

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

“WHO NOBLE IS, MAY LAUGH TO SCORN,

THE MAN WHO IS BUT NOBLY BORN.”



This is a couplet [Henry Thoreau](#) copied out of a magazine he had read in college. It is a reference to the natural nobility of [Chaucer](#) the commoner. Looking at the original in the magazine, it has been noticed that Thoreau altered “may hold in scorn” to “may laugh to scorn” – evidently in an attempt to emphasize the point that were one truly noble, one would not be going around holding others in scorn, but rather would be understanding toward the self-doubts and needs which underlay their pretensions. -Or am I reading too much into this improvement? (Were I to myself attempt such an improvement, I would make the couplet read “Who noble is, may nobly scorn, / The man who is but nobly born.” However, since I have no credentials as a poet, what I myself would favor might not even be achieving poetic scansion.)



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

WALDEN: I was studying ornithology, and sought only new or rare birds. But I confess that I am now inclined to think that there is a finer way of studying ornithology than this. It requires so much closer attention to the habits of the birds, that, if for that reason only, I have been willing to omit the gun. Yet notwithstanding the objection on the score of humanity, I am compelled to doubt if equally valuable sports are ever substituted for these; and when some of my friends have asked me anxiously about their boys, whether they should let them hunt, I have answered, yes, -remembering that it was one of the best parts of my education, - make them hunters, though sportsmen only at first, if possible, mighty hunters at last, so that they shall not find game large enough for them in this or any vegetable wilderness, -hunters as well as fishers of men. Thus far I am of the opinion of Chaucer's nun, who

“yave not of the text a pulled hen
That saith that hunters ben not holy men.”

There is a period in the history of the individual, as of the race, when the hunters are the “best men,” as the Algonquins called them. We cannot but pity the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane, while his education has been sadly neglected. This was my answer with respect to those youths who were bent on this pursuit, trusting that they would soon outgrow it. No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child. I warn you, mothers, that my sympathies do not always make the usual *phil-anthropic* distinctions.

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WALDEN: The present was my next experiment of this kind which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

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CHANTICLEER



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A WEEK: There is no wisdom that can take place of humanity, and we find **that** in Chaucer. We can expand at last in his breadth, and we think that we could have been that man's acquaintance. He was worthy to be a citizen of England, while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and in Asia, and Bruce in Scotland, and Wickliffe, and Gower, and Edward the Third, and John of Gaunt, and the Black Prince, were his own countrymen as well as contemporaries; all stout and stirring names. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and the name of Dante still possessed the influence of a living presence. On the whole, Chaucer impresses us as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among early English poets he is the landlord and host, and has the authority of such. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is to be taken into the account in estimating his character and influence. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak of him with more love and reverence than any modern author of his predecessors of the last century. The same childlike relation is without a parallel now. For the most part we read him without criticism, for he does not plead his own cause, but speaks for his readers, and has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He confides in the reader, and speaks privily with him, keeping nothing back. And in return the reader has great confidence in him, that he tells no lies, and reads his story with indulgence, as if it were the circumlocution of a child, but often discovers afterwards that he has spoken with more directness and economy of words than a sage. He is never heartless,

"For first the thing is thought within the hart,
Er any word out from the mouth astart."

PEOPLE OF
A WEEK

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

DANTE

GOWER

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



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1342

During this year or the next [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) was born, we suppose in London, the son of John Chaucer, a wealthy London wine importer. What we know about him we obtain primarily through the records of his employers, King Edward III, King Richard II, and King Henry IV. He may have attended the Latin grammar school at Saint Paul's Cathedral, and it is possible that he studied for the law at the Inns of Court. By 1357 he was a page to the daughter-in-law of King Edward III, the countess of Ulster. In this position he most likely learned the use of arms and the ways of the court. Later, his access to royal courts may have provided him with an audience for oral readings of his written work. From 1359 to 1360 he served in the Hundred Years' War, during which time he was taken prisoner and ransomed. In 1366 he married Phillipa Roet, a lady-in-waiting to the queen and sister of John de Gaunt's third wife. His first published original work was an elegy to the first wife of John de Gaunt, entitled "The Book of the Duchess." Gaunt served as a patron for most of Chaucer's life. By 1367 he was employed by Edward III as an esquire, and he continued to serve in various government and diplomatic capacities until at least until 1391. Some of his positions included controller of customs for London, clerk of the king's works (responsible for the maintenance of parks, roads and royal buildings), justice of the peace, and representative to Parliament. He also translated philosophical, religious and political texts. Chaucer's visits to Italy as courtier and diplomat enabled him to encounter, and be influenced by, the works of Dante and Giovanni Boccaccio ("of bokes rede I ofte, as I you tolde"). "Troilus and Criseyde," published in about 1385, is one such adaptation of Boccaccio's writings. This text is a poem over 8,000 lines in length with such complex characterization as to cause it to have been characterized as the first modern novel. Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" is a collection of story poems amounting to more than 18,000 lines. The collection is unified by the umbrella story of a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. Each pilgrim tells stories to pass the time, and part of the genius of the work is the interaction amongst the different storytellers, and between the tales and the overall framework of the work. This work is also significant in that Chaucer was writing in Middle English rather than in French as current fashion decreed. In addition, many different positions from 14th-Century society are represented and effectively characterized in the tales, from Knight to Reeve to Plowman. The satire that Chaucer had employed against the abuses of the church was, however, retracted in his conclusion and in the ensuing "confession."

[Henry Thoreau](#) would extract from the following [Chaucer](#) materials:

- General Prologue
- The Man of Law's Tale
- The Nun's Priest's Tale
- The Prioress's Tale
- The Canon Yeoman's Tale
- The Clerk's Tale
- The Franklin's Tale
- The Knight's Tale
- The Manciple's Tale
- The Pardoner's Tale
- The Parson's Tale
- The Squire's Tale
- The Wife of Bath's Tale
- Chaucer's Dream (attributed to Chaucer)
- The Court of Love (attributed to Chaucer)



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- The Legend of Good Women
- The Parliament of Fowls
- The Romance of the Rose
- The Testament of Love
- A Treatise on the Astrolabe
- Troilus and Criseyde
- Balade de Bon Conseyle (“Truth”)
- The Cuckoo and the Nightingale (attributed to Chaucer)
- The House of Fame

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





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1357

[Geoffrey Chaucer](#) was in the service of the Countess of Ulster.





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1359

[Geoffrey Chaucer](#) was captured during the siege of Reims, but was ransomed by King Edward III.



CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



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1370

Geoffrey Chaucer was writing his 1st book, BOOK OF THE DUCHESS.

Do I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.



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1374

[Geoffrey Chaucer](#) began to serve as the London controller of customs, a position he would hold until the year 1386.

THE SCARLET LETTER: Meanwhile, there I was, a Surveyor of the Revenue and, so far as I have been able to understand, as good a Surveyor as need be. A man of thought, fancy, and sensibility (had he ten times the Surveyor's proportion of those qualities), may, at any time, be a man of affairs, if he will only choose to give himself the trouble. My fellow-officers, and the merchants and sea-captains with whom my official duties brought me into any manner of connection, viewed me in no other light, and probably knew me in no other character. None of them, I presume, had ever read a page of my inditing, or would have cared a fig the more for me if they had read them all; nor would it have mended the matter, in the least, had those same unprofitable pages been written with a pen like that of Burns or of Chaucer, each of whom was a Custom-House officer in his day, as well as I. It is a good lesson - though it may often be a hard one- for a man who has dreamed of literary fame, and of making for himself a rank among the world's dignitaries by such means, to step aside out of the narrow circle in which his claims are recognized and to find how utterly devoid of significance, beyond that circle, is all that he achieves, and all he aims at. I know not that I especially needed the lesson, either in the way of warning or rebuke; but at any rate, I learned it thoroughly: nor, it gives me pleasure to reflect, did the truth, as it came home to my perception, ever cost me a pang, or require to be thrown off in a sigh. In the way of literary talk, it is true, the Naval Officer -an excellent fellow, who came into the office with me, and went out only a little later- would often engage me in a discussion about one or the other of his favourite topics, Napoleon or Shakespeare. The Collector's junior clerk, too a young gentleman who, it was whispered occasionally covered a sheet of Uncle Sam's letter paper with what (at the distance of a few yards) looked very much like poetry - used now and then to speak to me of books, as matters with which I might possibly be conversant. This was my all of lettered intercourse; and it was quite sufficient for my necessities.



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1378

When [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) was posted as a diplomat to Italy, [John Gower](#) was one of the persons to whom he granted power of attorney for his affairs in England.



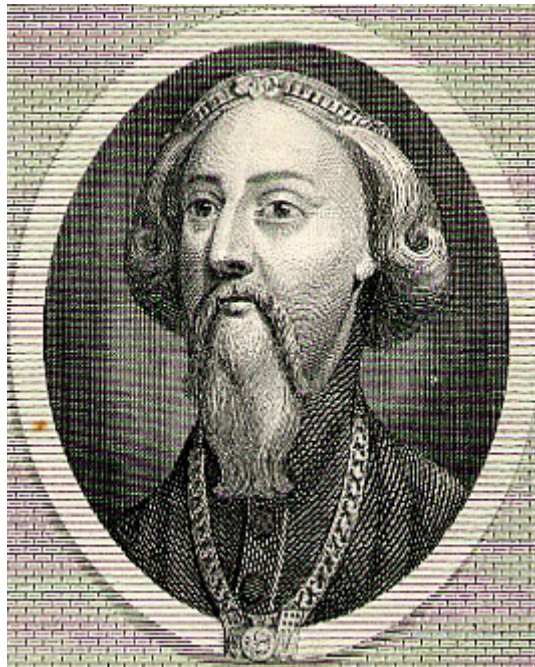
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1385

In about this timeframe, [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) dedicated his TROILUS AND CRISEYDE in part to “moral Gower.” Allegedly, in about this year King Richard II was aboard the royal barge on the Thames River, and chanced to meet [John Gower](#). He invited him aboard for conversation, the result being a commission to create his *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*.



THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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1386

Perhaps in this year, or by the year 1393, [John Gower](#)'s *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*.



This 30,000-line allegory in octosyllabic English couplets is constructed as a confession (a Christian confessing, to a priest, his series of offenses against Love), which provides the poet with the necessarily righteous frame within which he might get away with describing some rather interestingly nasty situations.

CONFESSIO AMANTIS

CONFESSIO AMANTIS

In its original edition this poem was dedicated to King Richard II. The poet's allegiance would switch later to the side of the future King Henry IV, with an equivalent switcheroo in the dedications to be noticed in later editions.

Toward the end of this work, a speech in praise of the author's personal friend [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) is placed in the mouth of Venus.



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1387

[Geoffrey Chaucer](#) began work on THE CANTERBURY TALES, in which a group of pilgrims engage in a storytelling contest while journeying to a shrine.

Gaston, Count de Foix wrote about mounted hunting in *LIVRE DE LA CHASSE*. Between 1406 and 1413 this would be translated into English for Edward, Duke of York under the title THE MASTER OF GAME. No mention is made of riding as it was assumed any nobleman knew how to do that. As for control, says Vladimir Littauer, “The number, variety, and extravagance of the means devised at the time to make a horse simply move forward make one wonder if the animal was indeed as stubborn and cold-blooded as the authors make him out to be, or if he was not so uncomfortably bitted that he moved in any direction with reluctance.”

**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.**



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1390

Geoffrey Chaucer wrote at the unfinished THE CANTERBURY TALES, from the preface of which Henry Thoreau would extract a pithy phrase (Volume II, lines 178-9), “He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen. / That seith that hunters beth nat hooly man,”

WALDEN: I was studying ornithology, and sought only new or rare birds. But I confess that I am now inclined to think that there is a finer way of studying ornithology than this. It requires so much closer attention to the habits of the birds, that, if for that reason only, I have been willing to omit the gun. Yet notwithstanding the objection on the score of humanity, I am compelled to doubt if equally valuable sports are ever substituted for these; and when some of my friends have asked me anxiously about their boys, whether they should let them hunt, I have answered, yes, -remembering that it was one of the best parts of my education, - make them hunters, though sportsmen only at first, if possible, mighty hunters at last, so that they shall not find game large enough for them in this or any vegetable wilderness, -hunters as well as fishers of men. Thus far I am of the opinion of Chaucer's nun, who

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and from “The Prioress's Tale” of which he would extract the pithy phrase “Mordre wol out”:



November 16, 1850: I hear deep amid the birches some row among the birds or the squirrels, where evidently some mystery is being developed to them. The jay [**Blue Jay** *Cyanocitta cristata*] is on the alert, mimicking every woodland note. What **has** happened? Who's dead? The twitter retreats before you, and you are never let into the secret. Some tragedy surely is being enacted, but murder will out. How many little dramas are enacted in the depth of the woods at which man is not present.



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WALDEN: From a hill-top you can see a fish leap in almost any part; for not a pickerel or shiner picks an insect from this smooth surface but it manifestly disturbs the equilibrium of the whole lake. It is wonderful with what elaborateness this simple fact is advertised, -this piscine murder will out,- and from my distant perch I distinguish the circling undulations when they are half a dozen rods in diameter.

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1399

December: [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) rented a house in the garden to the rear of Westminster Abbey in London.



During this year, or the next, in French, [John Gower](#)'s *CINKANTE BALADES*.



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1400

October 25, Monday (Old Style): [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) died. The body would be buried at Westminster Abbey, near where he had been living.



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1472 CE

In 1469 John and Wendelin of Spire, brothers from Rhenish, Bavaria, had been granted an exclusive 5-year privilege to establish themselves in Venice as printers. This city-state would be transforming itself into the printing center of Europe, with more than 50 printing establishments springing into existence there during the 1470s.

The 1st classical work to be printed in Europe was [Marcus Tullius Cicero](#)'s *DE OFFICIIS*, printed by this firm of Wendelin Da Spira in this year in Venice. Cicero had in 43 BCE addressed his work ON DUTY to his son Marcus, whom he had sent to Athens to study under the philosopher Cratippus. His fatherly theme had been

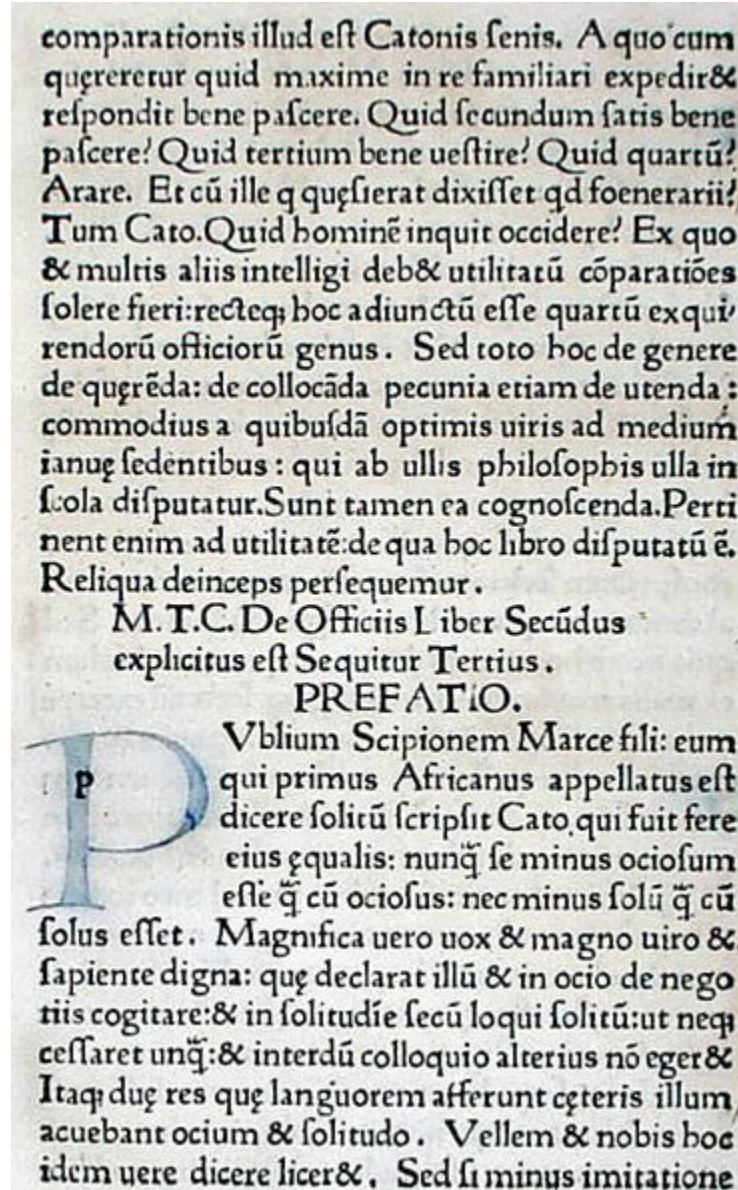
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the stoic one about “needing to be virtuous in order to be happy.”



Dante's *DIVINE COMEDY* was first printed at Foligno.

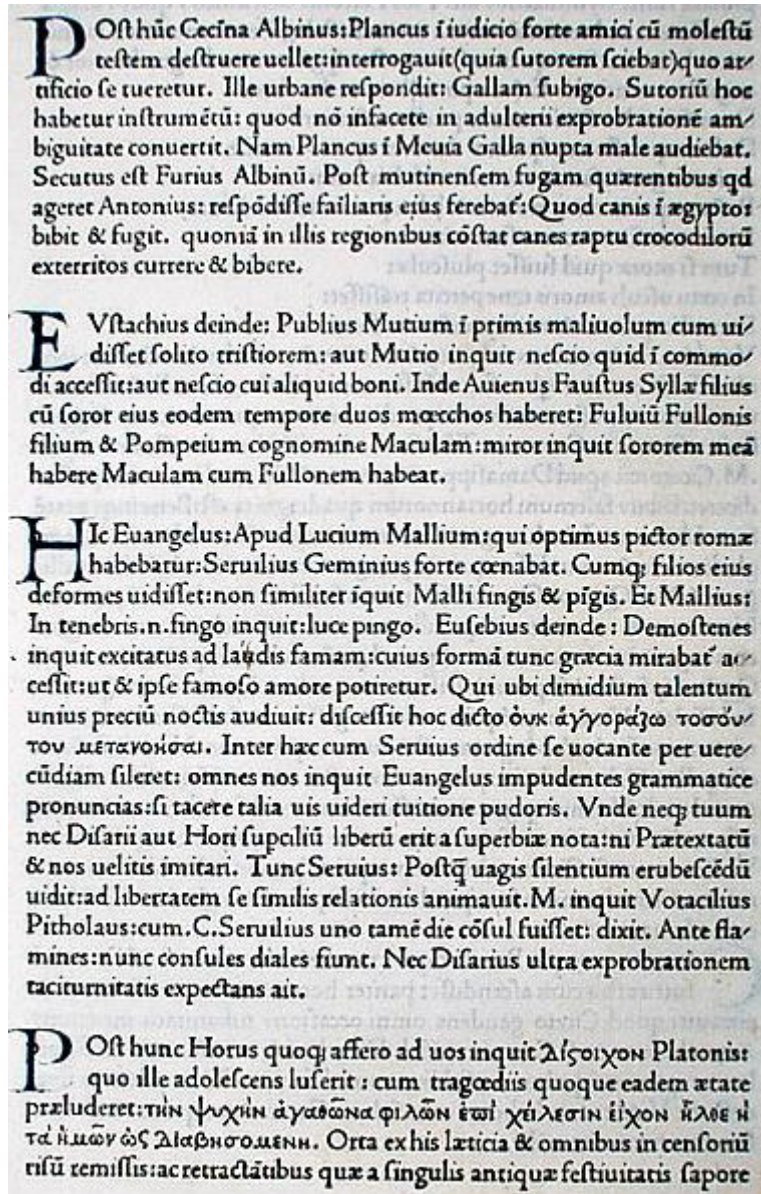
Printing in Venice: *DREAM OF SCIPIO*. *AMBROSINA THEODOSIUS MACROBIUS. SATURNALIA AND SOMNIUM SCIPONIS*. Printed by Nicolas Jenson. Macrobius, a grammarian of the 4th century A.D. wrote this curious collection of historical, mythological and critical disquisitions, to be believed during the holidays of the Saturnalia, at the home of Praetextus, a high official of the state. This collection is valuable for its quotations from other authors. His commentary on Cicero's *DREAM OF SCIPIO* (dealing with the doctrine of Pythagoras with respect to the harmony of these spheres), had been popular during the Middle Ages — [Geoffrey Chaucer](#)

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had been influenced by it. These Latin texts of Macrobius contain many illustrated phrases and quotations from Greek authors and for these Jenson used his recently designated greek type. These were first used the year previously in an edition of Cicero, Jenson's greek font was cut more evenly and was better supplied with accents than that of his rival, Wendelin de Spire. Proctor, writing about the Jenson greek type states, "for beauty of form it is not easily surpassed. Like all other types of Jenson, it was copied far and wide." Jenson wisely chose for his model the half uncial form of greek letters while Aldus unfortunately used the "perverted scribble" of the scholar.



Printing in Strassburg, Germany: Lyra's *POSTILLA SUPER PSALTERIUM*. John Mentelin, printer. Folio, double columns, rubricated initials. Mentelin's press was supposedly the 2d in Europe and the 1st in Strassburg.



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He apparently learned his craft under Gutenberg and was able to survive his master's bankruptcy.



Printing in Rome: Nicholas de Lyra, *POSTILLA SUPER PSALTERIUM*. Printed by Sweynheym and Pannartz in an evolving roman face. Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz left Mainz to establish their printing house in Italy, and have been credited with establishing the craft of printing in that country.

HISTORY OF
THE PRESS



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1477

Caxton printed [Geoffrey Chaucer](#)'s THE CANTERBURY TALES.



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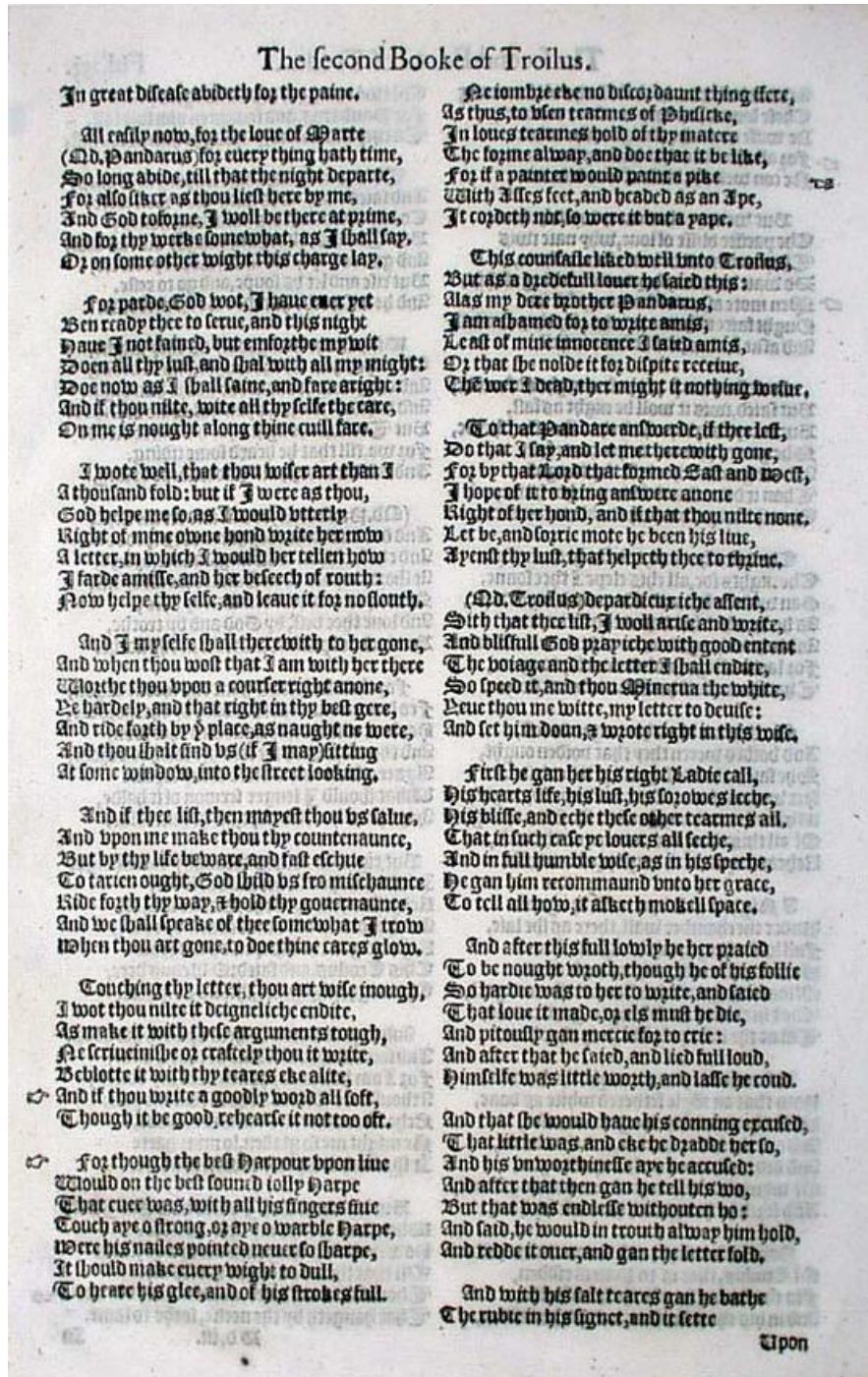
1602

An edition of the works of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) dating to this year (to give an idea of what such texts look like),
printed by Adam Islip in London:

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Islip printed in London from 1594 to 1603. He had issued his first edition of Chaucer's work in 1598, and had ventured many "reforms" and "improvements" in this new edition, "Sentence and proverbs noted ... obscure words prooued, the Latine and French not Englished by Chaucer, translated." (You should never expect an



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edition of Chaucer to contain the actual word usages of Chaucer, as such an edition would presumably now be unintelligible and inaccessible.)

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1700

May 1, Wednesday (Old Style) or May 12, Thursday (New Style): [John Dryden](#) died in London of inflammation caused by gout. The body would be placed next to that of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) at Westminster Abbey.



JOHN DRYDEN'S POEMS



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1767

John Quincy Adams was born, the 2nd of four children of Abigail Adams and John Adams. Despite the reputations these folks have acquired in historical imagination, it would be Abigail who would prove to be a stern and disapproving parent while John would prove to be the warmer, more loving parent. Alcoholism and related problems would ravage Abigail's brothers, and would later ravage her younger son. To ensure that John Quincy, her 1st-born son, would avoid this fate, she would throughout his life belabor him with a steady barrage of admonitions and criticisms. A biographer, Paul C. Nagel, would accuse Abigail of being "a calamity as a mother" who forced her own "ambitions and apprehensions upon her children."¹ Young John Quincy would temporarily escape his mother's tirades by spending much of his youth in Europe where his father was serving in different diplomatic posts. Europe came to represent to him not only intellectual freedom but also personal freedom from familial expectations and intrusions. However, the almanac which John Quincy kept during his early twenties would describe encounters with [prostitutes](#) or lower-class pickups in [Boston](#): "my taste" in erotics, he would explain to himself, "is naturally depraved." His fiancée Louisa Johnson, be it noted, was schooled in Nantes (where, according to a song, the ladies wear no panties). She wrote poetry and played the harp nicely enough, but those were only a couple of her proclivities. The dynamic duo would not limit themselves to reading [Chaucer](#), Spenser, Scott, and Maria Edgeworth aloud to one another, for the swain would draw his young lady's attention to the Reverend [John Donne](#)'s randy couplet in celebration of pubic hair: "Off with that wyerie Coronet and shew / The haiery Diademe which on you doth grow."

During the second Continental Congress, Abigail Adams entreated her husband John to "remember the ladies" in the new code of laws he was writing.

FEMINISM

1. Abigail Adams was a racist with a pronounced case of Negrophobia, who could not witness an American white man playing the role of *Othello*, in the [Shakespeare](#) play, wearing dark body makeup, without reporting that her "whole soul shuddered" as she witnessed "the sooty heretic Moor touch the fair Desdemona." I don't think that anyone has to date bothered to evaluate the impact this sort of mindset must have had on her children. (No black American would portray this character until Paul Robeson was cast for the role in 1942, and even then no theater on Broadway in New York City could be found that would book such a production.)



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1804



The 2d edition of [William Godwin](#)'s LIFE OF [GEOFFREY CHAUCER](#), THE EARLY ENGLISH POET: INCLUDING MEMOIRS OF HIS NEAR FRIEND AND KINSMAN, JOHN OF GAUNT, DUKE OF LANCASTER; WITH SKETCHES OF THE MANNERS, OPINIONS, ARTS AND LITERATURE OF ENGLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY... (London: Printed by T. Davidson, for R. Phillips; the 1st edition of this had been published in 1803). [David Henry Thoreau](#) would check the first two volumes out of the Harvard Library on May 5, 1835 and make notes in his college miscellaneous notebooks now stored at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia.

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 1

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 2

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 3

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 4



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1810



Alexander Chalmers's THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM CHAUCER TO COWPER; INCLUDING THE SERIES EDITED WITH PREFACES, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON; AND THE MOST APPROVED TRANSLATIONS, a revised and expanded version of Dr. Johnson's 1779-1781 LIVES OF THE POETS, began to come across the London presses of C. Wittingham. It would amount to 21 volumes and the printing would require until 1814 to be complete. According to the Preface, this massive thingie was "a work professing to be a Body of the Standard English Poets"².

2. When the massive collection would come finally to be reviewed in July 1814, the reviewer would, on the basis of Chalmers's selection of poems and poets, broadly denounce this editor as incompetent.



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PERUSE VOLUME I

PERUSE VOLUME III

PERUSE VOLUME IV

PERUSE VOLUME V

PERUSE VOLUME VI

PERUSE VOLUME VII

PERUSE VOLUME VIII

PERUSE VOLUME IX

PERUSE VOLUME X

PERUSE VOLUME XI

PERUSE VOLUME XII

PERUSE VOLUME XIII

PERUSE VOLUME XIV

PERUSE VOLUME XV

PERUSE VOLUME XVI

PERUSE VOLUME XVII

PERUSE VOLUME XVIII

PERUSE VOLUME XIX

PERUSE VOLUME XX

PERUSE VOLUME XXI



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GEORGE CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

WALDEN: Breed's hut was standing only a dozen years ago, though it had long been unoccupied. It was about the size of mine. It was set on fire by mischievous boys, one Election night, if I do not mistake. I lived on the edge of the village then, and had just lost myself over Davenant's Gondibert, that winter that I labored with a lethargy, -which, by the way, I never knew whether to regard as a family complaint, having an uncle who goes to sleep shaving himself, and is obliged to sprout potatoes in a cellar Sundays, in order to keep awake and keep the Sabbath, or as the consequence of my attempt to read Chalmers' collection of English poetry without skipping. It fairly overcame my Nervii. I had just sunk my head on this when the bells rung fire, and in hot haste the engines rolled that way, led by a straggling troop of men and boys, and I among the foremost, for I had leaped the brook. We thought it was far south over the woods, -we who had run to fires before, - barn, shop, or dwelling-house, or all together. "It's Baker's barn," cried one. "It is the Codman Place," affirmed another. And then fresh sparks went up above the wood, as if the roof fell in, and we all shouted "Concord to the rescue!" Wagons shot past with furious speed and crushing loads, bearing, perchance, among the rest, the agent of the Insurance Company, who was bound to go however far; and ever and anon the engine bell tinkled behind, more slow and sure, and rearmost of all, as it was afterward whispered, came they who set the fire and gave the alarm. Thus we kept on like true idealists, rejecting the evidence of our senses, until at a turn in the road we heard crackling and actually felt the heat of the fire from over the wall, and realized, alas! that we were there. The very nearness of the fire but cooled our ardor. At first we thought to throw a frog-pond on to it; but concluded to let it burn, it was so far gone and so worthless. So we stood round our engine, jostled one another, expressed our sentiments through speaking trumpets, or in lower tone referred to the great conflagrations which the world has witness, including Bascom's shop, and, between ourselves we thought that, were we there in season with our "tub", and a full frog-pond by, we could turn that threatened last and universal one into another flood. We finally retreated without doing any mischief, -returned to sleep and Gondibert. But as for Gondibert, I would except that passage in the preface about wit being the soul's powder, -"but most of mankind are strangers to wit, as Indians are to powder."



FIRE

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

INSURANCE

NARCOLEPSY

ALEXANDER CHALMERS

BASCOM & COLE



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

THE ENGLISH POETS:

[Joseph Addison](#), Akenside; Armstrong; Beattie; [Francis Beaumont](#); Sir J. Beaumont; Blacklock; Blackmore; [Robert Blair](#); Boyse; Brome; Brooke; Broome; Sir [Thomas Browne](#); [Charles Butler](#); [George Gordon, Lord Byron](#); Cambridge; [Thomas Carew](#); Cartwright; Cawthorne; Chatterton; [Geoffrey Chaucer](#); Churchill; [William Collins](#); [William Congreve](#); Cooper; Corbett; [Charles Cotton](#); Dr. Cotton; [Abraham Cowley](#); [William Cowper](#); Crashaw; Cunningham; [Daniel](#); [William Davenant](#); Davies; [Sir John Denham](#); Dodsley; [John Donne](#); Dorset; [Michael Drayton](#); Sir [William Drummond](#); [John Dryden](#); Duke; Dyer; Falconer; Fawkes; Fenton; [Giles Fletcher](#); [John Fletcher](#); Garth; [Gascoigne](#); Gay; Glover; Goldsmith; [Gower](#); Grainger; [Thomas Gray](#); Green; [William Habington](#); Halifax; [William Hall](#); Hammond; Harte; Hughes; Jago; Jenyns; Dr. [Samuel Johnson](#); Jones; [Ben Jonson](#); King; Langhorne; Lansdowne; Lloyd; Logan; Lovibond; Lyttelton; Mallett; Mason; William Julias Mickle; [John Milton](#); [Thomas Moore](#); Otway; Parnell; A. Phillips; J. Phillips; Pitt; Pomfret; [Alexander Pope](#); Prior; Rochester; Roscommon; Rowe; Savage; Sir [Walter Scott](#); [William Shakespeare](#); Sheffield; Shenstone; Sherburne; [Skelton](#); Smart; Smith; Somerville; [Edmund Spenser](#); Sprat; Stepney; Stirling; Suckling; Surrey; [Jonathan Swift](#); [James Thomson](#); W. Thomson; Tickell; [Turberville](#); Waller; Walsh; Warner; J. Warton; T. Warton; Watts; West; P. Whitehead; W. Whitehead; Wilkie; Wyatt; Yalden; [Arthur Young](#).

TRANSLATIONS:

[Alexander Pope](#)'s Iliad & Odyssey; [John Dryden](#)'s Virgil & [Juvenal](#); Pitt's Aeneid & Vida; Francis' Horace; Rowe's Lucan; Grainger's [Albius Tibullus](#); Fawkes' Theocritus, Apollonius Rhodius, Coluthus, [Anacreon](#), Sappho, Bion and Moschus, Museus; Garth's Ovid; Lewis' Statius; Cooke's [Hesiod](#); Hoole's Ariosto & Tasso; William Julias Mickle's Lusiad.

COMMENTARY:

William Julias Mickle's "Inquiry into the Religion Tenets and Philosophy of the Bramins," which Thoreau encountered in 1841 in Volume 21 (pages 713-33).



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1830




THE CANTERBURY TALES OF [CHAUCER](#); WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION, AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, NOTES AND A GLOSSARY BY THO. TYRWHITT, ESQ....

THO. TYRWHITT, VOL. I

THO. TYRWHITT, VOL. II

THO. TYRWHITT, VOL. V

It would be probably from this W. Pickering of London edition that [Henry Thoreau](#) would copy in July 1839,  in preparing some references to [Geoffrey Chaucer's](#) Chanticleer that would wind up at the front of his [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#) manuscript. First, in describing the condition and substance of the "poure widewe":

A yerd she had enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drie diche without,
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,
In all the land of crowing n'as his pere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse daies that in the chirches gon,
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his loge,
Than is a klok, or any abbey orloge.
By nature he knew eche ascentioun
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun;
For what degrees fiftene were ascended,
Than crew he, that it might not ben amended.
His combe was redder than the fin corall,
Embattelld, as it were a castel wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like asure were his legges and his tone;
His nailes whiter than the lilie flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok had in his governance,
Seven hennes, for to don all his plesance,
Which were his susters and his paramoures,
And wonder like to him, as of coloures.
Of which the fairest hewed in the throte,
Was cleped faire damoselle Pertelote,
Curteis she was, discrete, and debonaire.
And compenable, and bare herself so faire,
Sithen the day that she was sevennight old,
That trewelich she hath the herte in hold
OF Chaunteclere, loken in every lith:
He loved hire so, that wel was him therwith.
But swiche a joye it was to here hem sing,
Whan that the brighte Sonne gan to spring,
In swete accord: "My lefe is fare in lond."



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

Then in describing what happened after Chanticleere “flew down fro the beme”:

This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowen loude for the nones;
And dan Russel the fox stert up at ones,
And by the garget hente Cha[u]nteclere,
And on his back toward the wood him bere.

And finally in regard to the ruckus that then ensued:

The sely widewe, and hire doughtren two,
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at the dores sterten they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wode is gon,
And bare upon his back the cok away:
They criden, out! “Harrow and wala wa!
A ha the fox!” and him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond.
And Malkin, with her distaf in hire hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogges
So fered were for berking of the dogges.
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought hir hertes broke.
They yellenden as fendes don in Helle:
The dokes crieden as men wold him quelle;
The gees for fere flewen over the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarm of bees, —

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

WALDEN: I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN



GEOFFREY CHAUCER

CHANTICLEER

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

WALDEN: The present was my next experiment of this kind which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

**PEOPLE OF
WALDEN**[GEOFFREY CHAUCER](#)[CHANTICLEER](#)



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1835



May 5, Tuesday: King Leopold of Belgium officiated at the opening of a railroad line from Brussels to Mechelen — the 1st public passenger railroad to be opened in Europe.

In [Greenwich](#), [Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

3rd day 5 of 5 M / My friend James Taylor was interred this Afternoon - I could not attend the funeral expecting to be called to go on Board the [Greenwich](#) Packet which we were about 4 OC & reached there before Dark -

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

[David Henry Thoreau](#) was studying the first two volumes of [Harvard Library](#)'s copy of the 2d edition of [William Godwin](#)'s LIFE OF [GEOFFREY CHAUCER](#), published in London in 1804.



GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 1

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 2

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 3

GODWIN'S CHAUCER, VOL. 4

He would make notes in the series of college notebooks now stored at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia.

Per the records of the "[Institute of 1770](#)":

Thoreau absent. Russell lectured on "Poetry." Debated: "Whether the spread of the Catholic religion endangers the freedom of our institutions." Debaters for the next discussion: Trull, Treat, Thoreau and Thomas. Lecturers: Thoreau and Treat.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEORGE CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN



September 3, Thursday: [David Henry Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), for the 2d time, the 1st volume of Charles Rollin (1661-1741)'s THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE [EGYPTIANS](#), CARTHAGINIANS, ASSYRIANS, BABYLONIANS, MEDES AND PERSIANS, MACEDONIANS, AND GRECIANS. INCLUDING A HISTORY OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES OF THE ANCIENTS. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH. THE 12TH EDITION, REVISED, CORRECTED, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH A SET OF MAPS NEWLY ENGRAVED (first printed 1730-1738; one of the first 17 English editions, possibly the one issued in London in 1813).



This time he also checked out the atlas to this set of volumes. Our guy would comment later of the catacombs full of preserved death, of our museums full of stuffed animals, and of such history textbooks stuffed full with irrelevant facts, that:



"I hate museums, there is nothing so weighs upon the spirits. They are catacombs of nature. They are preserved death. One green bud of Spring one willow catkin, one faint trill from some migrating sparrow, might set the world on its legs again.

I know not whether I muse most at the bodies stuffed with cotton and sawdust – or those stuffed with bowels and fleshy fibre.

The life that is in a single green weed is of more worth than all this death. They are very much like the written history of the world – and I read Rollin and Ferguson with the same feeling."

–JOURNAL; September 24, 1843



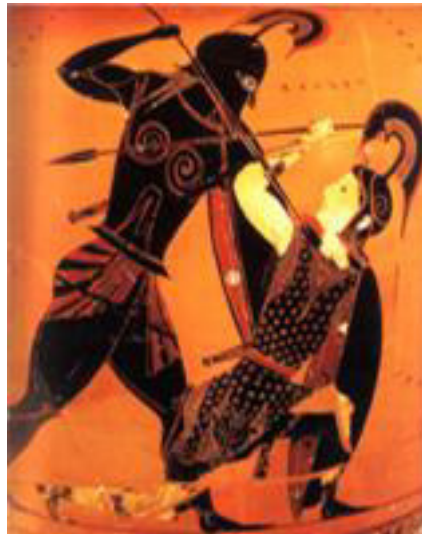


PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

[Thoreau](#) also checked out the 1st volume of the Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) translation of [Homer](#)'s *HOMERI ILLAS CUM BREVI ANNOTATIONE CURANTE C.G. HEYNE*. Lipsiae: in Libraria Weidmannia, 1804)



[Thoreau](#) also checked out volumes 1, 2, and 5 of the five volumes of THE CANTERBURY TALES OF [CHAUCER](#); WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION, AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, NOTES AND A GLOSSARY BY THO. TYRWHITT, ESQ.... (London: W. Pickering, 1830).³

CANTERBURY TALES, I

CANTERBURY TALES, II

CANTERBURY TALES, V



"There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away"
— Emily Dickinson

3. The record of the books Thoreau checked out from the Harvard Library during his Sophomore (1834-1835) and Junior (1835-1836) school years is of particular interest to us, because Charging Book "D" of the "[Institute of 1770](#)"—the book which contained the record of Thoreau's borrowings from that student club's library—is missing. This record may yet turn up — but its present absence is a serious hole in Thoreau scholarship.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

In [Newport, Rhode Island](#), Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

5th day 9th M 3rd 1835 / Owing to the alteration of the time of Holding the Meeting not being given out last first day, Vizt from 1 / 2 Past 10 to 11 OClock the gathering was scattered, as it is apt to be at every change which takes place. – it was However a pretty solid good Meeting - Several from other places were in attendance & Hannah Dennis spoke. –In the Afternoon I called on my Cousins Henry & Thos Gould at their respective Mills. –

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1837



January 9, Monday: [David Henry Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), the 3d volume of the 21-volume set edited by [Alexander Chalmers](#), THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM CHAUCER TO COWPER; INCLUDING THE SERIES EDITED WITH PREFACES, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON: AND THE MOST APPROVED TRANSLATIONS. THE ADDITIONAL LIVES BY ALEXANDER CHALMERS IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES (London, 1810).

PERUSE VOLUME III

[Thoreau](#) would extract from this volume [Samuel Daniel](#)'s *Philotas*, *Philocosmus*, and *Musophilus* into his literary notebook, and from there the material would be making its way into [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND](#)

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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MERRIMACK RIVERS, in the “Sunday” and “Monday” chapters.



Samuel Daniel

SAMUEL DANIEL

He also extracted from “To the Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland” into his literary notebook, and from there into A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS, and into “A Plea for Captain John Brown.”⁴

SAMUEL DANIEL

4. He also extracted from “Ulysses and the Syren,” “History of the Civil Wars,” “To Lucy Countess of Bedford,” “To the Lady Anne Clifford,” “To Henry Wrothesly, Early of Southampton,” and “Hymen’s Triumph to the Queen” into his literary notebook.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

“A PLEA FOR CAPTAIN JOHN BROWN”: One writer says that Brown’s peculiar monomania made him to be “dreaded by the Missourians as a supernatural being.” Sure enough, a hero in the midst of us cowards is always so dreaded. He is just that thing. He shows himself superior to nature. He has a spark of divinity in him.

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

A WEEK: Men do not fail commonly for want of knowledge, but for want of prudence to give wisdom the preference. What we need to know in any case is very simple. It is but too easy to establish another durable and harmonious routine. Immediately all parts of nature consent to it. Only make something to take the place of something, and men will behave as if it was the very thing they wanted. They **must** behave, at any rate, and will work up any material. There is always a present and extant life, be it better or worse, which all combine to uphold. We should be slow to mend, my friends, as slow to require mending, “Not hurling, according to the oracle, a transcendent foot towards piety.” The language of excitement is at best picturesque merely. You must be calm before you can utter oracles. What was the excitement of the Delphic priestess compared with the calm wisdom of Socrates? – or whoever it was that was wise. – Enthusiasm is a supernatural serenity.

“Men find that action is another thing
Than what they in discoursing papers read;
The world’s affairs require in managing
More arts than those wherein you clerks proceed.”

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

A WEEK: Though we know well, "That 't is not in the power of kings [or presidents] to raise A spirit for verse that is not born thereto, Nor are they born in every prince's days"; yet spite of all they sang in praise of their "Eliza's reign," we have evidence that poets may be born and sing in **our** day, in the presidency of James K. Polk,

"And that the utmost powers of English rhyme,"
Were not "within her peaceful reign confined."

The prophecy of the poet Daniel is already how much more than fulfilled!

"And who in time knows whither we may vent
The treasure of our tongue? To what strange shores
This gain of our best glory shall be sent,
T' enrich unknowing nations with our stores?
What worlds in th' yet unformed occident,
May come refined with the accents that are ours."

Enough has been said in these days of the charm of fluent writing. We hear it complained of some works of genius, that they have fine thoughts, but are irregular and have no flow. But even the mountain peaks in the horizon are, to the eye of science, parts of one range. We should consider that the flow of thought is more like a tidal wave than a prone river, and is the result of a celestial influence, not of any declivity in its channel. The river flows because it runs down hill, and flows the faster the faster it descends. The reader who expects to float down stream for the whole voyage, may well complain of nauseating swells and choppings of the sea when his frail shore-craft gets amidst the billows of the ocean stream, which flows as much to sun and moon as lesser streams to it. But if we would appreciate the flow that is in these books, we must expect to feel it rise from the page like an exhalation, and wash away our critical brains like burr millstones, flowing to higher levels above and behind ourselves. There is many a book which ripples on like a freshet, and flows as glibly as a mill-stream sucking under a causeway; and when their authors are in the full tide of their discourse, Pythagoras and Plato and Jamblichus halt beside them. Their long, stringy, slimy sentences are of that consistency that they naturally flow and run together. They read as if written for military men, for men of business, there is such a despatch in them. Compared with these, the grave thinkers and philosophers seem not to have got their swaddling-clothes off; they are slower than a Roman army in its march, the rear camping to-night where the van camped last night. The wise Jamblichus eddies and gleams like a watery slough.

"How many thousands never heard the name
Of Sidney, or of Spenser, or their books?
And yet brave fellows, and presume of fame,
And seem to bear down all the world with looks."

PEOPLE OF
A WEEK

PYTHAGORAS



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

PLATO

JAMBlichUS

[Thoreau](#) also checked out (a 2d time, as he had already checked out this book) the 2d edition of [Samuel Bailey](#)'s ESSAYS ON THE FORMATION AND PUBLICATION OF OPINIONS.

BAILEY'S OPINIONS



(This is indeed rare: on this new reading, scholars have discovered, as on the first pass in 1834, Thoreau took no notes. There is nothing in any of his published writings and there is nothing in any of his commonplace books to indicate that our guy had noted in this volume any thought whatever of any value to him. –Perhaps the fact that this philosophy baked none of his bread reveals something about him to us.)



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF



January 30, Monday: Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*2nd day went into Town & spent the day in attending to some
buisness & visiting some of my old acquaintance Dined at Dr
Tobey's & returned to the School House to lodge –*

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

[David Henry Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), Volume 5 of the New Series of [The Gentleman's Magazine](#), dealing with that magazine's 1836 content:⁵

THE GENTLEMAN'S MAG.

- [iii]-iv. S.: "Preface." the Reverend John Mitford [Originator: "Sylvanus Urban"]
- pages 2. S.: Note re Robert Montgomery Martin's History of the British Colonies. Thomas Fisher
- pages 2. L.: Remarks re the Abbé de la Rue. Thomas Wright [Originator: "Gaulois"]
- pages 2. L.: Genealogical note on Sacheverell family. Charles Edward Long [Originator: "I."]
- pages 3-10. Review: Thomas Frognall Dibdin's Reminiscences of a Literary Life. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 10-13. Article: "Diary of a Lover of Literature [by Thomas Green; abridged by Mitford (cont.).]" the Reverend John Mitford
- pages 14-15. Article: "Royal Porcelain Works, Worcester." Martin Barr [Originator: "B."]
- pages 15-16. Article: "St. Olave's Grammar School, Southwark." George Richard Corner [Originator: "G.R.C."]
- pages 16. Article: "Quaestiones Venusinae.—No. VII [conc.]." the Reverend James Tate [Originator: "The Author of Horatius Restitutus"]
- pages 17-27. Article: "Records of the Exchequer." John Bruce
- pages 32. L.: "Our Lord's Miracles on the Maimed." Dr. Samuel Merriman the Younger [Originator: "Ilanthropos" {in Greek}]
- pages 33-36. Article: "St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster." John Gough Nichols [Originator: "J.G.N."]
- pages 36-43. Article: "Scandinavia and the British Isles." Nicholas Carlisle
- pages 49-51. Review: James Davidson's The History of Axminster Church. John Gough Nichols
- pages 51-52. Review: William Caveller's Select Specimens of Gothic Architecture. Edward John Carlos

People of A Week and Walden

"Stack of the Artist of Kouroo"

5. We really have no idea why Thoreau checked this out, but I will note in passing that the volume does contain information pertaining to the town of Saffron Walden in England.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

- pages 52-53. Review: Samuel Tymms's The Family Topographer, vol. 5. Edward John Carlos
- pages 53-55. Review: Spiritual Despotism. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 55-57. Review: A. James Augustus St. John's [Egypt](#) and Mohammed Ali. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 57-58. Review: Harry Chester's The Lay of the Lady Ellen. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 58-59. Review: England and Russia; A Statement of Facts. By a Resident at Constantinople; Edward Stirling's Some Considerations on the Political State of the intermediate Country between Persia and [India](#). Thomas Fisher
- pages 59-60. Review: Annual Reports of the American Anti-Slavery Society; Anti-Slavery Record; Société Française pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage. Thomas Fisher
- pages 60. Review: The British and Foreign Temperance Advocate, vol. 2; The British and Foreign Temperance Herald, vol. 4. Thomas Fisher
- pages 60-64. Review: John Holland's Cruciana. Illustrations of the most striking aspects under which the Cross of Christ, and symbols derived from it, have been contemplated by Piety, Superstition, Imagination, and Taste. John Gough Nichols
- pages 64-67. Review: First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales. Thomas Fisher [Originator: "T.F."]
- pages 68. Review: E. Churton's Oriental Annual for 1836. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 68. Review: Mrs. Alaric Watts's The New Year's Gift and Juvenile Souvenir. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 69. Review: Jenning's Landscape Annual for 1836 (text by Thomas Roscoe and drawings by David Roberts). The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 69. Review: Smith and Elder's Friendship's Offering and Winter's Wreath for 1836. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 69. Review: William Darton's The New Year's Token for 1836. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 69-70. Review: P. Fisher [[William Andrew Chatto](#)]'s The Angler's Souvenir. The Reverend John Mitford

THE ANGLER'S SOUVENIR

- pages 70. Review: Frederick Shoberl's The Forget Me Not. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 70-71. Review: The Christian Keepsake, and Missionary Annual (ed. William Ellis). The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 71. Review: The Cabinet of Modern Art, and Literary Souvenir (ed. Alaric Alexander Watts). The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 71. Review: Fisher's Drawing-room Scrap-Book, 1836. With Poetical Illustrations by L.E.L. [Letitia Elizabeth Landon]. John Gough Nichols
- pages 71-72. Review: Flowers of Loveliness. John Gough Nichols
- pages 72. Review: Tilt's Comic Almanac for 1836. John Gough Nichols
- pages 72. Review: William Beattie's Scotland. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 72. Review: C.R. Bond's Truth's Triumph, a poem on the Reformation. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 72. Review: John Graham's A Vision of fair Spirits. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 77-78. S.: "Catalogue of the 11th Part of Mr. [Richard] Heber's Library (Manuscripts)." the Reverend John Mitford
- pages 80-82. S.: "Society of Antiquaries." John Gough Nichols
- pages 87-88. Obituary: Henry Charles Somerset, 6th Duke of Beaufort. John Gough Nichols
- pages 88-90. Obituary: Lord Robert Manners. John Gough Nichols
- pages 90-91. Obituary: Sir Thomas Elmsley Croft. Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEORGE CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

- pages 93-94. Obituary: The Reverend Luke Booker. The Reverend ——— Booker, son of the Reverend Luke Booker
- pages 94-98. Obituary: James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. W.B. Morgan
- pages 99. Obituary: Charles Perkins Gwilt. Joseph Gwilt
- pages 100. Obituary: Letitia Matilda Hawkins. ——— Hawkins, brother of deceased
- pages 106. S.: Remarks on the inscription “IHS.” John Gough Nichols
- pages 106. L.: Query re parish registers. John Southerden Burn [Originator: “J.S.B.”]
- pages 106. S.: Note on the unicorn emblem. Henry Gwyn
- pages 107-118. Article: Thomas Frognall Dibdin’s Reminiscences of a Literary Life (cont.). The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 121-125. Review: “State of the Church Missionaries in the East [India](#) [Josiah Pratt’s Sermon preached in the Chapel of Lambeth Palace... at the Consecration of the Right the Reverend Daniel Corrie, LL.D. Lord Bishop of Madras; Alexander Duff’s The Church of Scotland’s [India](#) Mission].” Thomas Fisher [Originator: “T.F.”]
- pages 129-132. Review: William Thomas Brande’s Characters of Philosophers. The Reverend John Mitford
- pages 132-135. L.: “On the Migration of Birds.” the Reverend John Mitford [Originator: “J.M.”]
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March: [David Henry Thoreau](#) studied [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), consulting the 1st volume of the 1818 [Alexander Chalmers](#) anthology.⁶

WALDEN: I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

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6. THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM [CHAUCER](#) TO [COWPER](#); INCLUDING THE SERIES EDITED WITH PREFACES, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY [DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON](#); AND THE MOST APPROVED TRANSLATIONS. THE ADDITIONAL LIVES BY [ALEXANDER CHALMERS](#) IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES. London, 1810.



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March 13, Monday: Having previously checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), the 3d volume of [Alexander Chalmers](#)'s 1810 anthology, THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM [CHAUCER](#) TO [COWPER](#),⁷ [David Henry Thoreau](#) on this date checked out the 1st volume.

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PARRY, AND KENNEDY; J. BUCKER; B. BAGSTER; J. HARDING; J. MACKENZIE; J. HATCHARD; R. E. EVANS;
MATTHEWS AND LEIGH; J. BAWMAN; J. BOOTH; J. AMSTER; P. AND W. WYMAN; AND W. GRACE. DORRINGTON
AND SON AT CAMBRIDGE, AND WILSON AND SON AT YORK.

1810.

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

During this month he would be studied [Geoffrey Chaucer](#).

WALDEN: I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

[GEOFFREY CHAUCER](#)[CHANTICLEER](#)

[Thoreau](#) supplemented his borrowings from the college library by checking out, from the library of the "Institute of 1770," the 1st volume (again) of [Edward Gibbon](#)'s THE HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (London 1807, 1820, 1821),

GIBBON, DECLINE & FALL I

Henry Theodore Tuckerman's ITALIAN SKETCH BOOK (1st edition, Philadelphia, 1835, anonymous; 2d edition, enlarged, Boston, 1837), and Bishop Thomas Percy (1729-1811)'s RELIQUES OF ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY (compiled 1765, reprinted Philadelphia, 1823; presumably this time it was the 2d of the three volumes that was being checked out).

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/percyboy.htm>

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
1839

[Orestes Augustus Brownson](#) ceased preaching and his [Boston Quarterly Review](#) declined in circulation. In his publication, the Reverend asserted that since his aim was to startle, he “made it a point to be as paradoxical and extravagant as he could.”

Although I confess I don’t see this suggestion, myself, as in any sense plausible or useful, [Professor Walter Roy Harding](#) has suggested this published comment by the Reverend [Brownson](#) to have been a “source” for [Henry Thoreau](#)’s [WALDEN](#) epigraph.⁸

[WALDEN](#): I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

**PEOPLE OF
WALDEN****GEOFFREY CHAUCER****CHANTICLEER**

8. I do need to confess that regardless of how implausible such a connection seems to me, it was in fact during this same year, in July, that Thoreau copied into his Commonplace Book the portion of “The Nonnes Preestes Tale” by [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) dealing with the figure of [Chanticleer](#). 

Chan"ti*cleer (?), n. [F. Chanteclair, name of the cock in the Roman du Renart (Reynard the Fox); chanter to chant + clair clear. See Chant, and Clear.] A cock, so called from the clearness or loudness of his voice in crowing.

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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WALDEN: The present was my next experiment of this kind which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

**PEOPLE OF
WALDEN**[GEOFFREY CHAUCER](#)[CHANTICLEER](#)



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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July: [Henry Thoreau](#) copied into his Commonplace Book a portion of “The Nonnes Preestes Tale” dealing with the figure of [Chanticleer](#), possibly from the 1830 edition by Thomas Tyrwhitt, THE CANTERBURY TALES OF [CHAUCER](#), WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION ETC. First, in describing the condition and substance of the “poure widewe”:

A yerd she had enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drie diche without,
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,
In all the land of crowing n’as his pere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse daies that in the chirches gon
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his loge,
Than is a klok, or any abbey orloge.
By nature he knew eche ascentioun
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun;
For what degrees fiftene were ascended,
Than crew he, that it might not ben amended.
His combe was redder than the fin corall,
Embattelled, as it were a castel wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like asure were his legges and his tone;
His nailes whiter than the lilie flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok had in his governance,
Seven hennes, for to don all his plesance,
Which were his susters and his paramoures,
And wonder like to him, as of coloures.
Of which the fairest hewed in the throte,
Was cleped faire damoselle Pertelote,
Curteis she was, discrete, and debonaire.
And compenable, and bare himself so faire,
Sithen the day that she was sevennight old,
That trowelich she hath the herte in hold
OF Chaunteclere, loken in every lith:
He loved hire so, that wel was him therwith.
But swiche a joye it was to here hem sing,
Whan that the brighte Sonne gan to spring,
In swete accord: “My lefe is fare in lond.”





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Then in describing what happened after Chanticleere “flew down fro the beme”:

This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowen loude for the nones;
And dan Russel the fox stert up at ones,
And by the garget hente Cha[u]nteclere,
And on his back toward the wood him bere.

And finally in regard to the ruckus that then ensued:

The sely widewe, and hire doughtren two,
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at the dores sterten they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wode is gon,
And bare upon his back the cok away:
They criden, out! “Harrow and wala wa!
A ha the fox!” and him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man;
Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond.
And Malkin, with her distaf in hire hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogges
So fered were for berking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought hir hertes broke.
They yellenden as fendes don in Helle:
The dokes crieden as men wold him quelle;
The gees for fere flewen over the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarm of bees, —

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WALDEN: The present was my next experiment of this kind which I purpose to describe more at length; for convenience, putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN



GEOFFREY CHAUCER

CHANTICLEER

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PHILIP CAFARO ON DEJECTION, DESPAIR, AND WALDEN'S EPIGRAPH⁹

Pages 17-18: The epigraph ["I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up."] suggests that Thoreau has made a choice here. Like Coleridge, he could have written an ode to dejection: faced west at sunset, rather than rising to greet the sun in the east. A journal entry, written while he was composing WALDEN, confesses: "Now if there are any who think that I am vain glorious -that I set myself up above others -and crow over their low estate -let me tell them that I could tell a pitiful story respecting myself as well as



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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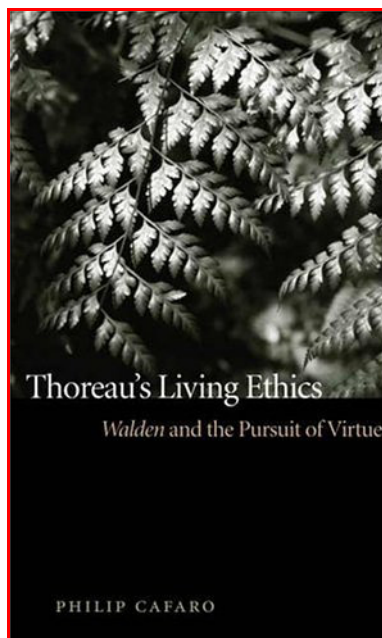
PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

them -if my spirits held out to do it, I could encourage them with a sufficient list of failures -& could flow as humbly as the very gutters themselves." Here, in the relative privacy of his journal, Thoreau lets himself moon a bit. He certainly knew these moods and the disappointments that led to them. In fact, he explored them, as essential human experiences having much to teach him.

But Thoreau knows that such dejected, twilight thoughts provide no impetus and no guidance for right living. "That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way." Note the word "despair" here, from the Latin *de* (without) + *sperare* (hope). Such hopelessness leads to lethargy and laziness. Despair is an important term in WALDEN, often marking our "stuckness" in the quotidian and our failure to demand more from our lives and ourselves. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation [acceptance, brute endurance] is confirmed desperation" [the final surrender, a fatalism that is truly fatal].

Rather than despair, we must build on a recognition of the essential goodness of life (*esse qua esse bonum est*, wrote Augustine, specifying **his** ethical starting point). "We should impart our courage, and not our despair," Thoreau writes, "our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that this does not spread contagion." The epigraph's crowing cock puts a simple "yes" to life at the center of ethics. We can get from this simple "yes" to more complex affirmations, but never from a "no"

9. [Philip Cafaro](#). THOREAU'S LIVING ETHICS: WALDEN AND THE PURSUIT OF VIRTUE. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2004





PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

to a "yes." And this first premise, or necessary practical postulate, cannot be proven. Affirmation or negation always remains the main choice facing each of us.

Consider a second key passage, one of the most often-cited in WALDEN:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life ... to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

The passage develops into a stirring peroration to life and life's grand possibilities (experiencing deeply, knowing truth, sharing this knowledge with others). But Thoreau makes it clear that these possibilities can be explored only by those who live **deliberately**. The term encompasses both the ability to consider alternatives and the ability to act – to instantiate one alternative rather than another. The presence of *liber* and *liberate* suggests an essential connection between such deliberation and human freedom.

If choosing to speak a basic "yes" to life is one key antidote to despair, another is deliberation: thinking through particular options and actively choosing the best ones, rather than falling into the easiest ones. Deliberation is an act of optimism, signaling the belief that we can have choices; that we can distinguish better from worse choices; that we can act on that knowledge and improve our lives. "I know of no more encouraging fact," Thoreau writes, "than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor." Throughout WALDEN, he renews his call for "deliberate" action in constructing a house, choosing a career, reading a book, building a fireplace. Deliberation is the key to living well, affirming human freedom, and meeting life's challenges. Life is glorious, Thoreau insists, and so the stakes are high. For we may come to the end of our lives and find that we have not lived. We may waste our lives on inessential trivialities. We may fail to learn what life has to teach. Like the penitential brahmins described in Walden's third paragraph, we may lead lives that deny or deform our human nature. In all these ways we may, and often do, deny life.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1841

November 30, Tuesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) began to spend some of his days in the “Poetry Alcove” at [Gore Hall](#), the new [Harvard Library](#), reading in [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) and [Sir Walter Raleigh](#).

We suppose he didn’t find in that alcove anything quite as pretty as the page shown on a following screen, from an original copy of Poet Laureate [John Gower](#)’s *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*:

HDT

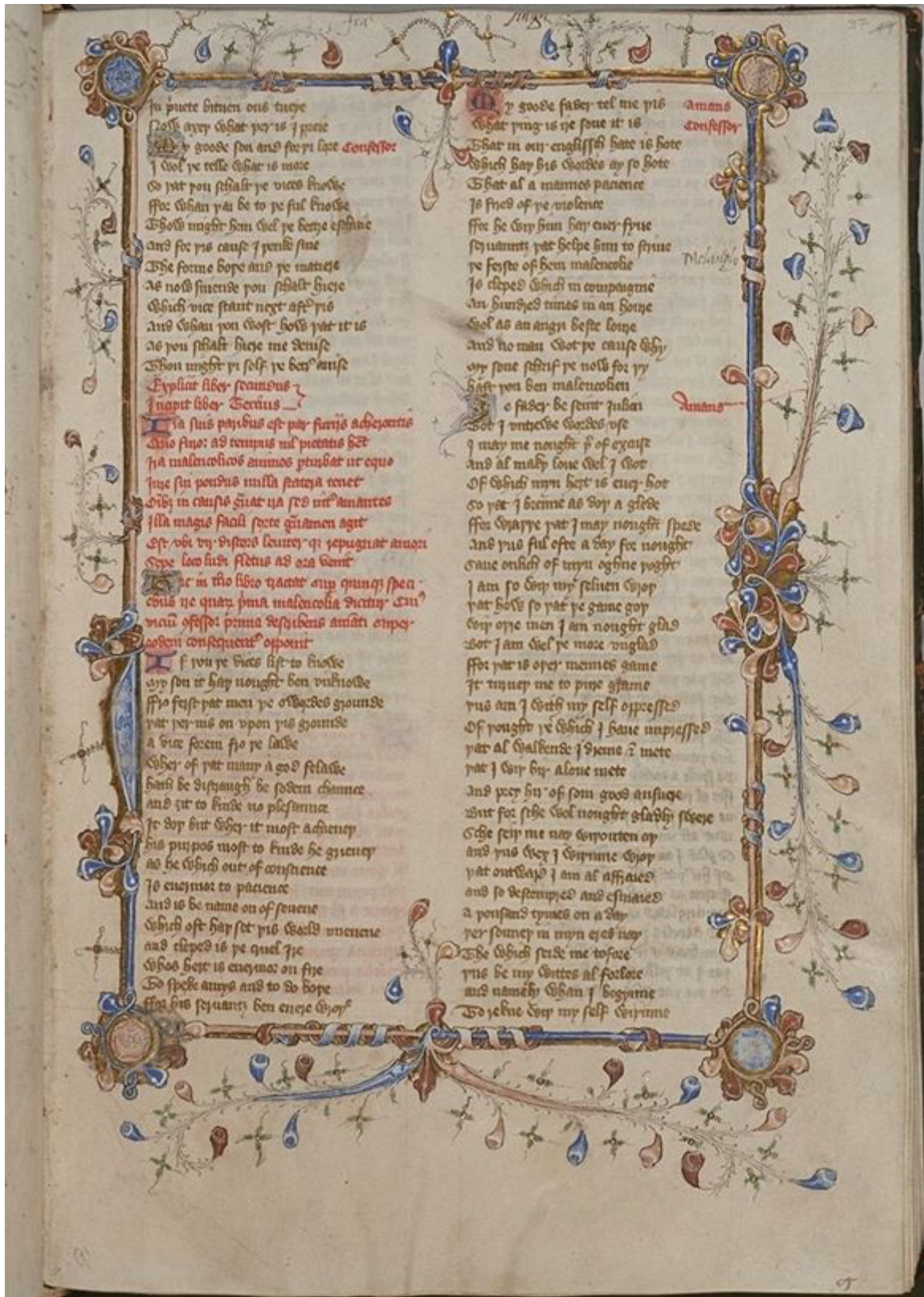
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He checked out the [Reverend Professor Thomas Warton, D.D.](#)'s THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY: FROM THE CLOSE OF THE ELEVENTH TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (Ed. Richard Price. London: T. Tegg, 1824).



THOMAS WARTON I

THOMAS WARTON II

THOMAS WARTON III

THOMAS WARTON IV

He also checked out, again, the initial volume of THE CANTERBURY TALES OF [CHAUCER](#); WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION, AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, NOTES AND A GLOSSARY BY THO. TYRWHITT, ESQ.... (London: W. Pickering, 1830).



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



CANTERBURY TALES, I



JOHN AUBREY

Nov. 30. Tuesday. Cambridge. — When looking over the dry and dusty volumes of the English poets, I cannot believe that those fresh and fair creations I had imagined are contained in them. English poetry from [Gower](#) down, collected into one alcove, and so from the library window compared with the commonest nature, seems very mean. Poetry cannot breathe in the scholar's atmosphere. The Aubreys and Hickeses, with all their learning, prophane it yet indirectly by their zeal. You need not envy his feelings who for the first time has cornered up poetry in an alcove.

I can hardly be serious with myself when I remember that I have come to Cambridge after poetry; and while I am running over the catalogue and collating and selecting, I think if it would not be a shorter way to a complete volume to step at once into the field or wood, with a very low reverence to students and librarians. Milton did not foresee what company he was to fall into. On running over the titles of these books, looking from time to time at their first pages or farther, I am oppressed by an inevitable sadness. One must have come into a library by an oriel window, as softly and undisturbed as the light which falls on the books through a stained window, and not by the librarian's door, else all his dreams will vanish. Can the Valhalla be warmed by steam and go by clock and bell?

Good poetry seems so simple and natural a thing that when we meet it we wonder that all men are not always poets. Poetry is, nothing but healthy speech. Though the speech of the poet goes to the heart of things, yet he is that one especially who speaks civilly to Nature as a second person and in some sense is the patron of the world. Though more than any he stands in the midst of Nature, yet more than any he can stand aloof from her. The best lines, perhaps, only suggest to me that that man simply saw or heard or felt what seems the commonest fact in my experience.

One will know how to appreciate [Chaucer](#) best who has come down to him the natural way through the very meagre pastures of Saxon and ante-Chaucerian poetry. So human and wise he seems after such diet that we are as liable to misjudge him so as usually.

{1/4th page missing}

vulgar — lies very near to them.

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{1/4th page missing}

The Saxon Poetry extant seems of a more serious and philosophical cast than the very earliest that can be called



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

English— It has more thought, but less music. It translates Boethius, it paraphrases the Hebrew Bible, it solemnly sings of war –of life and death– and chronicles events— The earliest English poetry is tintured with romance through the influence of the Normans, as the Saxon was not— The ballad and Metrical Romance belong to this period. Those old singers were for the most part imitators or translators — Or will it not appear when viewed at a sufficient distance — that our brave new poets are also secondary as they, and refer the eye that reads them and their poetry too, back and backward without end?¹⁰

Nothing is so attractive and unceasingly curious as character. There is no plant that needs such tender treatment, there is none that will endure so rough. It is the violet and the oak. It is the thing we mean, let us say what we will. We mean our own character, or we mean yours. It is divine and related to the heavens, as the earth is by the flashes of the Aurora. It has no acquaintance nor companion. It goes silent and unobserved longer than any planet in space, but when at length it does show itself, it seems like the flowering of all the world, and its before unseen orbit is lit up like the trail of a meteor. I hear no good news ever but some trait of a noble character. It reproaches me plaintively. I am mean in contrast, but again am thrilled and elevated that I can see my own meanness, and again still, that my own aspiration is realized in that other. You reach me, my friend, not by your kind or wise words to me here or there; but as you retreat, perhaps after years of vain familiarity, some gesture

10. This paragraph needs to be understood in the context of the various texts upon which [Thoreau](#) had relied while a student at Harvard College, texts which have been identified as: the [Reverend Joseph Bosworth](#)'s THE ELEMENTS OF ANGLO=SAXON GRAMMAR ... (London: Printed for Harding, Mavor, and Lepard, 1823), the [Reverend John Josias Conybeare](#)'s ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANGLO-SAXON POETRY, EDITED, WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES, INTRODUCTORY NOTICES, &C., BY HIS BROTHER [WILLIAM DANIEL CONYBEARE](#) (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), the three volumes of [Lord Bishop Thomas Percy](#)'s RELIQUES OF ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), the three volumes of [Joseph Ritson](#)'s ANCIENT ENGLISH METRICAL ROMANCES (London: W. Bulmer, for G. & W. Nicol, 1802), the four volumes of [Thomas Evans](#)'s OLD BALLADS, HISTORICAL AND NARRATIVE, WITH SOME OF MODERN DATE COLLECTED FROM RARE COPIES AND MANUSCRIPTS... A NEW EDITION, REVISED AND CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS, BY HIS SON, [R.H. EVANS](#) (London: Printed for R.H. Evans, by W. Bulmer and co., 1810), and the two volumes of [Robert Jamieson](#)'s POPULAR BALLADS AND SONGS, FROM TRADITIONAL MANUSCRIPTS AND SCARCE EDITIONS; WITH TRANSLATIONS OF SIMILAR PIECES FROM THE ANCIENT DANISH LANGUAGE, AND A FEW ORIGINALS BY THE EDITOR. (Edinburgh: A. Constable and co.; [etc. etc.], 1806).

BOSWORTH'S ANGLOSAXON

CONYBEARE'S ANGLOSAXON

THOMAS PERCY'S RELIQUES

RITSON'S ROMANCES I

RITSON'S ROMANCES II

RITSON'S ROMANCES III

EVANS'S OLD BALLADS I

EVANS'S OLD BALLADS II

EVANS'S OLD BALLADS III

EVANS'S OLD BALLADS IV

JAMIESON'S BALLADS I

JAMIESON'S BALLADS II



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

or unconscious action in the distance speaks to me with more emphasis than all those years. I am not concerned to know what eighth planet is wandering in space up there, or when Venus or Orion rises, but if, in any cot to east or west and set behind the woods, there is any planetary character illuminating the earth.

Packed in my mind lie all the clothes
Which outward nature wears,
For, as its hourly fashions change,
It all things else repairs.
My eyes look inward, not without,
And I but hear myself,
And this new wealth which I have got
Is part of my own pelf.
For while I look for change abroad,
I can no difference find,
Till some new ray of peace uncalled
Lumines my inmost mind,
As, when the sun streams through the wood,
Upon a winter's morn,
Where'er his silent beams may stray
The murky night is gone.
How could the patient pine have known
The morning breeze would come,
Or simple flowers anticipate
The insect's noonday hum,
Till that new light with morning cheer
From far streamed through the aisles,
And nimbly told the forest trees
For many stretching miles?

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



December 29, Wednesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) made an entry in his journal which indicates a very great respect of and admiration for and empathy with the poet [Geoffrey Chaucer](#):



December 29, Wednesday: Heaven is the inmost place. The Good have not to travel far.... I wish I could be as still as God is.... I would be as clean as ye oh woods ... I shall not rest till I be as innocent as you.... [[Chaucer](#)] walked in that low and retired way that I do and was not too good to live. (1, 348-50)



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

GOD IN CONCORD by Jane Langton © 1992

Viking Penguin

12

*Death is that expressive pause in the music
of the blast.*
Journal, December 29, 1841

Turning to the obituary page of the *Concord Journal*, Roger
Bland read about the death of Alice Snow:

Penguin Books USA Inc.

ISBN 0-670-84260-5 — PS3562.A515G58



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1842

January-March: [Henry Thoreau](#) copied lengthy extracts of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), including “The Nonnes Preestes Tale,” into his literary notebook.

January 2, Sunday: [Henry Thoreau](#) commented in his journal, in regard to the time period of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), that “[Dante](#), though just departed, still exerted the influence of a living presence,” a remark he would later insert into [A WEEK](#).



[A WEEK](#): There is no wisdom that can take place of humanity, and we find **that** in Chaucer. We can expand at last in his breadth, and we think that we could have been that man's acquaintance. He was worthy to be a citizen of England, while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and in Asia, and Bruce in Scotland, and Wicliffe, and Gower, and Edward the Third, and John of Gaunt, and the Black Prince, were his own countrymen as well as contemporaries; all stout and stirring names. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and the name of Dante still possessed the influence of a living presence. On the whole, Chaucer impresses us as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among early English poets he is the landlord and host, and has the authority of such. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is to be taken into the account in estimating his character and influence. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak of him with more love and reverence than any modern author of his predecessors of the last century. The same childlike relation is without a parallel now. For the most part we read him without criticism, for he does not plead his own cause, but speaks for his readers, and has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He confides in the reader, and speaks privily with him, keeping nothing back. And in return the reader has great confidence in him, that he tells no lies, and reads his story with indulgence, as if it were the circumlocution of a child, but often discovers afterwards that he has spoken with more directness and economy of words than a sage. He is never heartless,

“For first the thing is thought within the hart,
Er any word out from the mouth astart.”

PEOPLE OF
A WEEK

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

DANTE

GOWER



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

(Thoreau would also comment, in A WEEK, that Chaucer “rendered a similar service to his country to that which Dante rendered to Italy.”)



A WEEK: Chaucer had eminently the habits of a literary man and a scholar. There were never any times so stirring that there were not to be found some sedentary still. He was surrounded by the din of arms. The battles of Hallidon Hill and Neville's Cross, and the still more memorable battles of Cressy and Poitiers, were fought in his youth; but these did not concern our poet much, Wickliffe and his reform much more. He regarded himself always as one privileged to sit and converse with books. He helped to establish the literary class. His character as one of the fathers of the English language would alone make his works important, even those which have little poetical merit. He was as simple as Wordsworth in preferring his homely but vigorous Saxon tongue, when it was neglected by the court, and had not yet attained to the dignity of a literature, and rendered a similar service to his country to that which Dante rendered to Italy. If Greek sufficeth for Greek, and Arabic for Arabian, and Hebrew for Jew, and Latin for Latin, then English shall suffice for him, for any of these will serve to teach truth “right as divers pathes leaden divers folke the right waye to Rome.” In the Testament of Love he writes, “Let then clerkes enditen in Latin, for they have the propertie of science, and the knowinge in that facultie, and lette Frenchmen in their Frenche also enditen their queinte termes, for it is kyndely to their mouthes, and let us shewe our fantasies in soche wordes as we lerneden of our dames tonge.”

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

DANTE

Thoreau would also cite, in A WEEK, the *CONFESSIO AMANTIS* (IV, 2427-2432) of “Poet Laureate” John Gower:



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

Geoffrey Chaucer

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

A WEEK: These modern ingenious sciences and arts do not affect me as those more venerable arts of hunting and fishing, and even of husbandry in its primitive and simple form; as ancient and honorable trades as the sun and moon and winds pursue, coeval with the faculties of man, and invented when these were invented. We do not know their John Gutenberg, or Richard Arkwright, though the poets would fain make them to have been gradually learned and taught. According to Gower, —

“And Iadabel, as saith the boke,
Firste made nette, and fishes toke.
Of huntynge eke he fond the chace,
Whiche nowe is knowe in many place;
A tent of clothe, with corde and stake,
He sette up first, and did it make.”

Also, Lydgate says: —

“Jason first sayled, in story it is tolde,
Toward Colchos, to wynde the flees of golde.
Ceres the Goddess fond first the tilthe of londe;
Also, Aristeus fonde first the usage
Of mylke, and cruddis, and of honey swote;
Peryodes, for grete avauntage,
From flyntes smote fuyre, daryng in the roote.”

GOWER



January 2, Sunday. The ringing of the church bell is a much more melodious sound than any that is heard within the church. All great values are thus public, and undulate like sound through the atmosphere. Wealth cannot purchase any great private solace or convenience. Riches are only the means of sociality. I will depend on the extravagance of my neighbors for my luxuries, for they will take care to pamper me if I will be overfed. The poor man who sacrificed nothing for the gratification seems to derive a safer and more natural enjoyment from his neighbor's extravagance than he does himself. It is a new natural product, from the contemplation of which he derives new vigor and solace as from a natural phenomenon.

In moments of quiet and leisure my thoughts are more apt to revert to some natural than any human relation. Chaucer's sincere sorrow in his latter days for the grossness of his earlier works, and that he “cannot recall and annul” what he had “written of the base and filthy love of men towards women; but alas they are now continued from man to man,” says he, “and I cannot do what I desire,” is all very creditable to his character.

Chaucer is the make-weight of his century, — a worthy representative of England while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and Asia, and Bruce and Rienzi in Europe, and Wickliffe and Gower in his own land. Edward III and John of Gaunt and the Black prince complete the company. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and Dante, though just departed, still exerted the influence of a living presence. With all his grossness he is not undistinguished for the tenderness and delicacy of his muse. A simple pathos and feminine gentleness is peculiar to him which not even Wordsworth can match. And then his best passages of length are marked by a happy and healthy wit which is rather rare in the poetry of any nation. On the whole, he impresses me as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among the earliest English poets lie is their landlord and host, and has the authority of such. We read him with affection and without criticism, for he pleads no cause, but speaks for us, his readers, always. He has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He is for a whole country and country [sic] to know and to be proud of. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is also to be taken into the account in estimating his character. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak with more love and reverence of



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

him than any cotemporary poet of his predecessors of the last century. That childlike relation, indeed, does not seem to exist now which was then.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



March 11, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from Concord to [Waldo Emerson](#) at his hotel in New-York about some good verse he had just been reading by the old Scotch poet [John Bellenden](#), and to deliver a rebuttal of the Reverend



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Barzillai Frost's funeral elegy jab at the [Transcendentalists](#).¹¹

I see so many "carvell's licht, fast tending throw the sea" to your El Dorado, that I am in haste to plant my flag in season on that distant beach, in the name of God and king Henry. There seems to be no occasion why I who have so little to say to you here at home should take pains to send you any of my silence in a letter- Yet since no correspondence can hope to rise above the level of those homely speechless hours, as no spring ever bursts above the level of the still mountain tarn whence it issued - I will not delay to send a venture. As if I were to send you a piece of the house-sill - or a loose casement rather. Do not neighbors sometimes halloo with good will across a field, who yet never chat over a fence?

The sun has just burst through the fog, and I hear blue-birds, song-sparrows, larks, and robins, down in the meadow. The other day I walked in the woods, but found myself rather denaturalized by late habits. Yet it is the same nature that Burns and Wordsworth loved - the same life that Shakspeare and Milton lived. The wind still roars in the wood, as if nothing had happened out of the course of nature. The sound of the waterfall is not interrupted more than if a feather had fallen.

Nature is not ruffled by the rudest blast- The hurricane only snaps a few twigs in some nook of the forest. The snow attains its average depth each winter, and the chic-a-dee lisps the same notes. The old laws prevail in spite of pestilence and famine. No genius or virtue so rare & revolutionary appears in town or village, that the pine ceases to exude resin in the wood, or beast or bird lays aside its habits.

How plain that death is only the phenomenon of the individual or class - Nature does not recognise it, She finds her own again under new forms without loss. Yet death is beautiful when seen to be a law, and not an accident-

It is as common as life. Men die in Tartary - in Ethiopia - in England - in Wisconsin. And after all what portion of this so serene and living nature can be said to be alive? Do this year's grasses and foliage outnumber all the past. Every blade in the field - every leaf in the forest - lays down its life in its season as beautifully as it was taken up. It is the pastime of a full quarter of the year. Dead trees - sere leaves - dried grass and herbs - are not these a good part of our life? And what is that pride of our autumnal scenery but the hectic flush - the sallow and cadaverous countenance of vegetation - its painted throes - with the November air for canvass-

11. This remarkable letter is the earliest known from [Thoreau](#) to [Emerson](#).



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When we look over the fields we are not saddened because these particular flowers or grasses will wither – for the law of their death is the law of new life. Will not the land be in good heart because the crops die down from year to year? The herbage cheerfully consents to bloom, and wither, and give place to a new.

So is it with the human plant. We are partial and selfish when we lament the death of the individual, unless our plaint be a paean to the departed soul, and we sigh as the wind sighs over the fields, which no shrub interprets into its private grief.

One might as well go into mourning for every sere leaf – but the more innocent and wiser soul will snuff a fragrance in the gales of autumn, and congratulate nature upon her health.

After I have imagined thus much will not the Gods feel under obligations to make me realize something as good?

I have just read some good verse by the old Scotch poet John Bellenden–

“The fynest gold or silver that we se,
May nocht be wrocht to our utilitie,
Bot flammis kein & bitter violence;
The more distress, the more intelligence.
Quhay sailis lang in hie prosperitie,
Ar sone ouset be stormis without defence.”

JOHN BELLENDEN



March 11, Friday: [Chaucer](#)'s familiar, but innocent, way of speaking of God is of a piece with his character. He comes readily to his thoughts without any false reverence. If Nature is our mother, is not God much more? God should come into our thoughts with no more parade than the zephyr into our ears. Only strangers approach him with ceremony. How rarely in our English tongue do we find expressed any affection for God! No sentiment is so rare as love of God, -universal love. [Herbert](#) is almost the only exception. “Ah, my dear God,” etc. [Chaucer](#)'s was a remarkably affectionate genius. There is less love and simple trust in Shakespeare. When he sees a beautiful person or object, he almost takes a pride in the “maistry” of his God. The Protestant Church seems to have nothing to supply the place of the Saints of the Catholic calendar, who were at least channels for the affections. Its God has perhaps too many of the attributes of a Scandinavian deity. We can only live healthily the life the gods assign us. I must receive my life as passively as the willow leaf that flutters over the brook. I must not be for myself, but God's work and that is always good. I will wait the breezes patiently –and grow as nature shall determine –My fate cannot but be grand so. We may live the life of a plant or an animal — without living an animal life. This constant and universal content of the animal — comes of resting quietly in God's palm. I feel as if could at any time resign my life and the responsibility of living into Gods hands — and become an innocent free from care as a plant or stone.

My life my life –why will ye linger? Are the years short are the months of no account? How often has long delay quenched my aspirations Can God afford that I should forget him– Is he so indifferent to my career — Can heaven be postponed with no more ado–. Why were my ears given to hear those everlasting strains which haunt my life, and yet to be prophaned much more by these perpetual dull sounds?

Our doubts are so musical that they persuade themselves.



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Why, God, did you include me in your great scheme? Will you not make me a partner at last? Did it need there should be a conscious material?

My friend, my friend, I'd speak so frank to thee that thou wouldst pray me to keep back some part, for fear I robbed myself. To address thee delights me, there is such cleanness in the delivery. I am delivered of my tale, which, told to strangers, still would linger on my lips as if untold, or doubtful how it ran.

March 14, Monday: [Waldo Emerson](#) lectured in New-York. This was the 6th and final lecture of the series: "Prospects." (There would be a long report in the NY [Tribune](#).)



[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to Isaiah T. Williams from Concord. Speaking of the death of his brother John, he commented that "For my own part, I feel that I could not have done without this experience."

Concord March 14th 1842

Dear Williams,

I meant to write to you before but John's death and my own sickness, with other circumstances, prevented. John died of the lock-jaw, as you know, Jan. 11th I have been confined to my chamber for a month with a prolonged shock of the same disorder – from close attention to, and sympathy with him, which I learn is not without precedent. Mr. Emerson too has lost his oldest child, Waldo, by scarlet fever, a boy of rare promise, who in the expectation of many was to be one of the lights of his generation.

John was sick but three days from the slightest apparent cause – an insignificant cut on his finger, which gave him no pain, and was more than a week old – but nature does not ask for such causes as man expects – when she is ready there will be cause enough. I mean simply that perhaps we never assign the sufficient cause for anything – though it undoubtedly exists. He was perfectly calm, ever pleasant while reason lasted, and gleams of the same serenity and playfulness shone through his delirium to the last. But I will not disturb his memory. If you knew him, I could not add to your knowledge, and if you did not know him, as I think you could not, it is now too late, and no eulogy of mine would suffice— For my own part I feel that I could not have done without this experience.

What you express with regard to the effect of time on our youthful feelings – which indeed is the theme of universal elegy – reminds me of some verses of Byron – quite rare to find in him, and of his best I think. Probably you remember them.

"No more, no more, ! Oh never more on me

"The freshness of the heart can fall like dew

"Which out of all the lovely things we see,

"Extracts emotions beautiful and new,

"Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee,



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*“Think’st thou the honey with these objects grew
“Alas! ’Twas not in them, but in thy power,
“To double even the sweetness of a flower.*

*“No more, no more! Oh, never more, my heart!
“Canst thou be my sole world, my universe
“Once all in all, but now a thing apart,
“Thou canst not be my blessing, or my curse;
“The illusion’s gone forever—”*

It would be well if we could add new years to our lives as innocently as the fish adds new layers to its shell – no less beautiful than the old. And I believe we may if we will replace the vigor and elasticity of youth with faithfulness in later years.

When I consider the universe I am still the youngest born. We do not grow old we rust old. Let us not consent to be old, but to die (live?) rather. Is Truth old? or Virtue — or Faith? If we possess them they will be our elixir vitæ and fount of youth. It is at least good to remember our innocence; what we regret is not quite lost— Earth sends no sweeter strain to Heaven than this plaint. Could we not grieve perpetually, and by our grief discourage time’s encroachments?

All our sin too shall be welcome for such is the material of Wisdom, and through her is our redemption to come.

’Tis true, as you say, “Man’s ends are shaped for him”, but who ever dared confess the extent of his free agency? Though I am weak, I am strong too. If God shapes my ends – he shapes me also – and his means are always equal to his ends. His work does not lack this completeness, that the creature consents. I am my destiny. Was I ever in that straight that it was not sweet to do right? And then for this free agency I would not be free of God certainly— I would only have freedom to defer to him. He has not made us solitary agents. He has not made us to do without him. Though we must “abide our destiny”, will not he abide it with us? So do the stars and the flowers. My destiny is now arrived – is now arriving. I believe that what I call my circumstances will be a very true history of myself – for God’s works are complete both within and without – and shall I not be content with his success? I welcome my fate for it is not trivial nor whimsical. Is there not a soul in circumstances? – and the disposition of the soul to circumstances – is not that the crowning circumstance of all? But after all it is intra-stances, or how it stands within me that I am concerned about. Moreover circumstances are past, but I am to come, that is to say, they are results of me – but I have not yet ar-

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rived at my result.

All impulse, too, is primarily from within The soul which does shape the world is within and central.

I must confess I am apt to consider the trades and professions so many traps which the Devil sets to catch men in – and good luck he has too, if one may judge. But did it ever occur that a man came to want, or the almshouse from consulting his higher instincts? All great good is very present and urgent, and need not be postponed. What did Homer – and Socrates – and Christ and Shakspeare & Fox? Did they have to compound for their leisure, or steal their hours? What a curse would civilization be if it thus ate into the substance of the soul— Who would choose rather the simple grandeur of savage life for the solid leisure it affords? But need we sell our birthright for a mess of pottage? Let us trust that we shall be fed as the sparrows are.

“Grass and earth to sit on, water to wash the feet, and fourthly, affectionate speech are at no time deficient in the mansions of the good”

You may be interested to learn that Mr. Alcott is going to England in April.

That you may find in Law the profession you love, and the means of spiritual culture, is the wish of your friend

Henry D. Thoreau.

Isaiah T. Williams

Buffalo, N. Y.



March 14: [Chaucer](#)'s genius does not soar like Milton's, but is genial and familiar. It is only a greater portion of humanity, with all its weakness. It is not heroic, as Raleigh, or pious, as [Herbert](#), or philosophical, as Shakespeare, but the child of the English nation, but that child that is “father of the man.” His genius is only for the most part an exceeding naturalness. It is perfect sincerity, though with the behavior of a child rather than of a man. He can complain, as in the “Testament of Love,” but yet so truly and unfeignedly that his complaint does not fail to interest. All England has his case at heart.

He shows great tenderness and delicacy, but not the heroic sentiment. His genius was feminine, not masculine, — not but such is rarest to find in woman (though the appreciation of it is not), — but less manly than the manliest.

It is not easy to find one brave enough to play the game of love quite alone with you, but they must get some third person, or world, to countenance them. They thrust others between. Love is so delicate and fastidious that I see not how [it] can ever begin. Do you expect me to love with you, unless you make my love secondary to nothing else? Your words come tainted, if the thought of the world darted between thee and the thought of me. You are not venturesome enough for love. It goes alone unscared through wildernesses.

As soon as I see people loving what they see merely, and not their own high hopes that they form of others, I pity, and do not want their love. Such love delays me. Did I ask thee to love me who hate myself? No! Love that I love, and I will love thee that lovest it.

The love is faint-hearted and short-lived that is contented with the past history of its object. It does not prepare the soil to bear new crops lustier than the old.

“I would I had leisure for these things,” sighs the world. “When I have done my quilting and baking, then I will



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not be backward.”


Love never stands still, nor does its object. It is the revolving sun and the swelling bud. If I know what I love, it is because I *remember* it.

Life is grand, and so are its environments of Past and Future. Would the face of nature be so serene and beautiful if man's destiny were not equally so? What am I good for now, who am still marching after high things, but to hear and tell the news, to bring wood and water, and count how many eggs the hens lay? In the meanwhile, I expect my life will begin. I will not aspire longer. I will see what it is I would be after. I will be unanimous.

October 7, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) indicated in his journal that he had been reading in the works of [John Gower](#) (this had been a reading in his *CONFESSIO AMANTIS* as presented in [Alexander Chalmers](#)'s THE WORKS OF THE ENGLISH POETS, FROM [CHAUCER](#) TO [COWPER](#), VOLUME II).

CHALMERS/GOWER



Oct 7th -42 A little girl has brought me a purple finch [*Carpodacus*  *purpureus*] –or American linnet. These birds are now moving south. It reminds me of the Pine and spruce –and the Juniper and cedar on whose berries it feeds– It has the crimson hues of the October evenings and its plumage still shines as if it had caught and preserved some of their tints. (beams?). We know it chiefly as a traveller.

It reminds me of many things I had forgotten. many a serene evening lies snugly packed under its wing.

There is a depth in Autumn which no poetry has fathomed– Behind the rustling leaves — and the stacks of grain — and the bare clusters of the grape — I am sensible of a wholly new life — which no man has lived. My faith is fed by the yellow leaf. Who can hear the wind in October rustling the wood without believing that this earth has more mysterious and nobler inhabitants than Fauns and Satyrs Elves and Fairies– In the fading hues of sunset we see the portal of other mansions of our Father's house.

I am the Autumnal sun,
With Autumn gales my races run.
When will the hazle put forth its flowers,
And the grape ripen under my bowers?
When will the harvest and the hunter's moon
Turn my midnight into mid noon?
I am all sere & yellow,
And to my core mellow.
The mast is dropping within my woods
The winter is lurking within my moods
And the rustling of the withered leaf
Is the constant music of my grief,
My gay colored grief,
My autumnal relief.

We do not learn much from learned books but from true — sincere — human books — from frank and friendly biographies– Let me know how any man thought — and wavered and resolved, succeeded and failed, what he did and refrained from doing– I only want to know more of the life of man — of any man. In a true biography — any would be great — and any small.

The life of a good man, does not improve me any more than the life of a freebooter, for the inevitable laws appear as plain in the infringement, as in the observance.

And perhaps all life is maintained to the end by an equal expense of virtue of some kind. We all know what children we are sometimes in our virtues — what men in our vices. The decaying tree while yet it lives asks for sun wind and rain as well as the green one. It secretes sap and performs the functions of health.

[Gower](#) writes like a man of common sense and good parts who has undertaken with steady rather than high purpose to do narrative with rhyme. With little or no invention following in the track of the old fablers, he employs his leisure and his pen-craft, to entertain his readers, and speak a good word for the right. He has no fire or rather blaze — though occasionally some brand's end peeps out from the ashes, especially if in a dark day you approach the heap — and if you extend your hands over it you experience a slight warmth, more than elsewhere – And even in fair weather you may see a slight smoke go up — here and there.

He narrates what [Chaucer](#) some times sings. He tells his story with a fair understanding of the original and



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sometimes it gains a little in blunt plainness and directness in his hands.

Unlike the early Saxon and later English his poetry is but a plainer and directer speech than other men's prose.

He might have been a teamster and written his rhymes on his wagon seat as he went to mill with a load of plaster.

The woods begin to assume the brighter tints of autumn about the middle of September. The Sumack — grape and maple are among the first to change. The milk-weed turns to a very deep rich yellow.

The banks by retired roadsides are covered with asters — hazles — brakes — and huckleberry bushes — emitting a dry ripe scent.

Facts must be learned directly and personally — but principles may be deduced from information. The collector of facts possesses a perfect physical organization — the philosopher a perfect intellectual one. One can walk — the other sit — one acts, the other thinks. But the poet in some degree does both and uses and generalizes the results of both — he generalizes the widest deductions of philosophy.

Let us remind ourselves, then, who this early poet [John Gower](#) had been whom our Henry was reading, and was comparing with [Geoffrey Chaucer](#):

CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



A WEEK: There is no wisdom that can take place of humanity, and we find **that** in Chaucer. We can expand at last in his breadth, and we think that we could have been that man's acquaintance. He was worthy to be a citizen of England, while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and in Asia, and Bruce in Scotland, and Wicliffe, and Gower, and Edward the Third, and John of Gaunt, and the Black Prince, were his own countrymen as well as contemporaries; all stout and stirring names. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and the name of Dante still possessed the influence of a living presence. On the whole, Chaucer impresses us as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among early English poets he is the landlord and host, and has the authority of such. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is to be taken into the account in estimating his character and influence. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak of him with more love and reverence than any modern author of his predecessors of the last century. The same childlike relation is without a parallel now. For the most part we read him without criticism, for he does not plead his own cause, but speaks for his readers, and has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He confides in the reader, and speaks privily with him, keeping nothing back. And in return the reader has great confidence in him, that he tells no lies, and reads his story with indulgence, as if it were the circumlocution of a child, but often discovers afterwards that he has spoken with more directness and economy of words than a sage. He is never heartless,

“For first the thing is thought within the hart,
Er any word out from the mouth astart.”

PEOPLE OF
A WEEK

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

DANTE

GOWER

Thoreau had extracted a prefatory snippet for his chapter “Monday” from the Prologue to **Gower**'s *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*, lines 58-60:

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A WEEK :

I thynke for to touche also
The worlde whiche neweth everie daie,
So as I can, so as I maie.

— GOWER.

The hye sheryfe of Notynghame,
Hym holde in your mynde.
— Robin Hood Ballads.

His shoote it was but loosely shott,
Yet flewe not the arrowe in vaine,
For it mett one of the sheriffe's men,
And William a Trent was slaine.
— Robin Hood Ballads.

Gazed on the Heavens for what he missed on Earth.
— Britania's Pastorals.

GOWER



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1843

May 22, Monday: Tom Thumb was exhibited in [Boston](#).

[Joseph Smith, Jr.](#)'s wife of many years Emma Hale Smith was shocked to discover her husband secluded in an upstairs bedroom of their home in Nauvoo, Illinois with a family maidservant, [Eliza M. Partridge](#) (with whom her husband had entered into secret plural marriage on March 8th).

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote to [Mrs. Lidian Emerson](#) from Castleton, Staten Island:

You always seemed to look down at me as from some elevation -some of your high humilities- and I was better for having to look up. I felt taxed not to disappoint your expectations.

Castleton, Staten Island, May 22nd

1843

My Dear Friend,

I believe a good many conversations with you were left in an unfinished state, and now indeed I don't know where to take them up. But I will resume some of the unfinished silence[.]. I shall not hesitate to know you. I think of you as some elder sister of mine, whom I could not have avoided — a sort of lunar influence — only of such age as the moon, whose time is measured by her light. You must know that you represent to me woman — for I have not travelled very far [or] wide — and what if I had? I like to deal with you, for I believe you do not lie or steal, and these are very rare virtues. I thank you for your influence for two years — I was fortunate to be subjected to it, and am now to remember it. It is the noblest gift we can make — What signify all others that can be bestowed? You have



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*helped to keep my life “on loft,” as Chaucer
[of Griselda] says, and in a better sense. You always
^ seemed to look down at me as from some
elevation, some of your high humilities,
and I was the better for having to look*

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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*up. I felt taxed not to disappoint your
expectation — or could there be any accident
so sad as to be respected for something
better than we are? It was a pleasure
even to go away from you, as it is not
to meet some, as it apprised me of my
high relations, and such a departure is a
sort of further introduction and meeting.
Nothing makes the earth seem so
spacious as to have friends at a distance[.]
They make the latitudes and longitudes.
You must not think that fate
is so dark there, for even here I can see
a faint reflected light over Concord, and
I think that at this distance I can better
weigh the value of a doubt there.
Your moonlight — as I have told you,
though it is a reflection of the sun,
allows of bats and owls and other twilight
birds to flit therein. But I am very
glad that you can elevate your life with
a doubt — for I am sure that it is
nothing but an insatiable faith after all
that deepens and darkens its current — And
your doubt and my confidence are only
a difference of expression.
I have hardly begun to live on Staten Island
yet, but like the man who, when forbidden
to tread on English ground, carried*

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*Scottish ground in his boots, I carry Con-
cord ground in my boots and in my
hat — and am I not made of
Concord dust? I cannot realize
that it is the roar of the sea I
hear now, and not the wind in Walden*



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

*woods. I find more of Concord after all
in the prospect of the sea, beyond Sandy[-]
Hook than in the fields and woods.
If you were to have this Hugh the
gardener for your man you would
think a new dispensation had commenced.
He might put a fairer aspect on the
natural world for you, or at any [rate]
a screen between you and the [almshouse.]
There is a beautiful red honeysuckle
now in blossom in the woods here, which
should be transplanted to Concord, and
if what they tell me about the tulip
tree be true, you should have that
also. I have not seen Mrs Black
yet, but I intend to call on her
soon. Have you established those simpler
modes of living yet? — “In the full
tide of successful operation?” —
Tell Mrs[.] Brown that I hope
she is anchored in a secure haven, and de-
rives much pleasure still from reading
the poets — And that her constellation*

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*is not quite set from my sight, though it
is sunk so low in that northern horizon.
Tell Elizabeth Hoar that her bright
present did “carry ink safely to Staten
Island”, and was a conspicuous object
in Master Haven’s inventory of my [goods]
effects. — Give my respect to M^{me}
Emerson, whose Concord face I should*

{written perpendicular to text in center of page:
Address: Mrs. Lidian Emerson[.]
Concord
Mass[.]}

*her be glad to see here this summer; and remem-
^ ber me to the rest of the household who
have had vision of me. [Has Edith de-
generated or Ellen regenerated [yet,] for I
fear and hope that so it will be?*

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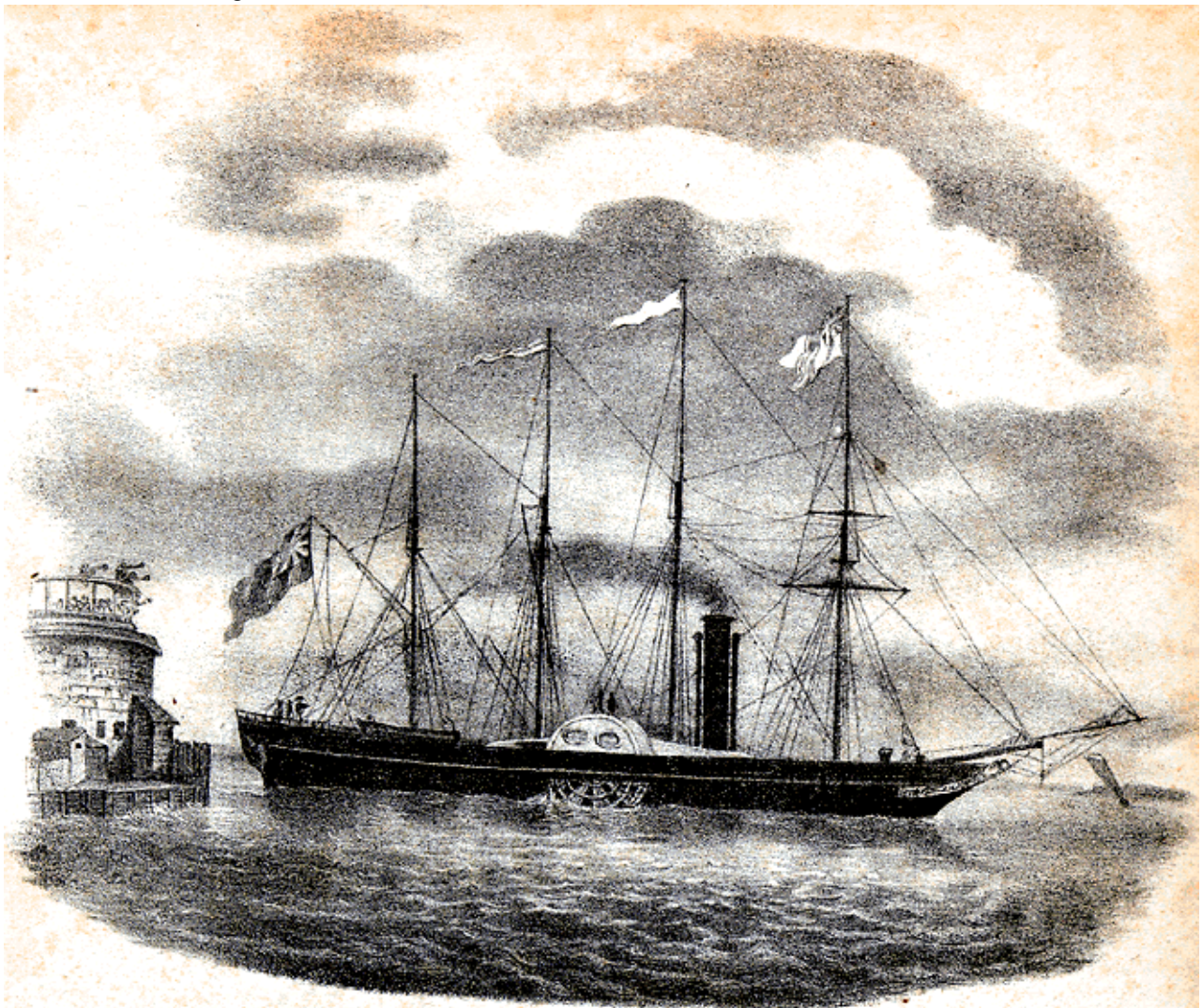
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

*Shake a day-day to Edith, and
say "[G]ood night" to Ellen for me.]
Farewell — Henry D. Thoreau*

Lidian commented to her friend [Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau](#), Thoreau's mother, that Henry had written her a "grateful and affectionate" letter, and Cynthia remarked tactfully that her Henry "was always tolerant." It must have been rather difficult for Cynthia and [John Thoreau](#), Senior, to watch from the sidelines as their surviving son's affections were pre-empted and their parental influence diluted by this local gentry with which they could not compete.

[Thoreau](#) also wrote on this day to his younger sister [Sophia](#), informing her that he had seen the *Great Western*, the latest thing in steam sailboats:





PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

Castleton, Staten Island, May 22nd. — 43
Dear Sophia,
I have had a severe cold ever since
I came here, and have been confined to the
house for the last week with bronchitis, though
I am now getting out, so I have not seen
much in the botanical way. The cedar seems
to be one of the most common trees here,
and the fields are very fragrant with it.
There are also the gum and tulip trees. The
latter is not very common, but is very
large and beautiful, bearing flowers as
large as tulips and as handsome. It is
not time for it yet. The woods are now
full of a large honeysuckle in full
bloom, which differs from ours in being
red instead of white, so that at first
I did not know its genus. The painted
cup is very common in the meadows
here. Peaches, and especially cherries, seem
to grow by all the fences.
Things are very forward here com-
pared with [Co]ncord. The apricots growing
out of doors are already as large
as plums. The apple, pear, peach, cherry,
and plum trees, have shed their blossoms.
The whole Island is like a garden,

Page 2
and affords very fine scenery. In front
of the house is a very extensive wood, beyond
which is the sea, whose roar I can hear
all night long, when there is no wind, if
easterly winds have prevailed on the At-
lantic. There are always some vessels
in sight — ten, twenty, or thirty miles off —
and Sunday before last there were hundreds
in long procession, stretching from New
York to Sanday Hook, and far beyond,
for Sunday is a lucky day.
I went to New York Saturday before
last. A walk of half an hour, by half
a dozen houses, along the Richmond road,
ie. the road that leads to R — on



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

*which we live — brings me to the village
[Southfield] of Stapleton, ~~still~~ in [Castleton,] where is
the lower dock; but if I prefer I can
walk along the shore three quarters of
a mile further toward New York,
to Quarantine, ~~another~~ village of Castle-
ton, to the upper dock, which the boat
leaves five or six times every day, a quarter
of an hour later than the former place.
Further on is the village of New-
Brighton — and further still Port Rich-
mond, which villages another steam-
boat visits.*

Page 3

*In New York I saw Geo. Ward, and also
Giles Waldo and William Tappan, [whom]
I can describe better when I have seen them
more — They are young friends of Mr [Em-]
erson. Waldo came down to the Island
to see me the next day. I also saw the
Great Western, the Croton Water works,
and the picture gallery of the National
Academy of Design. But I have not had
time to see or do much in N. Y. yet.
Tell Miss Ward I shall try to my
put ~~her~~ microscope to a good use, and
if I find any new and pressible
flower, will throw it into my
common place book[.] Garlic,
the original of the common
onion, grows like grass here
all over the fields, and during
its season spoils the cream and butter for
the market, as the cows like it very much.
Tell Helen there are two schools just
established in this neighborhood, with
large prospects, or rather designs, one for
boys, and another for girls. The latter
by a Miss Errington — and though it
is very small as yet — I will keep my
ears open for her in such directions —
The encouragement is very slight.
I hope you will not be washed away by*



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEORGE CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

*the Irish sea. Tell Mother I think
my cold was not wholly owing to imprudence[]
Perhaps I was being acclimated.*

Page 4

*Tell [fa]ther that Mr Tappan whose son I know — and whose clerks young
Tappan and Waldo are — has invented
and established a new and very important
business — which [Wa]ldo thinks would
allow them to burn 99 out of 100
of the stores in NY, which now
only offset and cancel one another.
It is a kind of intelligence office for
the whole country — with branches in the
principal cites, giving information with
regard to the credit and affairs of every
man of business in the country. Of
course it is not popular at the south
and west. It is an extensive business and
will employ a great many clerks.
Love to all — not forgetting aunt
and aunts — and Miss and Mrs Ward.
[Y^r] Affectionate Brother
Henry D. Thoreau.*

THOREAU RESIDENCES

Elsewhere, Thoreau would muse, in a manuscript now at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, that has been dated by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn to the 1848-1850 period and contains material that would get put in WALDEN:

A Sister,

One in whom you have - unbounded faith - whom you can - purely love. A sweet presence and companion making the world populous. Whose heart answers to your heart. Whose presence can fill all space. One who is a spirit. Who attends to your truth. A gentle spirit - a wise spirit - a loving spirit. An enlargement to your being, level to yourself. Whom you presume to know.... The stream of whose being unites with your own without a ripple or a murmur. & this spreads into a sea.

I still think of you as my sister.... Others are of my kindred by blood or of my acquaintance but you are part of me. You are of me & I of you I cannot tell where I leave off and you begin.... To you I can afford to be forever what I am, for your presence will not permit me to be what I should not be.... My sister whom I love I almost have no more to do with. I shall know where to find her.... I can more heartily meet her when our bodies are away. I see her without the veil of the body.... Other men have added to their farms I have annexed a soul to mine.

When I love you I feel as if I were annexing another world to mine.... O Do not



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

disappoint me.

Whose breath is as gentle and salubrious as a Zephyr's whisper. Whom I know as an atmosphere.... Whom in thought my spirit continually embraces. Unto whom I flow.... Who art clothed in white. Who comest like an incense. Who art all that I can imagine - my inspirer. The feminine of me - Who art magnanimous

It is morning when I meet thee in a still cool dewy white sun light In the hushed dawn - my young mother - I thy eldest son.... Whether art thou my mother or my sister - whether am I thy son or thy brother.

On the remembrances of whom I repose - so old a sister art thou - so nearly hast thou recreated me ... whose eyes are like the morning star Who comest to me in the morning twilight.

From another holograph sheet in Thoreau's handwriting, a sheet which is torn at the top:

By turns my purity has inspired and my impurity has cast me down.

My most intimate acquaintance with woman has been a sisters relation, or at most a catholic's virgin mother relation — not that it has always been free from the suspicion of lower sympathy. There is a love of woman [page torn] with marriage; — of woman on the [page torn] She has exerted the influence of a goddess on me; cultivating my gentler humane nature; cultivating & preserving purity, innocence, truth, [end of page]

[Succeeding fragment; marked 1850 by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn.] *Woman, is a nature older than I and commanding from me a vast amount of veneration -like Nature. She is my mother at: the same time that she is my sister, so that she is at any rate an older sister.... I cannot imagine a woman no older than I. ... Methinks that I am younger than ought that I associate with. The youngest child is more than my coeval?*

November 7, Tuesday morning: A school was being taught by Joseph C. Cole in the hall above the Red Brick Store, a very warm and pleasant room, and Elders Willard Richards and William W. Phelps needed this room so that they might continue working on the Prophet's history undisturbed. They moved the tables out of that room, but Mr. Cole moved them back in so they went to [Joseph Smith, Jr.](#)'s mansion to complain. The Prophet determined that their reasons were good and instructed them to take the room and advise this schoolteacher that he would need to look out for himself.

MORMONISM

The Treaty of [Nanking](#), by which the island of [Hong Kong](#) had been obtained by Great Britain on August 9, 1842 —which incidentally was the initial such treaty document to be photocopied— was made available to the public in English in the [London Gazette](#) (the document, in both English and Chinese, would be printed in Canton in the [Chinese Repository](#) for August 1844).¹²



The island of [Hong Kong](#) shall be possessed in perpetuity by Her Majesty Queen Victoria and her successors, and shall be ruled as they see fit.



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



November 7, Tuesday, 1843: When [Ossian](#) personifies the sun and addresses him, it is unnecessary to suppose, as his editor does, that he believed the sun to be an animated being," like the deer or lion. Wherein are we more believers in a God than the heathen, with their mysterious magic rites? as if one name were not as good as another. It is time to have done with these follies. I confess to more sympathy with the Druidical and Scandinavian, as handed down to us, than with the actual creeds of any church in Christendom. They have been reproached for worshipping the ghosts of their fathers rather than any unsubstantial forms; but do we not worship the ghosts of our fathers?

It is the characteristic of all religion and wisdom to substitute being for seeming, and to detect the anima or soul in everything. It is merely an evidence of inner faith when God is practically believed to be omnipresent. None of the heathen are too heathenish for me but those who hold no intercourse with their god. I love the vigorous faith of those heathen who sternly believed something. I say to these modern believers, "Don't interrupt those men's prayers." How much more do the moderns know about God and human life than the ancients? the English than the Chaldeans, or than the Tartars? Does English theology contain the recent discoveries?

Ossian feels and asserts the dignity of the bard. His province is to record the deeds of heroes.

I straightway seize the unfruitful tales

And send them down in faithful verse.

An heroic deed is his star in the night. The simple, impressive majesty of human life as seen through his mists, is that Ossian we know and remember. Who has discovered any higher morality than this? any truer philosophy? — a simple, brave, persevering life adorned with heroic deeds.

The reserved strength of Ossian, and moral superiority to most poets of what is styled a barbarous era, appears in the fact that he can afford to pass over the details of the battle, leaving the heroism to be imagined &om what has already been described of the character of the hero, while he hastens to hint at the result. Most heroic poets of a rude period delight mainly in the mere sound of blows and the flowing of blood. But Ossian has already described the result of the battle when he has minted the character of the heroes.

See an example in Callon and Colvala:

When I heard who the damsel was
Frequent dropped the warrior's tears.
I blessed the radiant barn of youth,
And bade the bard advance.

Dweller of the mountain cave,
Why should Ossian speak of the dead?
They are now forgot in their land,
And their tombs are seen no more, etc.;

or in Ca-lodin:

We engaged, and the enemy won;

Or in Cromar:

We fought down the narrow vale;
The enemy fled; Romarr fell by my sword.

No poet has done such justice to the island of foggy fame.

What a contrast between the stern and desolate poetry of Ossian and that of [Chaucer](#) and the early English bards! The bard indeed seems to have lost much of his dignity and the sacredness of his profession. He does not impose upon us. He has lost all his sternness and bardic fun, and but conceives the deed which the other has prepared to perform. It is a step from the forest and crag to the fireside, — from the hut of the Gael or Stonehenge with its circles of stones to the house of the Englishman. No hero — stands at the door, prepared to break forth into song or heroic actions, but a homely Englishman who has begun to cultivate the comforts of a roof; or a studious gentleman who practises the art of song. He possibly may not receive us. There is not room for all mankind about his hearth. He does not love all things, but a few.

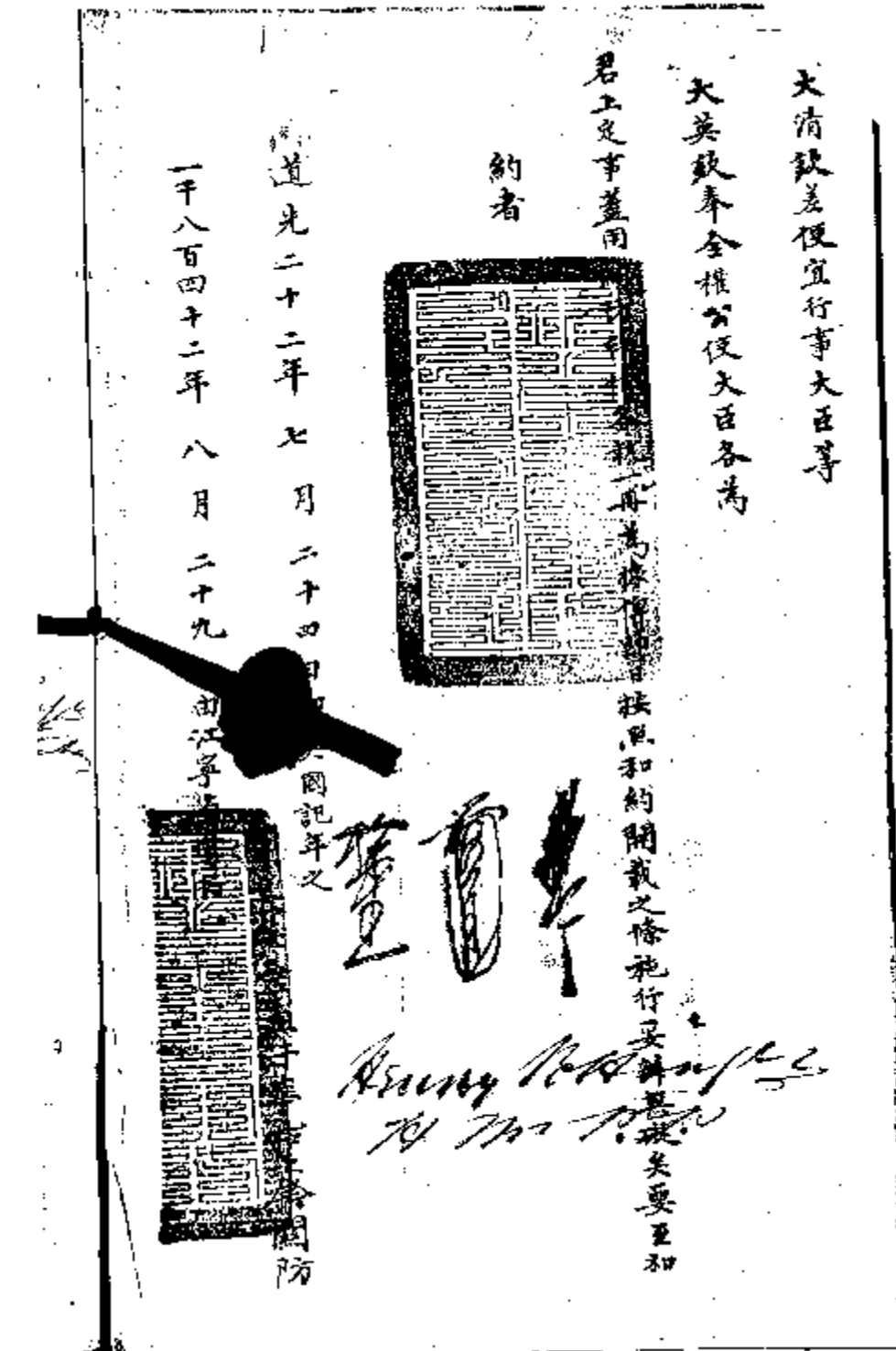
I see there a yellow fireside blaze, and hear the crackling fuel, and expect such heroism as consists with a comfortable life.

In the oldest poems only the most simple and enduring features of humanity are seen; such essential parts of a man as Stonehenge exhibits of a temple. We see the circles of stone, and the upright shafts of the man; we cannot tell whether this was civilized or savage; truly it was neither. For these simple, necessary traits are before and after civilization and are superior to it. All the culture that had a beginning must in the world's history have an end. It is like the fashions of France; like the tricks taught to a few tame bears and monkeys. How wise we are! how ignorant the savage! we with our penknife with a hundred blades, he with his gnarled club. Ask his senses

12. We are referring here to Victoria island, the land mass itself, not to [Hong Kong](#). Hong Kong is not something which was created as of 1842 by an agreement between England and [China](#). It is something that would be created later by English people whose energies were liberated from the control of England by great distance and by the presence of Chinese people, and by Chinese people whose energies were liberated from the control of China by the presence of English people.

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The final page of the Chinese version of the treaty document



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if they are not well fed, if his life is not well earned.

When we come to the pleasant English verse it seems as if the storm had all cleared away, and it were never to thunder and lighten any more. These stern events are traditionary.

We darkly behold (in the poetry of the obscurest eras) the forms of men, —such as can be seen afar through the mist, — no costume, no dialect, but for language you have a tongue itself. As for costume — we can dispense with that, —the skins of beasts or bark of trees are always to be had, — what if the man is naked?

The figurative parts of Ossian are like Isaiah and the Psalms, — the same use is made of gaunt Nature. He uses but few and simple images; but they are drawn from such objects as are familiar to men in all ages. To the poet who can use them greatly in his song, and make them convey his thoughts, the elements and stars seem to be nearer and more friendly. And other men involuntarily relinquish to him somewhat of their claim on Nature. The sun and the sea and the mists are his more than ours.

Let two stand on the highway, and — it shall be known that the sun belongs to one rather than to the other; the one will be found to claim, while the other simply retains, possession. The winds blow for one more than another; and on numerous occasions the uncertain or unworthy possessors silently relinquish their right in them. The most doubtful claimants have paid their money and taken a deed of their birthright, but the real owner is forever known to all men wherever he goes, and no one disputes his claim. For he cannot help using and deriving the profit, while to the dishonest possessor an estate is as idle as his parchment deed of it, and that is all he has purchased. Wherever the owner goes, inanimate things will fly to him and adhere.

What a fame was it that these Ossianic bards and heroes sought? To Fingal, Swaran says:

The hunter coming from the hills,
As he rests on a tomb, will say:
Here the mighties, Fingal and Swaran,
Joined battle, with their hundred bands.
Thus will the weary hunter speak
And our fame will abide forever.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

November 29, Wednesday evening: This had appeared as an advertisement in the Concord Freeman for November 10, 17, and 24:

Concord Lyceum.

The Curators are enabled to announce the following Lectures:

Wednesday Evening, Nov. 8, introductory lecture by Dr. Chs. Jackson, of Boston. Agricultural Chemistry.

Thursday Evening, Nov. 16, R. W. Emerson, of Concord. New England Character.

Thursday Evening, Nov. 23, O. A. Brownson, of Boston. On Demagogues.

Wednesday Evening, Nov. 29, H. D. Thoreau, of New York city.

Thursday Evening, Dec. 7, Rev. Henry Giles, of England. Daniel O'Connell and Irish agitation.

Thursday Evening, Dec. 14, Rev. Henry Giles, of England.

Wednesday Evening, Dec. 20, John S. Keyes, Esq., of Concord.

The lectures will commence precisely at 7 o'clock.
— All interested are invited to attend.

SAMUEL HOAR,

Curators, R. W. EMERSON,

CHAS. W. GOODNOW.

Concord, Nov. 8, '43.

A review of THE DIAL in the January 25, 1844 New-York Daily Tribune selected [Henry Thoreau](#)'s essay for praise and took the occasion to make a back-handed compliment to Emerson: "We deeply desire to quote many pages, by different writers, from this number, but must be content for to-day with the following extracts from a Lecture on Poetry, by HENRY D. THOREAU, a young disciple and companion of Emerson, in whom the true spirit of the author's philosophy is reproduced, without the egotism and indifference to practical life we have regretted to see it cherish in less genial natures." Evidently the manuscript leaves Thoreau read from are lost to us either in consequence of their use as printers copy for The Dial or of his recycling them into an early draft of A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS. We can see in the title used in The Dial that at least three of the ancient poets Thoreau lectured on were [Homer](#), [Ossian](#), and [Geoffrey Chaucer](#); there is no evidence that he lectured on other poets. It is likely that what we now see as "Homer. Ossian. [Chaucer](#)." in EARLY ESSAYS AND MISCELLANIES, since it takes 35 to 40 minutes to read this aloud, would represent more than half of Thoreau's actual oral presentation.

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1844

January: [Henry Thoreau](#)'s translations from the odes of [Pindar](#) and his "[Homer](#). [Ossian](#). [Chaucer](#)." appeared in this current issue of [THE DIAL](#).

READ PINDAR'S ODES

THE DIAL, JANUARY 1844

So, who then was the translator from French into English of the piece "The Preaching of [Buddha](#)" that also appeared? This amounts to the first English version of Chapter V of what we now know as THE LOTUS SUTRA. The piece was based upon two articles by [Professor Eugène Burnouf](#) that had appeared in French in the magazine *La Revue Indépendante* for April/May 1843 ([Professor Burnouf](#) having been the first to translate the LOTUS SUTRA from Sanskrit into a European language). In 1885, George Willis Cooke would finger Miss [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody](#), who not only knew French but also presumably carried the French magazine in question at her bookstore, as the English translator for this part of Thoreau's ethnical scriptures series, but there seems to be no document trail. (According to Sattelmeyer's THOREAU'S READING, item 1202 on page 264, Thoreau eventually would possess Burnouf's *LE LOTUS DE LA BONNE LOI*..., but since this book was not published until 1852 it does not bear upon the issue here.)

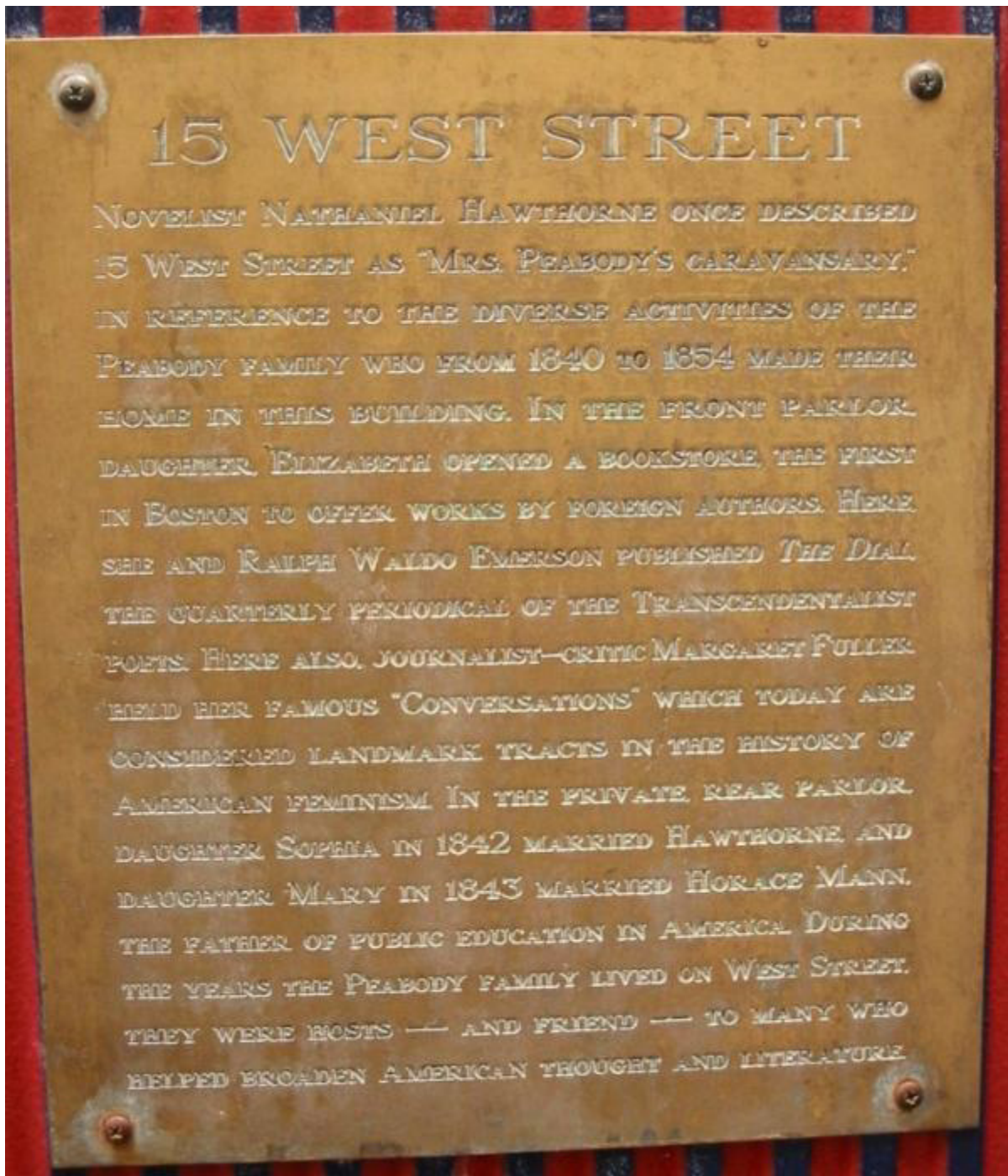


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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

January 25, Thursday: A review of [THE DIAL](#) in the New-York [Daily Tribune](#) selected [Henry Thoreau](#)'s essay for praise and took the occasion to make a back-handed compliment to Emerson: "We deeply desire to quote many pages, by different writers, from this number, but must be content for to-day with the following extracts from a Lecture on Poetry, by HENRY D. THOREAU, a young disciple and companion of Emerson, in whom the true spirit of the author's philosophy is reproduced, without the egotism and indifference to practical life we have regretted to see it cherish in less genial natures." Evidently the manuscript leaves Thoreau read from are lost to us either in consequence of their use as printers copy for THE DIAL or of his recycling them into an early draft of [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#). We can see in the title used in [THE DIAL](#) that at least three of the ancient poets Thoreau lectured on were [Homer](#), [Ossian](#), and [Geoffrey Chaucer](#); there is no evidence that he lectured on other poets. It is likely that what we now see as "Homer. Ossian. Chaucer." in EARLY ESSAYS AND MISCELLANIES, since it takes 35 to 40 minutes to read this aloud, would represent more than half of Thoreau's actual oral presentation.¹³

13. Edward E. Salisbury, "Memoir on the History of Buddhism," [Journal of the American Oriental Society](#) 1 (1843-49): 81-135. [Henry David Thoreau, ed.], "The Preaching of the Buddha," [The Dial](#) 4 (Jan. 1844): 391-401. On that piece see Roger C. Mueller, "A Significant Buddhist Translation by Thoreau," [The Thoreau Society Bulletin](#) (Winter 1977): 1-2. Mueller corrects earlier misunderstandings about the source of the selection in [The Dial](#): Thoreau translated the passages not from Eugène Burnouf's 1844 book but from two articles by that French scholar which were published in Paris the year before in [La revue indépendante](#).



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1845

August 23, Saturday: [Edgar Allan Poe](#)'s "'The Tell-Tale Heart'" was published in The Broadway Journal.

In England, John Lindley reported that "A fatal malady has broken out amongst the [potato](#) crop. On all sides we hear of the destruction."

FAMINE

There had since Wednesday been showers and thunderstorms from Maine to New-York, breaking what had been in eastern Massachusetts a severe drought. The lightning strikes on this day in the vicinity of Littleton, ten miles to the northwest of Walden Pond, both in the morning storm and in the afternoon storm, were particularly devastating, initiating several woodlot fires and several structure fires (such as the Tremont Hotel), stunning cattle in the fields, killing a couple of people, etc. On this afternoon [Henry Thoreau](#) got caught in a rainshower and thunderstorm, as he would report in [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#), and sought refuge in the isolated shanty of a local [Irish](#) immigrant family. The infant of the family would be described in [WALDEN](#) as still "cone-headed" by recent passage through the birth canal, and that girl baby had been born in May of this year:¹⁴

[WALDEN](#): I set out one afternoon to go a-fishing to Fair-Haven, through the woods, to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables. My way led through Pleasant Meadow, an adjunct of the Baker Farm, that retreat of which a poet has since sung, beginning, -

"Thy entry is a pleasant field,
Which some mossy fruit trees yield
Partly to a ruddy brook,
By gliding musquash undertook,
And mercurial trout,
Darting about."

I thought of living there before I went to Walden. I "hooked" the apples, leaped the brook, and scared the musquash and the trout. It was one of those afternoons which seem indefinitely long before one, in which many events may happen, a large portion of our natural life, though it was already half spent when I started. By the way there came up a shower, which compelled me to stand half an hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head, and wearing my handkerchief for a shed; and when at length I had made one cast over the pickerel-weed, standing up to my middle in water I found myself suddenly in the shadow of a cloud, and the thunder began to rumble with such emphasis that I could do no more than listen to it. The gods must be proud, thought I, with such forked flashes to rout a poor unarmed fisherman.

14. Note that "cone-headed," an accurate medical description of a neonate condition, is not an epithet of derision.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



Sat Aug 23d I set out this afternoon to go a fishing –for pickerel to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables– From Walden I went through the woods to Fair Haven –but by the way the rain came on again and my fates compelled me to stand a half hour under a pine –piling boughs over my head, and wearing my pocket handkerchief for an umbrella –and when at length I made one cast over the pickerel weed, the thonder gan romblen in the Heven with that gristly steven, that [Chaucer](#) tells of –(the gods must be proud with such forked flashes and such artillery to rout a poor unarmed fisherman) I made haste to the nearest hut for a shelter. This stood a half a mile off the road and so much the nearer to the pond– There dwelt a shiftless Irishman John Field & his wife –and many children from the broad faced boy that ran by his father’s side to escape the rain to the wrinkled & Sybil like –crone-like infant, not knowing whether to take the part of age or infancy that sat upon its father’s knee as in the palaces of nobles and looked out from its home in the midst of wet and hunger inquisitively upon the stranger with the privilege of infancy The young creature not knowing but it might be the last of a line of kings instead of John Fields poor starveling brat –or I should rather say still knowing that it was the last of a noble line and the hope and cynosure of the world. An Honest hard working –but shiftless man plainly was John Field. And his wife she too was brave to cook so many succeeding dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove –with round greasy face and bare breast –still thinking to improve her condition one day –with the never absent mop in hand –and yet no effects of it visible anywhere– The chickens like members of the family stalked about the room –too much humanized to roast well– They stood and looked in my eye or pecked at my shoe– He told me his story –how hard he worked bogging for a neighbor –ten dollars an acre –and the use of the land with manure for one year– And the little broad faced son worked cheerfully at his fathers side the while not knowing alas how poor a bargain he had made. Living –John Field –alas –without arithmetic.– Failing to live– Do you ever fish said I– Oh yes– I catch a mess when I am lying by –good perch I catch– what your bait– I catch shiners with fish worms & bait the perch with them.

You’d better go now John, said his wife with with glistening hopeful face– But poor John Field disturbed but a couple of fins while I was catching a fair string –& he said it was his luck –and when he changed seats –luck changed seats too.

Thinking to live by some derivative old country mode in this primitive new country e.g. to catch perch –with shiner.

I find an instinct in me conducting to a mystic spiritual life –and also another –to a primitive savage life– Toward evening — as the world waxes darker I am permitted to see the woodchuck stealing across my path, and tempted to seize and devour it. The wildest most desolate scenes are strangely familiar to me

Why not live a hard and emphatic life? not to be avoided –full of adventures and work! Learn much –in it. travel much though it be only in these woods I some-times walk across a field with unexpected expansion and long-missed content –as if there were a field worthy of me. The usual daily boundaries of life are dispersed and I see in what field I stand.

When on my way this after noon shall I go down this long hill in the rain to fish in the pond “I ask myself” –and I say to my-self yet roam far –grasp life & conquer it– learn much –& live– Your fetters are knocked off – you are really free. Stay till late in the night –be unwise and daring– See many men far and near –in their fields and cottages before the sun set –though as if many more were to be seen– And yet much rencontre shall be so satisfactory and simple that no other shall seem possible Do not repose every night as villagers do– The noble life is continuous and unintermitting At least, live with a longer radius– Men come home at night only for the next field or street –where their house hold echoes haunt –and their life pines and is sickly because it breathes its own breath. Their shadows morning & evening reach farther than their daily steps. But come home from far –from ventures & perils –from enterprise and discovery –& crusading –with faith and experience and character. Do not rest much. Dismiss prudence –fear –conformity – Remember only –what is promised. Make the day light you and the night hold a candle –though you be falling from heaven to earth –“from morn to dewy eve a summer’s day.”

for Vulcan’s fall occupied a day but our highest aspirations and performances fill but the interstices of time.

Are we not reminded in our better moments that we have been needlessly husbanding somewhat –perchance – our little God-derived capital –or title to capital guarding it by methods we know? but the most diffuse prodigality a better wisdom teaches –that we *hold* nothing –we are not what we were–

By usurers craft –by Jewish methods –we strive to retain and increase the divinity in us –when the greater part of divinity is out of us.

Most men have forgotten that it was ever morning– But a few serene memories –healthy & wakeful natures there are who assure us that the Sun rose clear, heralded by the singing of birds

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

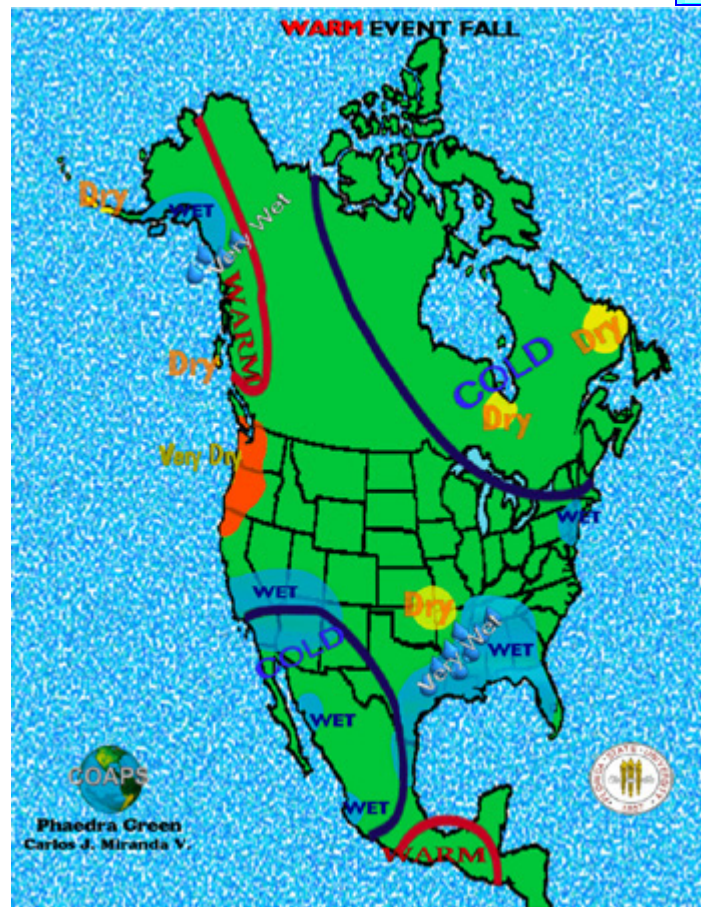
MEMNON

This very day's sun which rose before memnon was ready to greet it.

In all the dissertations –on language –men forget the language that is –that is really universal –the inexpressible meaning that is in all things & every where with which the morning & evening teem. As if language were especially of the tongue. Of course with a more copious hearing or understanding –of what is published the present *languages* will be forgotten.

The rays which streamed through the crevices will be forgotten when the shadow is wholly removed.

TIMELINE OF WALDEN





PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1846

At this point [Henry Thoreau](#) was working on drafts of both [A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS](#) and [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#), using recent journal passages on memory, history, fable, and religion and probably inserting revised versions of “Dark Ages” and “[Homer](#). [Ossian](#). [Chaucer](#).” from his articles in [THE DIAL](#). By February, the 2d draft of WEEK had expanded to nearly twice the length of the 1st draft.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1847

Henry Thoreau worked on drafts of both A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS and WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS, using recent Journal passages on memory, history, fable, and religion. He probably inserted revised versions of “Dark Ages” and “Homer. Ossian. Chaucer.” from THE DIAL.

The Manchester Times and Gazette of Manchester, England, in their edition for December 28, Tuesday, 1847, presented a miscellaneous series of extracts from books. They had mixed among these extracts a paragraph from Thoreau’s “THE POETRY OF OSSIAN”:

In his poetry, as in Homer’s, only the simplest and most enduring features of humanity are seen, such essential parts of a man as Stonehenge exhibits of a temple; we see the circles of stone, and the upright shaft alone. The phenomena of life acquired almost an unreal and gigantic size, seen through his mists. Like all older and grander poetry, it is distinguished by the few elements in the lives of its heroes. They stand on the heath, between the stars and the earth, shrunk to the bones and sinews. The earth is a boundless plain for their deeds. They lead such a simple, dry, and everlasting life, as hardly needs depart with the flesh, but is transmitted entire from age to age. There are but few objects to distract their sight, and their life is as unincumbered [*sic*] as the course of the stars they gaze at. Compared with this simple, fibrous life, our civilised history appears the chronicle of debility, of fashion, and the arts of luxury. But the civilised man misses no real refinement in the poetry of the rudest era. It reminds him that civilization does but dress men. It makes shoes, but it does not toughen the soles of the feet. It makes cloth of finer texture, but it does not touch the skin. Inside the civilised man stands the savage still in the place of honour. We are those blue-eyed, yellow-haired Saxons, these slender, dark-haired Normans.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)

PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



A WEEK: The genuine remains of Ossian, or those ancient poems which bear his name, though of less fame and extent, are, in many respects, of the same stamp with the Iliad itself. He asserts the dignity of the bard no less than Homer, and in his era we hear of no other priest than he. It will not avail to call him a heathen, because he personifies the sun and addresses it; and what if his heroes did "worship the ghosts of their fathers," their thin, airy, and unsubstantial forms? we worship but the ghosts of our fathers in more substantial forms. We cannot but respect the vigorous faith of those heathen, who sternly believed somewhat, and are inclined to say to the critics, who are offended by their superstitious rites, – Don't interrupt these men's prayers. As if we knew more about human life and a God, than the heathen and ancients. Does English theology contain the recent discoveries? Ossian reminds us of the most refined and rudest eras, of Homer, Pindar, Isaiah, and the American Indian. In his poetry, as in Homer's, only the simplest and most enduring features of humanity are seen, such essential parts of a man as Stonehenge exhibits of a temple; we see the circles of stone, and the upright shaft alone. The phenomena of life acquire almost an unreal and gigantic size seen through his mists. Like all older and grander poetry, it is distinguished by the few elements in the lives of its heroes. They stand on the heath, between the stars and the earth, shrunk to the bones and sinews. The earth is a boundless plain for their deeds. They lead such a simple, dry, and everlasting life, as hardly needs depart with the flesh, but is transmitted entire from age to age. There are but few objects to distract their sight, and their life is as unencumbered as the course of the stars they gaze at.

...

The profession of the bard attracted more respect in those days from the importance attached to fame. It was his province to record the deeds of heroes. When Ossian hears the traditions of inferior bards, he exclaims, –

"I straightway seize the unfruitful tales,
And send them down in faithful verse."

His philosophy of life is expressed in the opening of the third Duan of Ca-Lodin.

"Whence have sprung the things that are?
And whither roll the passing years?
Where does Time conceal its two heads,
In dense impenetrable gloom,
Its surface marked with heroes' deeds alone?
I view the generations gone;
The past appears but dim;
As objects by the moon's faint beams,
Reflected from a distant lake.
I see, indeed, the thunderbolts of war,
But there the unmighty joyless dwell,
All those who send not down their deeds
To far, succeeding times."...

**PEOPLE OF
A WEEK****OSSIAN**



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN



A WEEK: There are other, savager, and more primeval aspects of nature than our poets have sung. It is only white man's poetry. Homer and Ossian even can never revive in London or Boston. And yet behold how these cities are refreshed by the mere tradition, or the imperfectly transmitted fragrance and flavor of these wild fruits. If we could listen but for an instant to the chant of the Indian muse, we should understand why he will not exchange his savageness for civilization. Nations are not whimsical. Steel and blankets are strong temptations; but the Indian does well to continue Indian. After sitting in my chamber many days, reading the poets, I have been out early on a foggy morning, and heard the cry of an owl in a neighboring wood as from a nature behind the common, unexplored by science or by literature. None of the feathered race has yet realized my youthful conceptions of the woodland depths. I had seen the red Election-bird brought from their recesses on my comrades' string, and fancied that their plumage would assume stranger and more dazzling colors, like the tints of evening, in proportion as I advanced farther into the darkness and solitude of the forest. Still less have I seen such strong and wilderness tints on any poet's string. These modern ingenious sciences and arts do not affect me as those more venerable arts of hunting and fishing, and even of husbandry in its primitive and simple form; as ancient and honorable trades as the sun and moon and winds pursue, coeval with the faculties of man, and invented when these were invented. We do not know their John Gutenberg, or Richard Arkwright, though the poets would fain make them to have been gradually learned and taught. According to Gower, —

“And Iadahel, as saith the boke,
Firste made nette, and fishes toke.
Of huntyng eke he fond the chace,
Whiche nowe is knowe in many place;
A tent of clothe, with corde and stake,
He sette up first, and did it make.”

Also, Lydgate says: —

“Jason first sayled, in story it is tolde,
Toward Colchos, to wyne the flees of golde.
Ceres the Goddess fond first the tilthe of londe;
Also, Aristeus fonde first the usage
Of mylke, and cruddis, and of honey swote;
Peryodes, for grete avauntage,
From flyntes smote fuyre, daryng in the roote.”

PEOPLE OF
A WEEK

OSSIAN



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

During this year [Waldo Emerson](#) contributed the following deeply profound thought about our human trajectory to his journal:

It is not determined of man whether he came up or down: Cherubim or Chimpanzee.

At the end of the journal entries for this year, [Waldo](#) listed his recent readings in Oriental materials: “Plotinus; Synesius; Proclus; Institutes of Menu; Bhagavat Geeta; Vishnu Purana; [Confucius](#); [Zoroaster](#); [Saadi](#); Hafiz; Firdusi; Ferradeddin.”

The culture of the Imagination, how imperiously demanded, how doggedly denied. There are books which move the sea and the land, and which are the realities of which you have heard in the fables of Cornelius Agrippa and Michael Scott.

Sweetness of reading: Montaigne, [Froissart](#); [Chaucer](#).

Ancient: the three Banquets [Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch].

Oriental reading: [HE FORGOT TO FILL THIS OUT]

Grand reading: Plato; Synesius; [Dante](#); [Vita Nuova](#); Timæus (weather, river of sleep); Cudworth; Stanley.

All-reading: Account of Madame de Staël’s rule; Rabelais; Diderot, [Marguerite Aretin](#).

English reading: Clarendon; Bacon; Milton; Johnson; Northcote.

Manuals: Bacon’s Essays; [Ben Jonson](#); Ford; Beaumont and Fletcher.

Favorites: Sully; Walpole; Evelyn; Walton; [Burton](#); [White’s Selborne](#); Aubrey; Bartram’s Travels; French Gai Science, Fabliaux.

Tonic books: Life of Michael Angelo; [Gibbon](#); Goethe; Coleridge.

Novels: Manzoni.

Of Translation: Mitchell.

Importers: Cousin; De Staël; Southey.

Emerson also incidentally mentioned in his journal for this year someone he had been reading, [Charles Kraitsir](#), mentioning all the languages in his head. A few pages later he included something that Kraitsir had written, that “All the languages should be studied abreast.”



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

1850

November 16, Saturday: An issue of Chambers' Edinburgh Journal:

CHAMBERS' EDINBURGH JOURNAL

ISSUE OF NOVEMBER 16



November 16th I found 3 good arrowheads to-day behind Dennises. The season for them began some time ago as soon as the farmers had sown their winter rye –but the spring after the melting of the snow is still better.

I am accustomed to regard the smallest brook with as much interest for the time being as if it were the Orinoco or Mississippi –what is the difference I would like to know but mere size– And when a tributary rill empties in it is like the confluence of famous rivers I have read of. When I cross one on a fence I love to pause in mid-passage and look down into the water –& study its bottom its little mystery– There is none so small but you may see a pickerel regarding you with a wary eye –or a pigmy trout glance from under the bank –or in the spring perchance a sucker will have found its way far up its stream. You are sometimes astonished to see a pickerel far up some now shrunk rill where it is a mere puddle by the road side. I have stooped to drink at a clear spring no bigger than a bushel basket in a meadow from which a rill was scarcely seen to dribble away and seen lurking at its bottom 2 little pickerel not so big as my finger, sole monarchs of this their ocean –and who probably would never visit a larger water

In literature it is only the wild that attracts us –dulness is only another name for tameness– It is the untamed uncivilized free & wild thinking in Hamlet –in the Iliad –and in all the scriptures and mythologies that delights us –not learned in the schools –not refined & polished by art– A truly good book is something as wildly natural and primitive –mysterious & marvellous ambrosial & fertile –as a fungus or a lichen– Suppose the muskrat or beaver were to turn his views to literature what fresh views of nature would he present The fault of our books & other deeds is that they are too humane, I want something speaking in some measure to the condition of muskrats & skunk cabbage as well as of men –not nearly to a pining & complaining coterie of philanthropists. I discover again about these times that cranberries are good to eat in small quantities as you are crossing the meadows.

I hear deep amid the birches some row among the birds or the squirrels where evidently some mystery is being developed to them– The jay [Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*] is on the alert –mimicking every woodland note – what *has* happened –? who's dead? The twitter retreats before you & you are never let into the secret –some tragedy surely is being enacted –but murder will out– How many little drama's are enacted in the depths of the woods at which man is not present!

When I am considering which way I will walk my needle is slow to settle –my compass varies by a few degrees and does not always point due south west –and there is good authority for these variations in the heavens– It pursues the straighter course for it at last –like the ball which has come out of a rifle or the quoit that is twirled when cast. To day it is some particular wood or meadow or deserted pasture in that direction, that is my south-west

I love my friends very much but I find that it is of no use to go to see them– I hate them commonly when I am near them. They belie them selves & deny me continually.

Somebody shut the cat's tail in the door just now & she made such a catwaul as has driven two whole worlds out of my mind. thoughts I saw unspeakable things in the sky & looming in the horizon of my mind –and now they are all reduced to a cat's tail. Vast films of thought floated through my brain like clouds pregnant with rain enough to fertilize and restore a world –and now they are all dissipated.

There is a place whither I should walk today though oftenest I fail to find when by accident I ramble into it, great is my delight. I have stood by my door sometimes half an hour irresolute as to what course I should take– Apparently all but the evergreens & oaks have lost their leaves now. It is singular that the shrub-oaks retain their leaves through the winter, why do they?

The walnut trees spot the sky with black nuts.– Only catkins are seen on the birches.

CHAUCER

CAT



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

I saw the other day a dead limb which the wind or some other cause had broken nearly off, which had lost none of its leaves though all the rest of the tree which was flourish had shed them

There seems to be in the fall a sort of attempt at a spring—a rejuvenescence as if the winter were not expected by a part of Nature—violets—dandelions—and some other flowers blossom again—and mulleins & innumerable other plants begin again to spring & are only checked by the increasing cold. There is a slight uncertainty whether there will be any winter this year.

I was pleased today to hear a great noise & trampling in the woods produced by some cows who came running toward their homes which apparently had been scared by something unusual as their ancestors might have been by wolves. I have known sheep to be scared in the same and a whole flock to run bleating to me for protection. What shall we do with a man who is afraid of the woods—their solitude & darkness—What salvation is there for him? God is silent & mysterious.

Some of our richest days are those in which no sun shines outwardly, but so much the more a sun shines inwardly. I love nature, I love the landscape because it is so sincere. It never cheats me. It never jests—It is cheerfully—musically earnest. I rely on the earth.

Land where the wood has been cut off & is just beginning to come up again is called sprout land.

The sweet scented life everlasting has not lost its scent yet—but smells like the balm of the fields.

The partridge-berry leaves checker the ground on the side of moist hill-sides in the woods—Are *they* not properly called *checker* berries?

The era of wild apples will soon be over— I wander through old orchards of great extent now all gone to decay all of native fruit which for the most part went to the cider mill— But since the temperance reform—and the and the general introduction of grafted fruit—no wild apples such as I see every where in deserted pastures and where the woods have grown up among them—are set out. I fear that he who walks over these hills a century hence will not know the pleasure of knocking off wild apples—¹⁵ Ah poor man! there are many pleasures which he will be debarred from. Notwithstanding the prevalence of the Baldwin & the porter, I doubt if as extensive orchards are set out to day in this town as there were a century ago when these vast straggling cider orchards were set out. Men stuck in a tree then by every wall side & let it take its chance— I see nobody planting trees today in such out of the way places along almost every road & lane & wall side, and at the bottom of dells in the wood. Now that they have grafted trees & pay a price for them they collect them into a plot by their houses & fence them in.

My Journal should be the record of my love. I would write in it only of the things I love. My affection for any

15. William M. White's version of the journal entry is:

The era of wild apples will soon be over.

I wander through old orchards of great extent,

Now all gone to decay,

All of native fruit

Which for the most part went to the cider-mill.

But since the temperance reform

And the general introduction of grafted fruit,

No wild apples,

Such as I see everywhere in deserted pastures,

And where the woods have grown up among them,

Are set out.

I fear that he who walks over these hills a century hence

Will not know the pleasure of knocking off wild apples.

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PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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aspect of the world. What I love to think of. I have no more distinctness or pointedness in my yearnings than an expanding bud –which does indeed point to flower & fruit to summer & autumn –but is aware of the warm sun & spring influence only. I feel ripe for something yet do nothing –cant discover what that thing is. I feel fertile merely. It is seed time with me– I have lain fallow long enough.

Notwithstanding a sense of unworthiness which possesses me not without reason –notwithstanding that I regard myself as a good deal of a scamp –yet for the most part the spirit of the universe is unaccountably kind to me – and I enjoy perhaps an unusual share of happiness. Yet I question sometimes if there is not some settlement to come.

WALDEN: From a hill-top you can see a fish leap in almost any part; for not a pickerel or shiner picks an insect from this smooth surface but it manifestly disturbs the equilibrium of the whole lake. It is wonderful with what elaborateness this simple fact is advertised, –this piscine murder will out,– and from my distant perch I distinguish the circling undulations when they are half a dozen rods in diameter.

**PEOPLE OF
WALDEN****CHAUCER****GEOFFREY CHAUCER**



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER


PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1851

January 10, Friday: Richard Wagner completed his essay "Oper und Drama."



January 10: The snow shows how much of the *mts* in the horizon are covered with forest— I can also see plainer as I stand on a hill what proportion of the township is in forest.

Got some excellent frozen thawed apples off of Anursnack— Soft & luscious as a custard —and free from worms & rot Saw a partridge (**Ruffed Grouse**  *Bonasa umbellus*) budding—but they did not appear to have pecked the apples

There was a remarkable sunset a mother of pearl sky seen over the Price farm Some small clouds as well as the edges of large ones most brilliantly painted with mother of pearl tints through & through. I never saw the like before. Who can foretel the sunset—what it will be?

The near and bare hills covered with snow look like mountains—but the *mts* in the horizon do not look higher than hills.

I frequently see a hole in the snow where a partridge has squatted the mark or form of her tail very distinct.

The chivalric & heroic spirit which once belonged to the chevalier or rider only seems now to reside in the walker— To represent the chivalric spirit we have no longer a knight—but a walker errant— I speak not of Pedestrianism, or of walking a thousand miles in a thousand successive hours—

The Adam who daily takes a turn in his garden

methinks I would not accept of the gift of life If I were required to spend as large a portion of it sitting bent up or with my legs crossed as the shoemakers and tailors do. As well be tied head & heels together & cast into the sea— Making acquaintance with my extremities

I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art taking walks daily—not exercise—the legs or body merely—nor barely to recruit the spirits but positively to exercise both body & spirit —& to succeed to the highest & worthiest ends by the abandonment of all specifics ends.— who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering— — And this word saunter by the way is happily 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 perchance the children exclaimed There goes a sainte terror a holy lander— They who never go to the holy land in their walks as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers & vagabonds—

{*Two leaves missing*}

than usually jealous of my freedom I feel that my connexions with & obligations to society are at present very slight & transient. Those slight labors which afford me a livelihood & by which I am serviceable to my contemporaries are as yet a pleasure to me and I am not often reminded that they are a necessity. So far I am successful —and only he is successful in his business who makes that pursuit which affords him the highest pleasure sustain him. But I foresee that if my wants should be much increased the labor required to supply them would become a drudgery— If I should sell both my forenoons & afternoons to society neglecting my peculiar calling there would be nothin left worth living for. I trust that I shall never thus sell my birth-right for a mess of pottage

F. Andrew Michaux says that "the species of large trees are much more numerous in North America than in Europe: in the U S there are more than 140 species that exceed 30 feet in height — — ; in France there are but 30 that attain this size, of which 18 enter into the composition of the forests, & seven only are employed in building."

The perfect resemblance of the Chestnut Beech & hornbeams in Europe & the U S rendered a separate figure unnecessary.

He says the white oak "is the only oak on which a few of the dried leaves persist till the circulation is renewed in the spring."

Had often heard his father say that "the fruit of the common European walnut, in its natural state, is harder than that of the American species just mentioned [the Pacanenut Hickory] and inferior to it in size & quality."

The arts teach us a thousand lessons. Not a yard of cloth can be woven without the most thorough fidelity in the weaver. The ship must be made *absolutely* tight before it is launched.

It is an important difference between two characters that the one is satisfied with a happy but level success but, the other as constantly elevates his aim. Though my life is low, if my spirit looks upward habitually at an elevated angle —it is, as it were redeemed— When the desire to be better than we are is really sincere we are



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

instantly elevated, and so far better already

I lose my friends of course as much by my own ill treatment & ill valuing of them (prophaning of them cheapening of them) as by their cheapening of themselves –till at last when I am prepared to them justice I am permitted to deal only with the memories of themselves –their ideals still surviving in me –no longer with their actual selves–

We exclude ourselves– As the child said of the stream in which he bathed head or foot V Confucius

It is something to know when you are addressed by divinity and not by a common traveller.

I went down cellar just now to get an armful of wood –and passing the brick piers with my wood & candle –I heard methought a common place suggestion –but when as it were by accident –I reverently attended to the hint –I found that it was the voice of a God who had followed me down cellar to speak to me.

How many communications may we not lose through inattention?

I would fain keep a journal which should contain those thoughts & impressions which I am most liable to forget that I have had Which would have, in one sense the greatest remoteness –in another the greatest nearness, to me.

'Tis healthy to be sick sometimes,¹⁶

I do not know but the reason why I love some Latin verses more than whol English poems –is simply in the elegant terseness & conciseness of the language –an advantage which the individual appears to have shared with his nation.

When we can no longer ramble in the fields of Nature, we ramble in the fields of thought & literature. The old become readers– Our heads retain their strength when our legs have become weak.

English literature from the days of the minstrels to the Lake Poets *Chaucer* & Spencer & Shakspeare & Milton included breathes no quite fresh & in this sense wild strain It is an essentially tame & civilized literature reflecting Greece and Rome. Her wilderness is a greenwood her wild man a Robinhood. There is plenty of genial love of nature in her poets but

Her chronicles inform us when her wild animals, but not when the wild man in her became extinct

There was need of America

I cannot think of any poetry which adequately expresses this yearning for the wild. the *wilde*.

Ovid says

Nilus in extremum fugit perterritus orbem,
Occulitque caput, quod adhuc latet.–
Nilus terrified fled to the extremity of the globe,
And hid his head, which is still concealed –

And we moderns must repeat –quod adhuc latet.

Phaeton's Epitaph

Hic situs est Phaëton, currûs auriga paterni;
Quem si non tenuit, magnis tamen excidit ausis.

His sister Lampetie –

subitâ radice retenta est.

All the sisters were changed to trees while They were in vain beseeching Their mother not to break their branches

cortex in verba novissima venit.

16.The poet W.H. Auden has in 1962 brought forward a snippet from this day's entry as:

THE VIKING BOOK OF APHORISMS, A PERSONAL SELECTION BY W.H. AUDEN...

Pg	Topic	Aphorism Selected by Auden out of Thoreau
212	The Professions	'Tis healthy to be sick sometimes.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

His brother Cynus lamenting the death of Phaeton –killed by Joves lightning –& the metamorphosis of his sisters –was changed into a Swan –

Nec se caeloque, Iovique
Credit, ut injustè missi memor ignis ab illo.

Reason why the swan does not fly –

Nor trusts himself to the heavens
Nor to Jove, as if remembering the fire unjustly sent by him

i.e. against Phaeton.

precibusque minas regaliter addit.

II-397

Jove –

royally adds threats to prayers.

Callisto –

Miles erat Phoebes

i.e. a huntress

– – (neque enim coelestia tingi
Ora decet lachrymis) II-621
For it is not becoming that the faces
of the celestials be tinged with tears

How much more fertile a Nature has Grecian Mythology its root in than English Literature! The nature which inspired mythology still flourishes– Mythology is the crop which the old world bore before its soil was exhausted– The west is preparing to add its fables to those of the east. A more fertile nature than the Mississippi valley. None of your four hour nights for me me– The wise man will take a fool's allowance– The corn would not come to much if the nights were but four hours long
The soil in which those fables grew is deep and inexhaustible.
Lead cast by the Balearian sling.

Volat illud, et incandescit eundo;
Et quos non habuit, sub nubibus invenit, ignes.

II-728

That flies & grows hot with going,
And fires which it had not finds under the clouds.

The old world with its vast deserts –& its arid & elevated steppes & table lands contrasted with the new world with its humid & fertile valleys & savannahs & prairies –& its boundless primitive forests– Is like the exhausted Ind corn lands contrasted with the peat meadows, America requires some of the sand of the old world to be carted onto her rich but as yet unassimilated meadows

I went some months ago to see a panorama of the Rhine It was like a dream of the Middle ages– I floated down its historic stream in something more than imagination under bridges built by the Romans and repaired by later heroes past cities & castles whose very names were music to me made my ears tingle –& each of which was the subject of a legend. There seemed to come up from its waters & its vine-clad hills & vallys a hushed music as of crusaders departing for the Holy Land– There were Ehrenbreitstein & Rolandseck & Coblenz which I knew



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

only in history. I floated along through the moonlight of history under the spell of enchantment It was as if I remembered a glorious dream as if I had been transported to a heroic age & breathed an atmosphere of chivalry Those times appeared far more poetic & heroic than these

Soon after I went to see the panorama of the Mississippi and as I fitly worked my way upward in the light of today –& saw the steamboats wooding up –& looked up the Ohio & the Missouri & saw its unpeopled cliffs –& counted the rising cities –& saw the Indians removing west across the stream & heard the legends of Dubuque & of Wenona's Cliff –still thinking more of the future than of the past or present –I saw that this was a Rhine stream of a different kind that the foundations

{*One leaf missing*}

all this West –which our thoughts traverse so often & so freely. We have never doubted that their prosperity was our prosperity– It is the home of the younger-sons As among the Scandinavians the younger sons took to the seas for their inheritance and became the Vikings or Kings of the Bays & colonized Ice land & Greenland & probably discovered the continent of America

[Guyot](#) says –“the Baltic Sea has a depth of only 120 feet between the coasts of Germany and those of Sweden;”
p 82

“The Adriatic, between Venice & Trieste, has a depth of only 130 feet.”

“Between France & England, the greatest depth does not exceed 300 feet;”

He says

The most extensive forest “the most gigantic wilderness” on the earth is in the basin of the Amazon & extends almost unbroken more than 1500 miles

South America the kingdom of palms no where a greater number of species “This is a sign of the preponderating development of leaves over every other part of the vegetable growth; of that expansion of foliage, of that leafiness, peculiar to warm & moist climates. America has no plants with slender shrunken leaves, like those of Africa and New Holland. The Ericas, or heather, so common, so varied, so characteristic of the flora of the Cape of Good Hope, is a form unknown to the New World. There is nothing resembling those *Metrosideros* of Africa, those dry Myrtles (*Eucalyptus*) and willow-leaved acacias, whose flowers shine with the liveliest colors, but their narrow foliage, turned edgewise to the vertical sun, casts no shadow.”

my own

The white man derives his nourishment from the earth from the roots & grains The potatoe & wheat & corn & rice & sugar –which often grow in fertile & pestilential river bottoms fatal to the life of the cultivator The Indian has but a slender hold on the earth– He derives his nourishment in great part but indirectly from her through the animals he hunts

–“compared with the Old World, the New World is the humid side of our planet, the *oceanic*, *Vegetative* world, the passive element awaiting the excitement of a livelier impulse from without.” [[Guyot](#)]

{*One leaf missing*}

“For the American, this task is to work the virgin soil,”–

“Agriculture here already assumes proportions unknown everywhere else.” [[Guyot](#)]



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1852

Winter: In this timeframe, [Waldo Emerson](#) was musing to his journal:

'Tis said that the age ends with the poet or successful man, who knots up into himself the genius or idea of his nation; and, that, when the Jews have at last flowered perfectly into Jesus, there is the end of the nation. When Greece is complete in Plato, Phidias, Pericles, the race is spent & rapidly takes itself away. When Rome has arrived at Caesar & Cicero, it has no more that it can do & retreats. When Italy has got out dante, all the rest will be rubbish. So that we ought rather to be thankful that our hero or poet does not hasten to be born in America, but still allows us others to live a little, & warm ourselves at the fire of the sun, for, when he comes, we others must pack our petty trunks, & begone. But I say that Saxendom is tough & manyheaded, & does not so readily admit of absorption & being sucked & vampyrized by a Representative as fluid races. For have not the English stood [Chaucer](#)? stood [Shakspeare](#)? & [Milton](#), & [Newton](#)? & survived unto this day with more diffusion of ability, with a larger number of able gentlemen in all departments of work than any nation ever had?



GEOFFREY CHAUCER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

JOHN MILTON

ISAAC NEWTON

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN



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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: May 15, 2014



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

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, 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.



PEOPLE OF A WEEK AND WALDEN:

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

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.