The soothing advice of the professional biological determinist is ever the same regardless of era: "Don’t bother to try too hard, just relax and go with the flow, because you are what you are." The professional biological determinist of Thoreau’s era was the phrenologist, whereas the professional biological determinist of our own era is the Thoreau Society’s pet sociobiologist, Professor E.O. Wilson of Harvard.

Thoreau was familiar with phrenology, having studied the works of the founders of that discipline while a student at Harvard College, and having rubbed elbows with one of the chief local advocates of phrenology, Mr. Horace Mann, Sr. Phrenologists were even disturbing graves in Concord. It is marvelous that this had no influence on Henry, did not persuade him at all.
October 21, Tuesday: George Combe was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He would make of himself a lawyer and would turn to the science of Franz Josef Gall of Paris, known as “phrenology,” in an attempt to identify criminals at the earliest moment so that they could be proactively intercepted and prevented from beginning their lives of crime, and to identify the insane so they could be earlier committed to asylums.

**HISTORY’S NOT MADE OF WOULD. WHEN SOMEONE REVEALS, FOR INSTANCE, THAT A PARTICULAR INFANT WOULD MAKE OF HIMSELF A LAWYER AND WOULD TURN TO THE SCIENCE OF FRANZ JOSEF GALL OF PARIS, KNOWN AS “PHRENOLOGY,” IN AN ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY CRIMINALS AT THE EARLIEST MOMENT, AND TO IDENTIFY THE INSANE, S/HE DISCLOSES THAT WHAT IS BEING CRAFTED IS NOT REALITY BUT PREDESTINARIANISM. THE RULE OF REALITY IS THAT THE FUTURE HASN’T EVER HAPPENED, YET.**
October 27, Friday: Andrew Combe was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, a younger brother of George Combe. He would follow in the footsteps of his lawyer elder brother and turn to the science of Franz Josef Gall of Paris, known as “phrenology,” in an attempt to identify criminals at the earliest moment so that they could be proactively intercepted and prevented from beginning their lives of crime, and to identify the insane so they could be earlier committed to asylums.

**History’s not made of would. When someone reveals, for instance, that a particular infant would follow in the footsteps of his elder brother and would turn to the science of Franz Josef Gall of Paris, known as “phrenology,” in an attempt to identify criminals at the earliest moment, and to identify the insane, s/he discloses that what is being crafted is not reality but predestinarianism. The rule of reality is that the future hasn’t ever happened, yet.**
Having attended high school in Edinburgh, and the University of Edinburgh, George Combe entered a lawyer’s office in order to learn the law.

Johann Gaspar Spurzheim became Dr. Franz Joseph Gall’s dissectionist and assistant.
George Combe hung out his shingle as a lawyer in Edinburgh.

Drs. Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Gaspar Spurzheim parted company forever. You turn left and I’ll turn right.
The term phrenology was coined by Dr. Thomas Ignatius Maria Forster. An article on the system of “craniology” of Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Gaspar Spurzheim appeared in the Edinburgh Review. The article denounced this as “a piece of thorough quackery from beginning to end” in a manner that persuaded the local attorney George Combe of its absurdity. However, when Dr. Spurzheim came to Edinburgh and at a friend’s house offered a demonstration of the dissection of a human brain, Combe was sufficiently impressed to begin to attend the Doctor’s lectures, and became convinced “that the brain is the organ of mind; that the brain is an aggregate of several parts, each subserving a distinct mental faculty; and that the size of the cerebral organ is, caeteris paribus, an index of power or energy of function.”

Johann Gaspar Spurzheim began to publish on “his” new system of organology and brain anatomy, starting with The Physiognomical System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim; Founded on an Anatomical and Physiological Examination of the Nervous System in General, and of the Brain in Particular; and Indicating the Dispositions and Manifestations of the Mind.
George Combe’s initial essay on phrenology appeared in The Scots Magazine, and shortly afterward he offered a series of papers on phrenology in the Literary and Statistical Magazine. His younger brother Andrew Combe, having served an apprenticeship in a surgery, passed at Surgeon’s Hall and went to Paris to complete his medical studies.
George Combe’s Essays on Phrenology, or an Inquiry into the Principles and Utility of the System of Drs Gall and Spurzheim, and into the Objections Made against It (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute), made up of his articles in The Scots Magazine and Literary and Statistical Magazine (later editions would bear the title A System of Phrenology). Sir George Steuart Mackenzie’s Illustrations of Phrenology.
The Edinburgh Phrenological Society was established by George Combe, Andrew Combe, David Welsh, James Brownlee, William Waddell, and Lindsey Mackersey.
December: This was the year in which Dr. Andrew Combe was beginning his medical practice. He had defended phrenology before the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh. At this point the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh began to publish the Phrenological Journal.

Speaking of popular delusions and the madness of crowds, this was also the month of publication of an anti-Roman Catholic novel that would be a real crowd-pleaser, running through some dozen editions and being translated into most of the languages of Europe, Father Clement; A Roman Catholic Story.
George Combe’s ELEMENTS OF PHRENOLOGY, 1824.
During this year and the following one a schism would take place in the Edinburgh Phrenological Society over George Combe’s doctrine of natural laws, between the Combeans and a group that self-described as “the Evangelicals.”

Combe began a series of public discussions with Sir William Hamilton, which would continue into the following year. He would offer himself as a candidate for the chair of logic at Edinburgh but Sir William would be selected.
George Combe’s *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects* (J. Anderson jun.) in some quarter led to his denunciation as a materialist and an atheist.

Franz Joseph Gall died near Paris.
The study of paradigms of bridge failure by Louis Joseph Vicat, *RAPPORT SUR LES PONTS EN FIL DU FER SUR LE RHONE*, was necessitated by the collapse of a number of France’s suspension bridges.

The French removed one of the massive obelisks of red granite still surviving at Luxor in Egypt (after its temples had been plundered by the Persians in 520BCE), and this would be set up in the Place de la Concorde in Paris in 1836 (what’s the point? — Oh, you know).

The phrenologist Dr. George Combe’s *OBSERVATIONS ON MENTAL DERANGEMENT*. The Phrenological Society of Paris was established.

Heinrich Heine went to Paris as a journalist, and there would write newspaper articles about the development of democracy and capitalism in France.

Jean-Baptiste Say became Professor of Political Economy at the *College de France*. A chair of Egyptian antiquities was created there, especially for Jean-François Champollion.
George Combe got married with Cecilia Siddons, a daughter of the actress Sarah Siddons.
The red-hot idea in the study of the mental powers and dispositions of this era was that an individual’s intellectual abilities and personality traits could be revealed through measurement of his or her skullbone.

**ELEMENTS OF PHRENOLOGY.**

BY GEORGE COMBE, LATE PRESIDENT OF THE PHRENOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

SECOND AMERICAN EDITION

IMPROVED AND ENLARGED, FROM THE THIRD EDINBURGH, BY THE AUTHOR.

WITH ENGRAVINGS.


December 8, Thursday: David Henry Thoreau supplemented his borrowings from the Harvard Library by checking out, from the library of the “Institute of 1770”, William Beckford’s Italy: with Sketches of Spain and Portugal (London and Philadelphia: R. Bentley, 1834),
Terrible Tractoration, and other poems. By Christopher Caustic, M.D. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Aberdeen, and Honorary Member of no less than nineteen very learned societies [pseud.]. 3d American ed. (Boston: Russell, Shattuck & Co., 1836, a book of poetry and commentary of a sort which can be best described by suggesting that it might have been better had the author of it, the journalist Thomas Green Fessenden, persisted in his prior career as an attorney at law),

Terrible Tractoration

and the 3d of the five volumes of his Professor Adam Ferguson’s The History of the Progress and

This volume covers the period from Gaius Julius Caesar’s departure for Gaul to his defeat of Pompey at Pharsalus in Thessaly.

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
Dr. George Combe’s ON THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CEREBELLUM BY Drs. Gall, Vimont, Broussais, Roget, Rudolphi, Prichard, Tieemann; Also Answers to the Objections Urged Against Phrenology, with Dr. A. Combe (Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart). The author visited the United States to investigate the treatment of criminals. His brother Dr. Andrew Combe became personal physician to the British royal family. The Phrenological Association, formed as an alternative to the British Association which had spurned the phrenologists, first met in Newcastle. The Birmingham Phrenological Society was established. It was a good year for phrenology.
October 9, Wednesday: The phrenologist George Combe accompanied the Honorable Horace Mann, Sr., secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education, and Massachusetts governor Edward Everett, to a school convention scheduled for the following day in Taunton. At issue was the nature of the school-books to be approved by the state. It had been agreed that a 9-person panel would decide, made up of a representative of each of 9 religious bodies, and only one orthodox minister of this group was holding out against the incorporation of Combe’s THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN as this textbook.

“I look upon Phrenology as the guide of Philosophy, and the handmaid of Christianity; whoever disseminates true Phrenology, is a public benefactor.”
— Horace Mann, Sr.
The Phrenological Association met in Glasgow. The Exeter Phrenological Society was established. Dr. Andrew Combe completed his PHYSIOLOGICAL AND MORAL MANAGEMENT OF INFANCY. George Combe returned from the United States to Scotland and his MORAL PHILOSOPHY was published. The most reputable phrenologist in the English-speaking world, he pronounced that a man of science could tell, merely by looking at the skull of a Hindu, how it was that “one hundred millions of them are at this moment kept in subjection by forty or fifty thousand Englishmen.”

See, you can just look at his skull and tell, that sucker’s dead.

During the 1840s George Combe, Robert Noel, and Dr. Gustav Scheve would be lecturing on phrenology in Germany — which would turn out to be as fertile a field as England.

This sort of thing is needed, in order to help us understand how such a public personage as Charles Dickens could speak as he would in 1857 upon the mutiny in the Indian colony:

I wish I were Commander in Chief of India. The first thing I would do to strike that Oriental race with amazement ... should be to proclaim to them in their language, that I considered my holding that appointment by leave of God, to mean that I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested.

Hold it hard against them, Chuck! During this year, serial publication began of Charles Dickens’s MASTER HUMPHREY’S CLOCK as an initial part of his THE OLD CURIOsITY SHOP.

Spring: Horace Mann, Sr. ventured south along the coast and then westward, with the phrenologist George Combe, who very much approved of the shape of Mann’s skull. The traveling party passed through Philadelphia and visited Baltimore, Maryland, going on into Ohio and visiting Wheeling and Cincinnati. (I don’t know at what point Mann turned back.) Mr. and Mrs. Combe went into Indiana, to North Bend, where they met with General Benjamin Harrison, presidential hopeful:

He is sixty-seven, slender, stoops, of middle stature, and nervous and bilious temperament. His anterior lobe is long, tolerably high, moderately broad and compact; upper and under regions equally developed. His Alimentiveness and Acquisitiveness seem deficient. The base of the brain in front of the ear is narrow, above and behind full; and the coronal region is average. His appearance is more that of a literary than that of a military man; it is gentlemanly, and his manners are simple, kind, and characterized by excellent taste. In
short, he is like a man who has seen much of the world, moved in the best society, and who retains the polish of social life with the simplicity and kindness of the desert.

From Indiana Mr. and Mrs. Combe passed into Kentucky, visiting Louisville, Frankfort, Lexington, and Maysville, returning by way of Cincinnati and passing up the Ohio to Pittsburgh, Johnston, and Harrisburgh, and then to Philadelphia, whence they proceeded to Staten Island in order to embark aboard the British Queen for their return voyage across the Atlantic.
The Phrenological Association met in London.

The Dumfries Phrenological Society was established.

The most reputable phrenologist in the English-speaking world, George Combe, offered his NOTES ON THE UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA, in which he pronounced: ¹

that the existing races of native American Indians show skulls inferior in their moral and intellectual development to those of the Anglo-Saxon race, and that, morally and intellectually, these Indians are inferior to their Anglo-Saxon invaders, and have receded before them.

November 16, Tuesday: The consumptive doctor Andrew Combe wrote to his brother George Combe, the phrenologist, indicating that the reason why he had not married and produced children was that they were supposing his familial predisposition to tuberculosis, otherwise known as the tubercular diathesis, to be hereditary.² (Were many tubercular people refraining from marrying and producing children because they suspected the hereditary transmissibility of the constitution, or diathesis? Might this have been something that was on people’s minds in the Thoreau family?)

After the fighting of November 13th, in which the Afghans had been repulsed, there had not been further attacks. Lieutenant Walker, with a resalah of irregular horse, had been taking advantage of this lull in the fighting to rush magazine supplies from time to time under cover of darkness into the Bala Hissar. Lieutenant Eyre would comment³ that “the manifest superiority of the Bala Hissar as a military position, led to the early discussion of the expediency of abandoning the cantonment, and consolidating our forces in the above-mentioned stronghold. The Envoy himself was, from the first, greatly in favour of this move, until overruled by the many objections urged against it by the military authorities; to which, as will be seen by a letter from him presently quoted, he learned by degrees to attach some weight himself; but to the very last it was a measure that had many advocates, and I venture to state my own firm belief that, had we at this time moved into the Bala Hissar, Cabul would have been still in our possession. But Brigadier Shelton having firmly set his face against the movement from the first moment of its proposition, all serious idea of it was gradually abandoned, though it continued to the very last a subject of common discussion.”

¹. Let’s consider this to be the case of the receding Indian with the receding Indian skull.
At Ruprecht Karl University in Heidelberg, George Combe delivered a course of 22 lectures on phrenology, in the German language. He traveled in Europe, studying the management of schools, prisons, and asylums.

Another great schism arose at a meeting of the Phrenological Association in London, when W. Engeldue declared that phrenology proved materialism to be true. What’s this spiritual bullshit — thoughts and emotions arise in brains, which are material objects!

The Sheffield Phrenological Society was established.

A Christian Phrenological Society was established by John Epps and J. Hawkins in London.

A practical (that is, practicing) phrenologist, Orson Squires Fowler, published the booklet Fowler on Matrimony: or Phrenology and Physiology Applied to the Selection of Companions for Life; including Directions to the Married for Living Together Affectionately and Happily:

Orson say: compatibility and incompatibility are to be foreseen in the bumps on your heads:
The British royal family had the lumps on the head of their toddler Bertie examined by a reputable phrenologist, Dr. Andrew Combe, author of the reputable textbook PHYSIOLOGICAL AND MORAL MANAGEMENT OF INFANCY, and were assured that their child’s brain was “defective.”

“I look upon Phrenology as the guide of Philosophy, and the handmaid of Christianity; whoever disseminates true Phrenology, is a public benefactor.”

— Horace Mann, Sr.

4. It just shows to go you, that anybody who has their head examined ought to have their head examined.
October 15, Tuesday: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born to a Lutheran pastor Karl Ludwig Nietzsche and a former teacher Franziska Nietzsche in Röcken near Leipzig, Prussia. The family considered itself not German but Polish (the name “Nietzschy” derives from “Nikolaus”).

Robert Chambers confessed in a letter to a friend that he had made the experiment of reading aloud a chapter from the anonymous sensation VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION to the novelist Catherine Crowe.

At just about this same time (it was a Saturday walk at midmonth) George Combe the noted phrenologist suggested to Chambers that he should be reading VESTIGES — a book Combe was presently studying which Chambers would surely find agreeable.
October 20, Sunday: George Combe the noted phrenologist wrote to Friend Lucretia Mott about a new work that displayed great scientific learning, that he had just recommended to his friend Robert Chambers, titled *VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION*, which she should read as “another battery erected against superstition.”

The crowd-pleasing heresy offered by this book was that since species had evolved over time directed by divine intervention, to superior forms, we the perusers of this literature must be superior beings and greatly entitled, and authorized to do whatever we want. Although this is of course an ever popular conceit, it was inevitable that some would be wise enough to recognize it as what it is, and so the crowd-pleasing pseudoscientist who had authored it would need to keep his identity secret until his death 27 years later.

**VESTIGES** offered enticing opportunities.... [Various cited passages] struck just the right note of tasteful solemnity. Fashionable readers, both women and men, scanned the reviews for such passages ... opening up possibilities for talk.... *VESTIGES* had the advantage of making an orthodox subject into something just dangerous enough to be attractive.... [Divine creation had been given] a topical frisson for the first time in years.... All in all, *VESTIGES* offered wonderful opportunities for displaying conversational skill.
June 27, Friday: The attorney George Combe, the most reputable phrenologist in the English-speaking world, wrote to Horace Mann, Sr., attributing VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION to Robert Chambers but asking that the matter be held in confidence.

“I look upon Phrenology as the guide of Philosophy, and the handmaid of Christianity; whoever disseminates true Phrenology, is a public benefactor.”

— Horace Mann, Sr.
August 9, Monday: The phrenologist Dr. Andrew Combe, author of so much evil, who had for the longest time been suffering from tuberculosis and trying various cures, succumbed at Gorgie near Edinburgh, Scotland. Physician, heal thyself? — No, don’t say that, he didn’t know he was evil.

A dozen elders of the Mormon church assembled and decided that they would designate their new settlement “Salt Lake City, Great Basin, North America” and employ that as “a caption for all letters and documents issued from this place.”

Margaret Fuller reported to the New-York Tribune from Milan on her experience of the summer in northern Italy:

Milan, August 9, 1847.

Since leaving Rome, I have not been able to steal a moment from the rich and varied objects before me to write about them. I will, therefore, take a brief retrospect of the ground. I passed from Florence to Rome by the Perugia route, and saw for the first time the Italian vineyards. The grapes hung in little clusters. When I return, they will be full of light and life, but the fields will not be so enchantingly fresh, nor so enamelled with flowers.

The profusion of red poppies, which dance on every wall and glitter throughout the grass, is a great ornament to the landscape. In full sunlight their vermilion is most beautiful. Well might Ceres gather such poppies to mingle with her wheat.

We climbed the hill to Assisi, and my ears thrilled as with many old remembered melodies, when an old peasant, in sonorous phrase, bade me look out and see the plain of Umbria. I looked back and saw the carriage toiling up the steep path, drawn by a pair of those light-colored oxen Shelley so much admired. I stood near the spot where Goethe met with a little adventure, which he has described with even more than his usual delicate humor. Who can ever be alone for a moment in Italy? Every stone has a voice, every grain of dust seems instinct with spirit from the Past, every step recalls some line, some legend of long-neglected lore.

Assisi was exceedingly charming to me. So still! — all temporal noise and bustle seem hushed down yet by the presence of the saint. So clean! — the rains of heaven wash down all impurities into the valley. I must confess that, elsewhere, I have shared the feelings of Dickens toward St. Francis and St. Sebastian, as the “Mounseer Tonsons” of Catholic art. St. Sebastian I have not been so tired of, for the beauty and youth of the figure make the monotony with which the subject of his martyrdom is treated somewhat less wearisome. But St. Francis is so sad, and so ecstatic, and so brown, so entirely the monk, — and St. Clara so entirely the nun! I have been very sorry for her that he was able to draw her from the human to the heavenly life; she seems
so sad and so worn out by the effort. But here at Assisi, one cannot help being penetrated by the spirit that flowed from that life. Here is the room where his father shut up the boy to punish his early severity of devotion. Here is the picture which represents him despoiled of all outward things, even his garments, — devoting himself, body and soul, to the service of God in the way he believed most acceptable. Here is the underground chapel, where rest those weary bones, saluted by the tears of so many weary pilgrims who have come hither to seek strength from his example. Here are the churches above, full of the works of earlier art, animated by the contagion of a great example. It is impossible not to bow the head, and feel how mighty an influence flows from a single soul, sincere in its service of truth, in whatever form that truth comes to it.

A troop of neat, pretty school-girls attended us about, going with us into the little chapels adorned with pictures which open at every corner of the streets, smiling on us at a respectful distance. Some of them were fourteen or fifteen years old. I found reading, writing, and sewing were all they learned at their school; the first, indeed, they knew well enough, if they could ever get books to use it on. Tranquil as Assisi was, on every wall was read Viva Pio IX! and we found the guides and workmen in the shop full of a vague hope from him. The old love which has made so rich this aerial cradle of St. Francis glows warm as ever in the breasts of men; still, as ever, they long for hero-worship, and shout aloud at the least appearance of an object.

The church at the foot of the hill, Santa Maria degli Angeli, seems tawdry after Assisi. It also is full of records of St. Francis, his pains and his triumphs. Here, too, on a little chapel, is the famous picture by Overbeck; too exact a copy, but how different in effect from the early art we had just seen above! Harmonious but frigid, grave but dull; childhood is beautiful, but not when continued, or rather transplanted, into the period where we look for passion, varied means, and manly force.

Before reaching Perugia, I visited an Etrurian tomb, which is a little way off the road; it is said to be one of the finest in Etruria. The hill-side is full of them, but excavations are expensive, and not frequent. The effect of this one was beyond my expectations; in it were several female figures, very dignified and calm, as the dim lamp-light fell on them by turns. The expression of these figures shows that the position of woman in these states was noble. Their eagles' nests cherished well the female eagle who kept watch in the eyrie.

Perugia too is on a noble hill. What a daily excitement such a view, taken at every step! life is worth ten times as much in a city so situated. Perugia is full, overflowing, with the treasures of early art. I saw them so rapidly it seems now as if in a trance, yet certainly with a profit, a manifold gain, such as Mahomet thought he gained from his five minutes' visits to other spheres. Here are two portraits of Raphael as a youth:
it is touching to see what effect this angel had upon all that
surrounded him from the very first.
Florence! I was there a month, and in a sense saw Florence: that
is to say, I took an inventory of what is to be seen there, and
not without great intellectual profit. There is too much that
is really admirable in art, — the nature of its growth lies
before you too clearly to be evaded. Of such things more
elsewhere.
I do not like Florence as I do cities more purely Italian. The
natural character is ironed out here, and done up in a French
pattern; yet there is no French vivacity, nor Italian either.
The Grand Duke — more and more agitated by the position in which
he finds himself between the influence of the Pope and that of
Austria — keeps imploring and commanding his people to keep
still, and they are still and glum as death. This is all on the
outside; within, Tuscany burns. Private culture has not been in
vain, and there is, in a large circle, mental preparation for a
very different state of things from the present, with an ardent
desire to diffuse the same amid the people at large. The
sovereign has been obliged for the present to give more liberty
to the press, and there is an immediate rush of thought to the
new vent; if it is kept open a few months, the effect on the
body of the people cannot fail to be great. I intended to have
translated some passages from the programme of the
*Patria*, one of
the papers newly started at Florence, but time fails. One of the
articles in the same number by Lambruschini, on the duties of
the clergy at this juncture, contains views as liberal as can
be found in print anywhere in the world. More of these things
when I return to Rome in the autumn, when I hope to find a little
leisure to think over what I have seen, and, if found worthy,
to put the result in writing.
I visited the studios of our sculptors; Greenough has in clay a
David which promises high beauty and nobleness, a bass-relief,
full of grace and tender expression; he is also modelling a head
of Napoleon, and justly enthusiastic in the study. His great
group I did not see in such a state as to be secure of my
impression. The face of the Pioneer is very fine, the form of
the woman graceful and expressive; but I was not satisfied with
the Indian. I shall see it more as a whole on my return to
Florence.
As to the Eve and the Greek Slave, I could only join with the
rest of the world in admiration of their beauty and the fine
feeling of nature which they exhibit. The statue of Calhoun is
full of power, simple, and majestic in attitude and expression.
In busts Powers seems to me unrivalled; still, he ought not to
spend his best years on an employment which cannot satisfy his
ambition nor develop his powers. If our country loves herself,
she will order from him some great work before the prime of his
genius has been frittered away, and his best years spent on
lesser things.
I saw at Florence the festivals of St. John, but they are poor
affairs to one who has seen the Neapolitan and Roman people on
such occasions.
Passing from Florence, I came to Bologna, — learned Bologna; indeed an Italian city, full of expression, of physiognomy, so to speak. A woman should love Bologna, for there has the spark of intellect in woman been cherished with reverent care. Not in former ages only, but in this, Bologna raised a woman who was worthy to the dignities of its University, and in their Certosa they proudly show the monument to Matilda Tambroni, late Greek Professor there. Her letters, preserved by her friends, are said to form a very valuable collection. In their anatomical hall is the bust of a woman, Professor of Anatomy. In Art they have had Properzia di Rossi, Elizabetta Sirani, Lavinia Fontana, and delight to give their works a conspicuous place.
In other cities the men alone have their Casino dei Nobili, where they give balls, conversazioni, and similar entertainments. Here women have one, and are the soul of society.
In Milan, also, I see in the Ambrosian Library the bust of a female mathematician. These things make me feel that, if the state of woman in Italy is so depressed, yet a good-will toward a better is not wholly wanting. Still more significant is the reverence to the Madonna and innumerable female saints, who, if, like St. Teresa, they had intellect as well as piety, became counsellors no less than comforters to the spirit of men.
Ravenna, too, I saw, and its old Christian art, the Pineta, where Byron loved to ride, and the paltry apartments where, cheered by a new affection, in which was more of tender friendship than of passion, he found himself less wretched than at beautiful Venice or stately Genoa.
All the details of this visit to Ravenna are pretty. I shall write them out some time. Of Padua, too, the little to be said should be said in detail.
Of Venice and its enchanted life I could not speak; it should only be echoed back in music. There only I began to feel in its fulness Venetian Art. It can only be seen in its own atmosphere. Never had I the least idea of what is to be seen at Venice. It seems to me as if no one ever yet had seen it, — so entirely wanting is any expression of what I felt myself. Venice! on this subject I shall not write much till time, place, and mode agree to make it fit.
Venice, where all is past, is a fit asylum for the dynasties of the Past. The Duchesse de Berri owns one of the finest palaces on the Grand Canal; the Duc de Bordeaux rents another; Mademoiselle Taglioni has bought the famous Casa d’Oro, and it is under repair. Thanks to the fashion which has made Venice a refuge of this kind, the palaces, rarely inhabited by the representatives of their ancient names, are valuable property, and the noble structures will not be suffered to lapse into the sea, above which they rose so proudly. The restorations, too, are made with excellent taste and judgment, — nothing is spoiled. Three of these fine palaces are now hotels, so that the transient visitor can enjoy from their balconies all the wondrous shows of the Venetian night and day as much as any of
their former possessors did. I was at the Europa, formerly the Giustiniani Palace, with better air than those on the Grand Canal, and a more unobstructed view than Daniell’s.

Madame de Berri gave an entertainment on the birthnight of her son, and the old Duchesse d’Angoulême came from Vienna to attend it. ’T was a scene of fairy-land, the palace full of light, so that from the canal could be seen even the pictures on the walls. Landing from the gondolas, the elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen seemed to rise from the water; we also saw them glide up the great stair, rustling their plumes, and in the reception-rooms make and receive the customary grimaces. A fine band stationed on the opposite side of the canal played the while, and a flotilla of gondolas lingered there to listen. I, too, amid, the mob, a pleasant position in Venice alone, thought of the Stuarts, Bourbons, Bonapartes, here in Italy, and offered up a prayer that other names, when the possessors have power without the heart to use it for the emancipation of mankind, might be added to the list, and other princes, more rich in blood than brain, might come to enjoy a perpetual *villeggiatura* in Italy. It did not seem to me a cruel wish. The show of greatness will satisfy every legitimate desire of such minds. A gentle punishment for the distributors of *letters de cachet* and Spielberg dungeons to their fellow-men.

Having passed more than a fortnight at Venice, I have come here, stopping at Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, Lago di Garda, Brescia. Certainly I have learned more than ever in any previous ten days of my existence, and have formed an idea what is needed for the study of Art and its history in these regions. To be sure, I shall never have time to follow it up, but it is a delight to look up those glorious vistas, even when there is no hope of entering them.

A violent shower obliged me to stop on the way. It was late at night, and I was nearly asleep, when, roused by the sound of bubbling waters, I started up and asked, "Is that the Adda?" and it was. So deep is the impression made by a simple natural recital, like that of Renzo’s wanderings in the *Promessi Sposi*, that the memory of his hearing the Adda in this way occurred to me at once, and the Adda seemed familiar as if I had been a native of this region.

As the Scottish lakes seem the domain of Walter Scott, so does Milan and its neighborhood in the mind of a foreigner belong to Manzoni. I have seen him since, the gentle lord of this wide domain; his hair is white, but his eyes still beam as when he first saw the apparitions of truth, simple tenderness, and piety which he has so admirably recorded for our benefit. Those around lament that the fastidiousness of his taste prevents his completing and publishing more, and that thus a treasury of rare knowledge and refined thought will pass from us without our reaping the benefit. We, indeed, have no title to complain, what we do possess from his hand is so excellent.

At this moment there is great excitement in Italy. A supposed spy of Austria has been assassinated at Ferrara, and Austrian
troops are marched there. It is pretended that a conspiracy has been discovered in Rome; the consequent disturbances have been put down. The National Guard is forming. All things seem to announce that some important change is inevitable here, but what? Neither Radicals nor Moderates dare predict with confidence, and I am yet too much a stranger to speak with assurance of impressions I have received. But it is impossible not to hope.

December 11, Saturday: A cartoon by Horace Mayhew in Punch depicted the sensational anonymous bestseller *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* as a bastard child, waiting disconsolately outside the door of the Foundling Hospital with a sign reading WANTS A FATHER.

During Robert Chambers’ lifetime he would confide in only seven people. Among the over sixty suggestions as to the authorship were, in alphabetical order:

- Ada, countess of Lovelace
- Neil Arnott
- Charles Babbage
- Samuel Bailey
- Henry Peter Brougham
- William Carpenter
- Anne Chambers (the manuscript was in her handwriting)
- Robert Chambers
- George Combe
- Andrew Crosse
- Catherine Crowe
- Charles Darwin
- Edward Forbes
- Charles Lyell
- Thomas Simmons Mackintosh
- Harriet Martineau
- Francis Newman
- John Pringle Nichol
• William Makepeace Thackeray
• Sir Richard Rawlinson Vyvyan, Bart. (Emerson’s guess)
• Hewett Watson

The authorship would be revealed in 1884, after Chambers was safely in his grave. For the time being,
only the following people would know for sure:
• Neil Arnott
• Anne Chambers, who copied manuscripts for her husband so his handwriting would not appear
• William Chambers
• Robert Cox
• Alexander Ireland
• John Pringle Nichol
• David Page, who would become a disgruntled ex-employee and try to reveal the actual authorship,
  with his problematic accusations hitting the newspapers on November 24, 1854 and December 2, 1854
George Combe established the 1st infant school in Edinburgh, Scotland.
In response to the commercial crisis of this year, George Combe’s pamphlet *The Currency Question*. His *Phrenology Applied to Painting and Sculpture* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co.).
George Combe’s *On the Relation Between Science and Religion* (Maclachlan and Stewart).

**The Science of 1857**
August 14, Saturday: The phrenologist George Combe died at Dr Lane’s hydropathic establishment at Moor Park, Farnham (where Charles Darwin’s daughter Etty also was being treated) while engaged in a revision to the 9th edition of The Constitution of Man.

There had been miles and miles of leftover cable aboard the US Steam Frigate Niagara, at the completion of the Atlantic Cable project. The initial advertisement for a souvenir chunk of it appeared in the Illustrated London News:

ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH.—A slice of the CABLE, set as a Charm in gold or silver gilt, is now ready, forming an elegant appendage and lasting memento of this wonderful achievement of science, size of a sovereign, including the mounting. Silver gilt, 12s. 6d; Gold, 21s., post-free upon receipt of order. Address EDWARDS and JONES, 161, Regent-street, W.
November 25, Monday: Professor Henri-Frédéric Amiel, who would be referred to as the “Swiss Thoreau,” wrote in his *Journal Intime*: “To understand a drama requires the same mental operation as to understand an existence, a biography, a man. It is a putting back of the bird into the egg, of the plant into its seed, a reconstitution of the whole genesis of the being in question. Art is simply the bringing into relief of the obscure thought of nature; a simplification of the lines, a falling into place of groups otherwise invisible. The fire of inspiration brings out, as it were, designs traced beforehand in sympathetic ink. The mysterious grows clear, the confused plain; what is complicated becomes simple — what is accidental, necessary.

In short, art reveals nature by interpreting its intentions and formulating its desires. Every ideal is the key of a long enigma. The great artist is the simplifier.

Every man is a tamer of wild beasts, and these wild beasts are his passions. To draw their teeth and claws, to muzzle and tame them, to turn them into servants and domestic animals, fuming, perhaps, but submissive — in this consists personal education.”

Worried father Prince Albert visited his son Bertie at Cambridge, to discuss his son’s sexual liaison with the Irish actress Nellie Clifden. The two had a long walk and talk in the rain, the gist of which would have been “For goodness sake keep it in your pants.”

[This seems to be the appropriate place to introduce a comment about self-fulfilling prophesies. Early on these parents had subjected their child to a series of inspections by a reputable phrenologist, Dr. Andrew Combe, who had felt his head bumps and announced, essentially, that due to “defective” brain development Bertie was going to be naturally a sexy sort of guy who would have a lifelong problem with keeping it in his pants. His brain would make him do it! Bertie had grown up knowing that this was his scientific diagnosis and had never been informed that this “science” was hokum. So, what do you expect, question mark? Parents, let this be a warning to you — do not let anyone manipulate your child’s head bumps. Beyond that, do not allow anyone even to cast your child’s horoscope! There is such a thing as the self-fulfilling prophesy and it is the duty of every decent pair of parents to protect their offspring from that sort of mentalist trap.]

“I look upon Phrenology as the guide of Philosophy, and the handmaid of Christianity; whoever disseminates true Phrenology, is a public benefactor.”

— Horace Mann, Sr.
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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

- Remark by character “Garin Stevens” in William Faulkner’s INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Prepared: December 26, 2015
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.
Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology—but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

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