin out these saws farther, but hasten to thank you for your frank and
friendly letter, and to wish you the best deliverance
in that contest to which every soul must go alone.
Yours, in all good hope,

R.W. EMERSON.

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

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

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

But, alas, I presently had a tragedy of my own to weep for, the
death of my elder brother, Peyton. He had long suffered from the
sequele of scarlatina, but, nevertheless, had studied law and
begun practice. During the summer of 1851 he visited me on my
circuit (Rockville) and accompanied me to St. James Camp-
meeting. He was deeply affected on hearing me preach, and
approached the "mourner’s bench." No "conversion" occurred, and

7. When this entry was written no word had reached me of the vain efforts of abolitionists to get from Kossuth an expression of
sympathy with their cause. The “independence” pleaded for by Kossuth had no more to do with personal freedom than this had to
do with the “independence” fought for in 1776 by American slaveholders, who forced Jefferson to strike out of the Declaration its
antislavery section.
he returned home (Falmouth) in a sad mood. Then there arose in him the abhorrence of dogmas and the ideal of a church of pure reason, absolutely creedless and unecclesiastical, uniting all mankind. Alas, little did he know that his brother, even myself, was at that moment in mortal inward struggle with a creed! But this I learned only after his death. For at that critical moment he died of typhoid fever, — March 18, 1852, fourteen days after his twenty-second birthday. There was bequeathed to my later years the miserable reflection that possibly he might have survived the attack but for the lowering of his strength by agitation under my preaching at the camp-meeting.

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

2 1/2 Pm to Cliffs & Heywood’s Brook.

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

Using Grays names—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Ap.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symplocarpus Foetidus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alnus Incana</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Serrulata</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acer Rubrum</td>
<td>9th one by Red Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow earliest</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulmus Americana</td>
<td>15 one – Cheney’s (others 10 days or 14 later)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus Tremuloides</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corylus Americana</td>
<td>16 perhaps before the last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carex Pennsylvanica</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caltha Palustris</td>
<td>25 many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stellaria Media</td>
<td>26 Cheney’s garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capsella Bursa Pastoris</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taraxacum Dens-leonis</td>
<td>25 one in water (seen by another the 20th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equisetum Arvense</td>
<td>25 in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnaphalium Purpureum</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxifraga Virginiiensis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antennaria Plantaginifolia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranunculus Fascicularis</td>
<td>28 only 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All but the 3d 8th 11th 12th observed in the very best season. & these within a day (?) of their flowering. I observe that the first six are decidedly water or water-loving plants & the 10, 13th, & 14th were found in the water — & are equally if not more confined to that element. — — — The 7th & 8th belong to the cooler zones of the earth — the 7th ac. to Emerson as far N as 64° — & comes up (is it this?) on burnt lands first & will grow in dry cool dreary places. — — — The 9th on a dry warm rocky hill-side the earliest(?) grass to blossom also the 18th—the 11th & 12 in cold damp gardens — like the earth first made dry land. — — — the 15th & 17 on dry (scantily clad with grass) fields & hills — hardy— — the 16th sunny bare rocks — in seams on moss where also in a day or two the columbine will bloom. The 18th is also indebted to the warmth of the rocks— This may perhaps be nearly the order of the world’s creation— Thus we have in the spring of the year the spring of the world represented— Such were the first localities afforded for plants —Water-bottoms — bare rocks — & scantily clad lands — & land recently bared of water. The spotted tortoise is spotted on shell head —tail —& legs. Fresh leaves of a Neottia pale & not distinctly veined.
Red solomon seal berries on their short stems prostrate on the dead leaves, some of them plump still. One man has turned his cows out to pasture. Have not seen the Slate col. snowbird [Dark-eyed Junco Junco hyemalis] for a few days. I am getting my greatcoat off, but it is a cold & wintry day – with snow clouds appearing to draw water, but cold water surely or out of the north side of the well. A few flakes in the air – drawing snow as well as water. From fair Haven the landscape all in shadow apparently to the base of the mts – but the Peterboro hills are in sun shine and unexpectedly are white with snow (no snow here unless in some hollows in the woods) reflecting the sun – more obvious for the sun shine– I never saw them appear so near. It is startling thus to look into winter.

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

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

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

That small flat downy gnaphalium in sandy paths – is it the fragrant life-everlasting. The Andromeda requires the sun– It is now merely a dull reddish brown – with light (greyish?) from the upper surface of the leaves. Frogspawn a mass of transparant jelly bigger than the two fists composed of contiguous globules or eyes with each a little squirming pollywog? in the centre 1/3 inch long. Walden is yellowish (apparently) next the shore where you see the sand – then green in still shallow water – then or generally deep blue. This as well under the R.R. and now that the trees have not leaved out – as under pines.

That last long storm brought down a coarse elephantine sand foliage in the Cut. Slumbrous ornaments for a cave or subterranean temple, such as at Elephantium? I see no willow leaves yet– A maple by Heywood’s meadow has opened its sterile blossoms – why is this (and maples generally) so much later than the Red Bridge one?

A week or more ago I made this list of early willows in Mass according to Gray putting Emerson in brackets–

Salix tristis. Sage Willow

S. humilis (Low Bush Willow) S. Muhlenbergiensis. S Conifera.
S. eriocephala (Silky Headed Willow) S. Prinoides?
S. crassa. “closely resembles the last” i.e. S. discolor [Wolly Headed Swamp]
S. sericea (Silky-leaved Willow) S. Grisea. [Brittle-Gray]
April 29th: Observed a fire yesterday on the RR – Emerson’s Island that was. The leaves are dry enough to burn; and I see a smoke this afternoon in the W. horizon—There is a slight haziness on the woods—as I go to May Flower Road at 2½ Pm—which advances me further into summer. Is that the Arrowhead so forward with its buds in the Nut meadow ditch? The ground is dry. I smell the dryness of the woods—their shadows look more inviting, & I am reminded of the hum of bees. The pines have an appearance which they have not worn before yet not easy to describe.

The mottled light (sunlight) & shade seen looking into the woods is more like summer. But the Season is most forward at the 2nd Div. Brook where the Cowslip is in blossom & nothing yet planted at home these bright yellow suns of the meadow in rich clusters their flowers contrasting with the green leaves—from amidst the all-producing dark-bottomed water. A flower-fire bursting up as if through crevices in the meadow. They are very rich seen in the meadow where they grow—and the most conspicuous flower at present, but held in the hand they are rather coarse—But their yellow & green are really rich & in the meadow they are the most delicate objects. Their bright yellow is something incredible when first beheld. There is still considerable snow in the woods—where it has not melted since winter. Here is a small reddish topped rush (is it the Juncus effusus common or soft rush?) now a foot high in the meadow with the cowslips. It is the greatest growth of the grass form I have seen. The butterflies are now more numerous red and blue-black or dark velvety. The art of life—of a poets life is— not having any thing to do, to do something. People are going to see Kossuth—but the same man does not attract me & Geo. Loring. If he could come openly to Boston without the knowledge of Boston, it might be worth my while to go & see him.— The may-flower on the point of blossoming—I think I may say that it will blossom to-morrow. The blossoms of this plant are remarkably concealed beneath the leaves—perhaps for protection—it is singularly unpretending—not seeking to exhibit or display its simple beauty. It is the most delicate flower both to eye & to scent as yet—it’s weather worn leaves do not adorn it. If it had fresh spring leaves it would be more famous & sought after. Observed 2 thrushes arrived which I do not know. I discover a hawk over my head by his shadow on the ground. also small birds. The acorns among the leaves have been sprouted for a week past—the shells open and the blushing (red) meat exposed at the sprout end where the sprout is already turning toward the bowels of the earth—already thinking of the tempests which it is destined as an oak to withstand—if it escapes worm & squirrel—Pick these up & plant them if you would make a forest. Old Mr Francis Wheeler thinks the river has not risen so high as recently for 63 years; that was in June!! that it was then higher. Noah Wheeler—never saw it so high as lately. I think it doubtful if it was higher in 1817 F. Wheeler Jr saw dandelions in bloom the 20th of Ap. Garfield’s folks used them for greens. They grew in a springy place behind Brigham’s in the corner.

The fringilla Hiemalis still here though apparently not so numerous as before. The Populus Grandidentata in blossom the sterile (?) flowers though I cannot count at most more than 5 or 6 stamens. I observe the light green leaves of a Pyrola (?) standing high on the stem in the woods—with the last years fruit the “one-sided” or else the “Oval-leaved” I think. As I come home over the corner road the sun now getting low is reflected very bright & silvery from the water on the meadows—seen through the pines of Hubbards Grove. The causeway will be passable on foot to-morrow.

8. Thoreau would later use this in paragraph 84 of his early lecture “WHAT SHALL It PROFIT” as:

I might say that the art of life was, not having anything to do — to do something — no longer the slave of circumstances, to perform some free labor.
March: By this point the castle of the Smithsonian Institution had been completed and the Lower Main Hall was open to the public (one floor of the East Wing, comprising 8 rooms, had been carpeted in the most luxurious Brussels floral carpeting and was destined as living quarters for Secretary Joseph Henry and his family). William Francis Channing delivered a lecture on the topic of “The American fire-alarm telegraph.”
May 19, Tuesday: William Francis Channing and Moses G. Farmer obtained patent #17,355 for Improvements in Electro Magnetic Fire Alarm Telegraphs, a patent which they would soon sell to John N. Gamewell, whose company and successive companies still bearing the Gamewell name have manufactured nearly all the familiar “red boxes on the corner.” After the first system in Boston in 1852 would come Philadelphia in 1855, St. Louis in 1858, New Orleans and Baltimore in 1860, and New-York in 1869. In the first boxes a notched code wheel was turned by a hand crank on the front of the box. This crude arrangement would soon be superceded by a spring-driven clockwork type mechanism that would drive the code wheel when actuated by yanking down a lever.

Henry Thoreau surveyed a lot belonging to Daniel Shattuck near Peter Hutchinson’s field and Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

May 19, A. M.—Surveying D. Shattuck’s wood-lot beyond Peter’s.

See myriads of minute pollywogs, recently hatched, in the water of Moore’s Swamp on Bedford road. Digging again to find a stake in woods, came across a nest or colony of wood ants, yellowish or sand-color, a third of an inch long, with their white grubs, now squirming, still larger, and emitting that same pungent spicy odor, perhaps too pungent to be compared with lemon-peel. This is the second time I have found them in this way this spring (vide April 28th). Is not the pungent scent emitted by wasps quite similar?

I see the ferns all blackened on the hillside next the meadow, by the frost within a night or two. That ant scent is not at all sickening, but tonic, and reminds me of a bitter flavor like that of peach-meats.
During this year the 1st usage of surgical disinfectant was beginning to reduce the death rate from major surgery from 45% toward 15% (another source uses the date 1861 instead of 1865, and claims that the statistic is a reduction of mortality rate from 18% to 1.2% — and I have no idea how to resolve the discrepancy between these two very specific and definitive assertions).

9. This procedure was performed upon me at about the age of 12 (which would have been in about 1949) in a private residence in Wabash, Indiana — the big difference being that the black medical apparatus box utilized had been one that the practitioner had just plugged into a wall socket (to do so he needed to unplug a standing lamp). I was taken there by my mother but the procedure was not performed on her, only on me. The practitioner, whom I was informed was a doctor, handed me a naked wire to hold tightly in my hands and then rubbed my forehead with a ring on his finger, a ring to the underside of which, inside his palm, he had attached a wire. He instructed me to keep talking continuously, and rubbed the ring back and forth across my forehead. I remember how the ring bounced and vibrated against my skull.
The French army surgeon Jean-Antoine Villemin demonstrated by experiments upon animals that tuberculosis was a contagious infection (many medics remained incredulous because they knew that the disease tended to run in families, and understood from this that the disease was a disease of heredity).

The Tsarevitch Nicholas, presumptive heir to the throne of Russia, was receiving treatment for consumption in Nice. His mother visited him there on several occasions, and in 1865 the Tsar Alexander II came to receive his last words and to order the return of his body to Russia on board the frigate Alexander Nevsky.

— René and Jean Dubos: The White Plague

In England in this year there was a short-lived enthusiasm that an effusion of the root of the American pitcher plant could be used as a treatment for the smallpox. This, however, proved to be about as accurate as the old attempts at fortifying the blood by dressing the victim in red bedclothing, covering the sickbed with red-died blankets, and putting red-died curtains in the windows. Meanwhile, in France, drawing on his experiences with the army, Doctor Jean-Antoine Villemin (1827-1892) was informing the Academy of Medicine that tuberculosis might be a transmissible disease resembling the smallpox rather than a hereditary disorder or a form of cancer. Louis Pasteur was at this point publishing his “germ theory” of disease. In the New World, the city of Seattle, named after Headman Seattle (See-Ath of the Susquamish), was simultaneously making it illegal for persons of native ancestry to reside within its limits. Would this have been related in any way to the development of germ theory in France, or is it merely a coincidence that these developments were occurring in the same Year of Our Lord?

WHAT I’M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF
By this point about half the students at Yearly Meeting School in Providence, Rhode Island were not from Quaker families, with about one out of every five of the students who were Quakers coming to the school from outside New England. The board and tuition rate that was being charged of members of the New England Yearly Meeting was $100, while Quakers from outside New England were being charged $190, scholars only one of whose parents was a Quaker were being charged $190, and non-Quakers were being charged $300.

The School Committee having received $28,000.50 for land sold to the city of Providence for widening Hope Street and opening Lloyd Avenue from Hope Street to Arlington Avenue, and having sold other plots of land as well either to the city or to private parties, in this year a consent decree was sought, validating these transactions. The Rhode Island Supreme Court of course kindly obliged (such a consent degree did not, of course, free the school to do whatever it wanted with the moneys it had received).

This is what Providence looked like in this year:

Providence Gas installed gas pipes into the buildings of the Butler Hospital for the Insane. After 29 consecutive years of financial deficits the hospital was able to post its first “surplus,” amounting to $742.

During the late 1870s, the inmate population at the Dexter Asylum across the street from the Moses Brown School had stabilized at around 100, where it would remain until the asylum’s closing. Living conditions, as depicted in early lists of rules and punishments, work records, and daily menus, were hardly desirable by present standards. Visitors were permitted only once every three weeks, male and female inmates were kept carefully segregated, the evening meal consisted merely of white bread and tea, and those found guilty of drinking, “immoral conduct,” “loud talking or disrespectful behavior,” or malingering to avoid work were subject to “confinement in bridewell [a jail cell] for a time not exceeding three days, and of being kept on short
allowance of food.”

The grassy enclosure of about 9 1/12 acres located west of Dexter Street near High Street, which had been for years in service as a militia training field, was by this point no longer being required for such purposes.

Eli Whitney Blake, Hazard Professor of Physics at Brown University, had been fascinated by the development of this new instrument of communication, the telephone, although he was not of the sort who would pursue financial benefit, and had been conveying this enthusiasm to his students, many of whom had constructed their own receiver devices. Dr. William Francis Channing had also been attracted into this project. Although Alexander Graham Bell had on February 14, 1876 submitted a crude working model to the US Patent Office and had secured a patent, his receiver device, which had been on exhibit at the Centennial Exhibition that summer, had turned out to unwieldy due to its weighing ten pounds. In late winter, or in the early spring of this year, at Professor Blake’s lodgings in the house of Rowland Hazard, 45 Williams Street in Providence, Rhode Island, there was a demonstration of the telephone:

The wire was strung between the reception room, just within the front door, and the study at the other end of the long hall, with a telephone at either end. Ely happened to be listening at the receiver in the study, where Prof. Blake was completing his preparation, when he heard a familiar voice at the other end of the wire and said “My father has just come in, I hear his voice; were you expecting him?” Prof. Blake was dumbfounded and elated, for not even in their wildest flights of fancy had the scientists dreamed of the possibility of recognizing individual voices.
Professor Blake and his students reduced the problem of the unwieldiness of the device by replacing the horseshoe magnet with a bar magnet, and found that in so doing they not only rendered the device more handy, but also improved the clarity of the communication. Their redesign was termed a “butterstamp” because it resembled a kitchen tool that embosses a design into a block of butter. You held the butterstamp-shaped receiver against your ear while pointing the butterstamp-shaped transmitter directly at your mouth.

May: One morning the Providence, Rhode Island newspaper was noticed to feature a description of the telephone transmitter/receiver apparatus used by Alexander Graham Bell, with an illustration — and this produced great agitation in a science classroom at Brown University:

Prof. Blake came into the lecture-room in a state of great excitement, a copy of the paper in his hand and addressed the class substantially as follows: “Gentlemen, you have seen the announcement of Professor Bell’s telephone in this morning’s paper. You are all familiar with the instrument; some of you have yourselves made them. I want to tell you that some time ago Prof. Bell came down from Boston to compare notes with Prof. Peirce, Dr. Channing and myself. He told us that he had mastered the principle of the telephone but had been unable to devise a receiver which was not too cumbersome for use. We showed him our receiver with which you are all familiar. I ask you to compare that with Prof. Bell’s as pictured in the paper today.”

THE SCIENCE OF 1877
March 27, Saturday: William Francis Channing addressed a Select Committee of the US House of Representatives in regard to his proposal for an Inter-Oceanic Ship Railway that would convey seagoing vessels up and over the mountains of the isthmus between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Why bother digging some big old dumb canal? Why do things a hard way when there’s an easier way?

He presented exhibits.
The Reverend Edward Everett Hale reprocessed his account of an 1845 clamber up mount Katahdin with college chum William Francis Channing, for the pages of Appalachia magazine.

March 21, Thursday: The New York Times carried an obituary for William Francis Channing, who had on March 19th died of pneumonia at the Perry Hospital in Boston:

Dr. William F. Channing.

BOston, March 20.—Dr. William Francis Channing, noted scientist and son of the philosopher, Dr. William Ellery Channing, and cousin of the late Rev. William Henry Channing, once Chaplain of the United States Senate, died at the Perry Hospital today. He was taken with pneumonia on Washington's Birthday, which was also the eighty-first anniversary of his own birth, and though the symptoms were favorable to his recovery, his advanced age stood in the way, and he was unable to rally from the weakening effects of the disease.

Dr. Channing was born in Boston and was graduated from Harvard in 1839, being a classmate of Dr. Edward Everett Hale. He later took a course in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, receiving his diploma in 1844, but never practicing his profession. Even while pursuing his studies he was engaged in active work of other sorts, for he assisted in the first geological survey of New Hampshire, in 1841-2, and for two years following was associated with Dr. Henry L. Bowditch in the editorship of The Latimer Journal of Boston.

With Prof. Moses G. Farmer Dr. Channing worked for the ten years following 1841 in developing a fire-alarm telegraph and the apparatus, patented in 1857, is still in very general use. Nine years later he patented a railroad for transporting ships overland, and in 1877 invented a telephone, which was bought by the Bell Company. He was a frequent contributor to scientific journals on electrical subjects and wrote the first books on electricity as applied to medicine. Dr. Channing moved to Pasadena, Cal., sixteen years ago for the benefit of his wife's health. She died there and he returned to Boston six months ago.

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY
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“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: December 27, 2014
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.
Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology—but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.