FRANCES ANNE “FANNY” KEMBLE (BUTLER)¹

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

¹ A grandson would be Owen Wister. This painting was done by Thomas Sully the year before Fanny wedded with Pierce Butler.
November 27, Monday: Fanny Kemble was born in London. Her father Charles Kemble was a stage manager at the Covent Garden Theatre, her mother Marie Kemble an actress.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

2nd day 27th of 11th Mo// It has been a day (to me) of some feeling sensibility on various subjects - In the eveng called a little while at the black school. At Aunt M Gould & D Williams’s – Dear Aunt M Gould is in a poor destitute situation is entirely blind with one eye & the sight in the other fails fast, my pitty & tender compassion was much excited in setting with her this evening, & desires were raised in my heart that the Lord may help her that He who was her Guide in Youth may be her Staff to lean upon in Old Age -

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT
October 5, Monday: Chester A. Arthur was born.

Fanny Kemble made her 1st appearance on the stage when she appeared as Juliet in her father’s production of “Romeo and Juliet.” London’s Covent Garden Theatre was £13,000 in debt when she started her career but she proved so popular than within a short period it was back in the black. Fanny soon had several elderly admirers including Sidney Smith, Thomas Macaulay, and George Stephenson, who would invite her to the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

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

2nd day 5th of 10th M 1829 Since the last date we have enjoyed the company with us, at the Institution, of our dear son J S Gould, which has been very pleasant to us both to see him as a steady hopeful Youth, having been during his absence from us preserved in plainness of Dress & address & I trust in good measure from the contaminating influence of the spirit of the World & I think has deepened in the best sense. — This Afternoon he & his Mother have gone to Newport on his way home to Hudson where we expect he will remain for some time to come —& perhaps as long as he or we may live but we are thankful deeply so, that he is doing so well, & desire not to repine at the loss of his company tho’ we feel it sensibly & keenly

NO-ONE’S LIFE IS EVER NOT DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY HAPPENSTANCE
March: Two especially beautiful dresses were made for Fanny Kemble to wear as Portia in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

**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.**
September 15, Wednesday: Various US commissioners, including General Coffee and John Eaton, met with various Choctaw chiefs and headmen at Dancing Rabbit Creek (Mississippi?), to pressure them to sign over their territory and begone across the Mississippi River.

On an experimental railroad ride from London to Brighton, which would succeed in replacing what had been six arduous hours by stagecoach with what would be two pleasant hours by steam coach “at the rate of five and thirty miles per hour,” the young and impressionable Fanny Kemble had been seated beside engineer George Stephenson, he of the “dark and deeply marked countenance,” aboard one of the cars drawn along after the locomotive Rocket.

The most intense curiosity and excitement prevailed, and though the weather was uncertain, enormous masses of densely packed people lined the road, shouting and waving hats and handkerchiefs as we flew by them. We travelled at 35 miles an hour (swifter than a bird flies). When I closed my eyes this sensation of flying was quite delightful.

I had been unluckily separated from my mother in the first distribution of places, but by an exchange of seats which she was enabled to make she rejoined me when I was at the height of my ecstasy, which was considerably damped by finding that she was frightened to death, and intent upon nothing but devising means of escaping from a situation which appeared to her to threaten with instant annihilation herself and all her travelling companions.

When we neared Manchester the sky grew cloudy and dark, and it began to rain. The vast concourse of people who had assembled to witness the triumphant arrival of the successful travellers was of the lowest orders of mechanics and artisans, among whom great distress and a dangerous spirit of discontent with the government at that time prevailed. Groans and hisses greeted the carriage, full of influential personages, in which the Duke of Wellington sat.

High above the grim and grimy crowd of scowling faces a loom had been erected, at which sat a tattered, starved-looking weaver, evidently set there as a representative man, to protest against the triumph of machinery and the gain and glory which the wealthy Liverpool and Manchester men were likely to derive from it.

With such experiments completed, the grand opening ceremonies for the initial long-distance passenger railway for which high-speed locomotives were designed, the Liverpool to Manchester Railway, was marred on this day by the accidental death of William Huskisson, a prominent politician. The directors of the company had been unsure whether to use locomotives or stationary engines on their line, and had offered a competition in October 1829 in which the best locomotive had win a prize of £500, their concept being that the winning design might be good enough to be used on their new railway. The Stockton & Darlington line, which had opened in 1825, had been reported as having reduced the cost of transporting coal from 18s. to 8s. 6d. the ton [would that be the long ton or the short ton?]. The investors in the Bridgewater Canal had been making a killing in the transporting of raw materials and finished goods between the textile industry centered in Manchester
and the prime port of Liverpool. Shares in the canal company, originally purchased at £70, were selling by 1825 at £1,250 and paying an annual dividend of £35! A group of businessmen led by James Sandars had therefore recruited Stephenson to build them a 31-mile Liverpool & Manchester Railway the main objective of which would be to let the water out of this investment pool.

Since the Marquis of Stafford, who had become the principal shareholder in the canal venture upon the death of the Duke of Bridgewater, was realizing an annual profit of £100,000 from his shares, it was obvious that he would lead in a struggle against this railway plan. After Stephenson’s proposed route had been nixed in the House of Commons, James Sandars recruited a company run by George Rennie to do another survey and perhaps build it. However, the officials of this company refused to deal with Stephenson (they did not consider him a bona fide engineer) and for this reason lost the contract. In 1826 Parliament had finally granted permission for the Manchester & Liverpool Railway project to be begun. George Stephenson needed to figure out a way to pass over the unstable peat bog of Chat Moss, create a 9-arch viaduct across the Sankey Valley, and cut through solid rock for two full miles at Olive Mount. The Liverpool & Manchester railway was to
consist of a double line of rails of the fish-bellied type laid on stone or timber sleepers. Passenger trains were to start at the Crown Street Station in Liverpool and, after passing Moorish Arch at Edge Hill, arrive at Water Street in Manchester.

The Duke of Wellington was traveling toward the ceremonial cite despite his declaration of to the economic unviability of these new schemes to build rail roads:

> Depend upon it, Sir, nothing will come of them!

There were eight trainloads of dignitaries coming out of Manchester that morning. On the south one of the two tracks, a trainload of the grandest dignitaries of all, the Duke representing the aristocracy of England and Sir Robert Peel representing the people of England, was being pulled by the locomotive *Northumbrian* manned by none other than its inventor Stephenson.

> “[The railroad will] only encourage the common people to move about needlessly.”
>  — Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

On the north one of the two tracks, the seven trainloads of lesser dignitaries were to pass along at close interval. Alfred, Lord Tennyson was one of the passengers on the initial train from Liverpool to Manchester. The whole apparatus had been so unfamiliar—it was such a black night, and there had been so many people standing around the train in the station— that he presumed at first that the wheels of the train were running in a groove rather than atop a rail. He created this line which would appear in 1842 in “Locksley Hall”: 
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Seventeen miles out of Manchester, 56 minutes out, the routine was to be that all the trains would stop to take on water at the Parkside station, and then the one train of extreme unctions on the south track would remain while the other seven trainloads of unctions passed by and saluted them. The opening ceremony included a procession of eight locomotives, including the Northumbrian, the Rocket, the North Star, and the Phoenix. After the group of special visitors were given a ride on the Northumbrian, a key MP in the governmental reorganization then going on, a gent by the name of William Huskisson, got out to stretch his legs and the Duke saw him and waved, and the man started toward the state carriage in response to this hail from the chief just as the Rocket came thundering in. Warnings were shouted when people realized that the Rocket, driven by Joseph Locke, was about to pass the Northumbrian. The Duke opened his door and held out his hand but Huskisson, who had acute rheumatism, fell and the locomotive badly mangled one of his legs. Lady Wilton was so positioned as to witness everything, and later reported the event to Fanny Kemble:

We started on Wednesday last, to the number of about eight hundred people, in carriages. The most intense curiosity and excitement prevailed, and, though the weather was uncertain, enormous masses of densely packed people lined the road, shouting and waving hats and handkerchiefs as we flew by them. What with the sight and sound of these cheering multitudes and the tremendous velocity with which we were borne past them, my spirits rose to the true champagne height, and I never enjoyed anything so much as the first hour of our progress. I had been unluckily separated from my mother in the first distribution of places, but by an exchange of seats which she was enabled to make she rejoined me when I was at the height of my ecstasy, which we considerably damped by finding that she was frightened to death, and intent upon nothing but devising means of escaping from a situation which appeared to her to threaten with instant annihilation herself and all her travelling companions. While I was chewing the cud of this disappointment, which was rather bitter, as I had expected her to be as delighted as myself with our excursion, a man flew by us, calling out through a speaking-trumpet to stop the engine, for that somebody in the directors’ carriage had sustained an injury. We were all stopped
accordingly, and presently a hundred voices were heard exclaiming that Mr Huskisson was killed; the confusion that ensued is indescribable; the calling out from carriage to carriage to ascertain the truth, the contrary reports which were sent back to us, the hundred questions eagerly uttered at once, and the repeated and urgent demands for surgical assistance, created a sudden turmoil that was quite sickening. At last we distinctly ascertained that the unfortunate man’s thigh was broken. From Lady Wilton, who was in the Duke’s carriage, and within three yards of the spot where the accident happened, I had the following details, the horror of witnessing which we were spared through out situation behind the great carriage. The engine had stopped to take in a supply of water, and several of the gentlemen in the directors’ carriage had jumped out to look about them. Lord Wilton, Count Batthyany, Count Matuscenitz, and Mr Huskisson among the rest were standing talking in the middle of the road, when an engine on the other line, which was parading up and down merely to show its speed, was seen coming down upon them like lightning. The most active of those in peril sprang back into their seats; Lord Wilton saved his life only by rushing behind the Duke’s carriage, and Count Matuscenitz had but just leaped into it, with the engine all but touching his heels as he did so; while poor Mr Huskisson, less active from the effects of age and ill-health, bewildered, too, by the frantic cries of “Stop the engine! Clear the track!” that resounded on all sides, completely lost his head, looked helplessly to the left and right, and was instantaneously prostrated by the fatal machine, which dashed down like a thunderbolt upon him, and passed over his leg, smashing and mangling it in the most horrible way. (Lady Wilton said she distinctly heard the crushing of the bone.) So terrible was the effect of the appalling accident that, except that ghastly “crushing” and poor Mrs Huskisson’s piercing shriek, not a sound was heard or a word uttered among the immediate spectators of the catastrophe. Lord Wilton was the first to raise the poor sufferer, and calling to aid his surgical skill, which is considerable, he tied up the severed artery, and, for a time at least, prevented death by loss of blood. Mr Huskisson was then placed in a carriage with his wife and Lord Wilton, and the engine, having been detached from the directors’ carriage, conveyed them to Manchester. So great was the shock produced upon the whole party by this event, that the Duke of Wellington declared his intention not to proceed, but to return immediately to Liverpool. However, upon its being represented to him that the whole population of Manchester had turned out to witness the procession, and that a disappointment might give rise to riots and disturbances, he consented to go on, and gloomily enough the rest of the journey was accomplished....

After this disastrous event the day became overcast, and as we neared Manchester the sky grew cloudy and dark, and it began to rain. The vast concourse of people who had assembled to witness the triumphant arrival of the successful travellers was of the lowest order of mechanics and artisans, among whom great
distress and a dangerous spirit of discontent with the government at that time prevailed. Groans and hisses greeted the carriage, full of influential personages, in which the Duke of Wellington sat. High above the grim and grimy crowd of scowling faces a loom had been erected, at which sat a tattered, starved-looking weaver, evidently set there as a representative man, to protest against the triumph of machinery and the gain and glory which the wealthy Liverpool and Manchester men were likely to derive from it. The contrast between our departure from Liverpool and our arrival in Manchester was one of the most striking things I ever witnessed. The news of Mr Huskisson’s fatal accident spread immediately, and his death, which did not occur till the evening, was anticipated by rumour.

The Observer would report the incident slightly differently in its issue of the 19th:

The great national work was opened to the public on Wednesday last, with all the ceremonies befitting such an important occasion. The Duke of Wellington, Mr. Huskisson, Sir R. Peel, Prince Esterhazy, and Mr. Holmes were guests of the Committee, together with almost every person of consideration in the neighbouring counties. The project of establishing a correspondence by railway between two of the most populous and important towns in the kingdom, was not started till 1824, when a Mr. James proposed it. The rate of travelling is spoken of as being likely to average about sixteen or eighteen miles an hour. Several of the passengers of the Northumbrian got out to walk on the railway, and among them was Mr. Huskisson. He was discoursing with Mr. J. Sanders, one of the principal originators and promoters of the railroad, when the Rocket engine came slowly up, and as the engineer had been for some time checking its velocity, so silently that it was almost upon the group before they observed it. In the hurry of the moment all attempted to get out of the way. Mr Huskisson hesitated, staggered a little, as if not knowing what to do, then attempted again to get into the carriage. As he took hold of the door to do this, but the motion threw him off balance, and before he could recover he was thrown down directly in the path of the Rocket. Mrs. Huskisson, who, along with several other ladies, witnessed the accident, uttered a shriek of agony, which none who heard will ever forget.

There was no surgeon present and although a physician attempted to stem the bleeding and although Stephenson used the Northumbrian to get the injured man to the nearest medical attention at the vicarage in Eccles at the rate of 36 miles an hour, Huskisson would die later that day. And this, the first rail fatality, would not be the last — but who among us can stand in the way of progress without getting run over?

Such large crowds had assembled along the line between Liverpool and Manchester that it was considered prudent to continue with the procession. Fanny Kemble would report that:

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handkerchiefs as we flew by them. We travelled at 35 miles an hour (swifter than a bird flies). When I closed my eyes this sensation of flying was quite delightful.

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2. Have you heard the story, that our railroad rails are the distance apart that they are simply because that was the distance between the wheels of a Roman chariot? There has been this delightful story being passed around because it can be made to serve certain concepts of path-dependence. This story has been passed around particularly by those people within and outside the Department of Defense who love to bemoan our outdated or bureaucratically oppressive “MilSpecs” — of which the standard railroad gauge is cited as an antique and perhaps ridiculous example.

The story that is being told, albeit interesting and scandalous, seems to be a story without much historic merit. The distance 4’8.5” (1435 millimeter) is the standard gauge in North America, most of Europe (not in Iberia or former Russian and Soviet empires), and parts of South America, Asia, and Australia, that comprises nearly 60 percent of world route length. The L&MRR had a strong demonstration effect in Continental Europe as well as the US, and engineers trained by mine-works engineer Stephenson also aided the gauge’s diffusion in Britain and the Continent — but not in North America.

The standard width has been characterized as exceedingly odd. However, for one thing, American railways were not built by expatriate Brit engineers, but almost exclusively by Americans copying British engineering practice. This practice our local engineers happened to copy was that of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway that had been opened in 1830. Stephenson indeed had copied for this new railroad the gauge with which he had previous experience in the mines, but this was originally the not quite so “exceedingly odd” measure of 4’8” rather than 4’8.5” — He had added an extra half inch during construction of the L&MRR in order to allow a little more leeway between rails and wheel flanges. There is some evidence that the original rails were often 2” wide, indicating a width of track including the rails of an even 5’0” — still less an “exceedingly odd” measure. Mining tramways actually differed in width, ranging mostly between 3’0” and 4’6” in southern England and Wales. It could be regarded as a mere accident of history that the gauge with which Stevenson happened to have experience was the 4’8” gauge of northern England. It appears true that mining ore carts were approximately the same width as road wagons, but the width of road wagons actually varied by region. It is plausible that the width of wagons was fitted to road ruts, although ruts at narrow city gates might have mattered more than ruts on open roads. The main “evidence” for carrying the story back to Roman chariots comes not from any study of the history of road ruts but from consideration of ancient “groove-ways” (which were essentially permanent stone “ruts,” a practical form of improved road surface at the time). It is true that one or two of these (but these one or two were not in Britain) happen to have roughly the same “gauge” as modern railways — within a broad band of wheel widths that would fit the grooves. However, others had other widths.

Some American engineers copied Stephenson’s practice only approximately, introducing nonstandard gauges of 4’9” and 4’10” and 5’0”. The latter two choices would lead to some difficulties later on, when we would go about integrating our continental railway network.
As the *Northumbrian* entered Manchester its passenger carriages were pelted by the weavers with stones—these laborers still resented the Duke of Wellington’s involvement in the Peterloo Massacre and his strong opposition to the proposed Reform Act of 1832.

The Liverpool & Manchester railway would be a great success. In 1831 the company would transport 445,047 passengers for receipts amounting to £155,702 and annual profits amounting to £71,098. By 1844 receipts would reach £258,892 and annual profits would reach £136,688. During this period shareholders would regularly receive an annual dividend of £10 for each £100 they had invested.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*4 day 15 of 9 M / Silent Meeting at the Institution but not so dull as sometimes.* –

**THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT**
FANNY KEMBLE

Frances Anne Kemble (Butler)

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.

Fanny Kemble’s 1st American tour, with her father Charles Kemble.
Fanny Kemble was continuing her American tour with her father when in Boston she rode out to Quincy, ten miles, to view the technology of the first commercial railroad in the United States, and witnessed a terrible accident.

It was in about this year that Engineer Isaac Dripps of the Camden and Amboy Railroad retrofitted his locomotive *John Bull*, which had been created in England with a cowcatching device designed by Charles Babbage, with an additional front-riding deflector riding upon its own set of wheels.
Fanny Kemble

Frances Anne Kemble’s 2d American tour.

1834

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

Frances Anne Kemble (Butler)

“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project
June 7, Saturday: In New-York Fanny Kemble had met Pierce Mease Butler, son and heir of a US senator, who had been following her from place to place and serving as a volunteer musician during her performances in the theatre. Fanny got married with him on this day in Philadelphia and would give up the stage for awhile, but after their divorce in 1848 would return to her career, appearing in plays and giving Shakespearean readings.

This was the day of Greek independence. General Theodoros Kolokotronis was sentenced to death for treason for having resisted the rule of Otto of Greece (he would in the following year be released).

Commander George Back left Fort Reliance for the expedition’s depot on Artillery Lake.

(Page 255) It now only remained to block up the windows and doors; which done, the four persons remaining with me, including the guide, were laden with burdens of ninety pounds each, and two dogs, equipped with saddle bags, carrying meat for the journey; and thus appointed, I left Fort Reliance, accompanied by Mr. King, a little past noon of the 7th June.
Fanny Kemble’s *A Journal of a Residence in America* was published by Henry Holt and was castigated by the proper both in Britain and in America. For example, in the pages of the *Atheneum* the book was characterized as “one of the most deplorable exhibitions of vulgar thinking and vulgar expression that it was ever our misfortune to encounter,” and an American newspaper reviewer named Poe quite concurred that a young lady ought never have allowed to be put in print such common locutions as “dawdled,” or “gulped,” or “pottering,” or “grumpily.” In this excerpt the author wrote up a trip she had made in 1832 from New-York by steamboat on the Delaware River, then by stagecoach, and finally by horse-drawn railroad car, to Philadelphia:

The steamboat was very large and commodious as all these conveyances are.... These steamboats have three stories; the upper one is, as it were, a roofing or terrace on the leads of the second, a very desirable station when the weather is neither too foul, nor too fair; a burning sun being, I should think, as little desirable there, as a shower of rain. The second floor or deck, has the advantage of the ceiling above, and yet, the sides being completely open, it is airy, and allows free sight of the shores on either hand. Chairs, stools and benches are the furniture of these two decks. The one below, or third floor, downwards, in fact, the ground floor, being the one near the water, is a spacious room completely roofed and walled in, where the passengers take their meals, and resort if the weather is unfavorable. At the end of this room, is a smaller cabin for the use of the ladies, with beds and sofa, and all the conveniences necessary, if they should like to be sick; whither I came and slept till breakfast time. Vigne’s account of the pushing, thrusting, rushing, and devouring on board a western steamboat at meal times, had prepared me for rather an awful spectacle; but-this, I find, is by no means the case in these civilized parts, and everything was conducted with perfect order, propriety and civility. The breakfast was good, and was served and eaten with decency enough.

At about half past ten, we reached the place where we leave the river, to proceed across a part of the State of New Jersey, to the Delaware.... Oh, these coaches! English eye hath not seen, English ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of Englishmen to conceive the surpassing clumsiness and wretchedness of these leathern inconveniences. They are shaped something like boats, the sides being merely leathern pieces, removable at pleasure, but which in bad weather are buttoned down to protect the inmates from the wet. There are three seats in this machine, the middle one having a movable leathern strap, by way of a dossier, runs between the carriage doors, and lifts away, to permit the egress and ingress of the occupants of the other seats.... For the first few minutes, I thought I must have fainted from the intolerable sensation of smothering which I experienced. However, the leathers having been removed, and a little more air obtained, I took heart of grace, and resigned myself to my fate. Away wallopped the four horses, trotting with their front, and galloping with their hind legs: and away went we after them, bumping, thumping, jumping, jolting, shaking,

3. And you might at least have the decency to stop while we’re talking to you!
tossing and tumbling, over the wickedest road, I do think, the
cruellest, hard-heartedest road that ever wheel rumbled upon.
Through bog and marsh and ruts, wider and deeper than any
Christian ruts I ever saw, with the roots of trees protruding
across our path, their boughs every now and then giving us an
affectionate scratch through the windows; and, more than once,
a half-demolished trunk or stump lying in the middle of the road
lifting us up, and letting us down again, with most awful
variations of our poor coach body from its natural position.
Bones of me! what a road! Even my father’s solid proportions
could not keep their level, but were jerked up to the roof and
down again every three minutes. Our companions seemed nothing
dismayed by these wondrous performances of a coach and four, but
laughed and talked incessantly, the young ladies, at the very
top of their voices, and with the national nasal twang....
The few cottages and farm-houses which we passed reminded me of
similar dwellings in France and Ireland; yet the peasantry here
have not the same excuse for disorder and dilapidation, as
either the Irish or French. The farms had the same desolate,
untidy, untended look; the gates broken, the fences carelessly
put up, or ill repaired; the farming utensils slutishly
scattered about a littered yard, where the pigs seemed to
preside by undisputed right; house-windows broken, and stuffed
with paper or clothes; dishevelled women, and barefooted,
anomalous looking human young things. None of the stirring life
and activity which such places present in England and Scotland;
above all, none of the enchanting mixture of neatness, order,
and rustic elegance and comfort, which render so picturesque the
surroundings of a farm, and the various belongings of
agricultural labor in my own dear country. The fences struck me
as peculiar; I never saw any such in England. They are made of
rails of wood placed horizontally, and meeting at obtuse angles,
so forming a zigzag wall of wood, which runs over the country
like the herringbone seams of a flannel petticoat. At each of
the angles, two slanting stakes, considerably higher than the
rest of the fence, were driven into the ground, crossing each
other at the top, so as to secure the horizontal rails in their
position....
At the end of fourteen miles we turned into a swampy field, the
whole fourteen coachfuls of us, and by the help of heaven, bag
and baggage were packed into the coaches which stood on the
railway ready to receive us. The carriages were not drawn by
steam, like those on the Liverpool railway, but by horses, with
the mere advantage in speed afforded by iron ledges, which, to
be sure, compared with our previous progress through the ruts,
was considerable. Our coachful got into the first carriage of
the train, escaping, by way of especial grace, the dust which
one’s predecessors occasion. This vehicle had but two seats, in
the usual fashion; each of which held four of us. The whole
inside was lined with blazing scarlet leather, and the windows
shaded with stuff curtains of the same refreshing color; which
with full complement of passengers, on a fine, sunny, American
summer’s day, must make as pretty a little miniature held as may be, I should think.... This railroad is an infinite blessing; ’tis not yet finished, but shortly will be so, and then the whole of that horrible fourteen miles will be performed in comfort and decency, in less than half the time. In about an hour and a half, we reached the end of our railroad part of the journey, and found another steamboat waiting for us, when we all embarked on the Delaware.... At about four o’clock, we reached Philadelphia, having performed the journey between that and New York (a distance of a hundred miles,) in less than ten hours, in spite of bogs, ruts and all other impediments.

Fanny also describing a second, separate trip, by canal boat from Schenectady, New York to Utica:

We proceeded by canal to Utica, which distance we performed in a day and a night, starting at two from Schenectady, and reaching Utica the next day at about noon. I like traveling by the canal boats very much. Ours was not crowded, and the country through which we passed being delightful, the placid moderate gliding through it, at about four miles and a half an hour, seemed to me infinitely preferable to the noise of wheels, the rumble of a coach, and the jerking of bad roads, for the gain of a mile an hour. The only nuisances are the bridges over the canal, which are so very low, that one is obliged to prostrate oneself on the deck of the boat, to avoid being scraped off it; and this humiliation occurs, upon an average, once every quarter of an hour.... The valley of the Mohawk, through which we crept the whole sunshining day, is beautiful from beginning to end; fertile, soft, rich, and occasionally approaching sublimity and grandeur, in its rocks and hanging woods. We had a lovely day, and a soft blessed sunset, which, just as we came to a point where the canal crosses the river, and where the curved and wooded shores on either side recede, leaving a broad smooth basin, threw one of the most exquisite effects of light and color, I ever remember to have seen, over the water, and through the sky.... We sat in the men’s cabin until they began making preparations for bed, and then withdrew into a room about twelve feet square, where a whole tribe of women were getting to their beds. Some half undressed, some brushing, some curling, some washing, some already asleep in their narrow cribs, but all within a quarter of an inch of each other; it made one shudder.... At Utica we dined; and after dinner I slept profoundly. The gentlemen, I believe, went out to view the town, which, twenty years ago, was not, and now is a flourishing place, with fine-looking shops, two or three hotels, good broad streets, and a body of lawyers, who had a supper at the house where we were staying, and kept the night awake with champagne, shouting, toasts, and clapping of hands: so much for the strides of civilization through the savage lands of this new world....
Early in the year John Adolphus Etzler had returned from the West Indies to New-York. Undoubtedly to meet and suitably impress other reformers, he would there attend the Fourier Society of New York’s annual celebration of the French philosopher-utopist Charles Fourier’s birthday. There he would make the acquaintance of a Fourierist socialist and humanitarian, C.F. Stollmeyer, also a recent German immigrant, who was at that time readying Albert Brisbane’s THE SOCIAL DESTINY OF MAN for publication. Stollmeyer was to become not only the publisher of The New World, but also a primary disciple of Etzler. This SOCIAL DESTINY OF MAN, seconded by the writings and lectures of such men as the Reverend Dana McLean Greeley of Concord, the Reverend William Henry Channing, Horace Greeley, and Parke Godwin would stimulate the rise of several Phalansterian Associations, in the middle and western states, chiefest of which would be the “North American Phalanx” on the north shore of New Jersey.

The Reverend Adin Ballou’s “Practical Christians” began to publish a gazette, the Practical Christian, for the “promulgation of Primitive Christianity.” He would write in HISTORY OF THE HOPEDALE COMMUNITY, FROM ITS INCEPTION TO ITS VIRTUAL SUBMERGENCE IN THE HOPEDALE PARISH that this year would initiate “a decade of American history pre-eminently distinguished for the general humanitarian spirit which seemed to pervade it, as manifested in numerous and widely extended efforts to put away existing evils and better the condition of the masses of mankind; and especially for the wave of communal thought which swept over the country, awakening a very profound interest in different directions in the question of the re-organization of society; — an interest which assumed various forms as it contemplated or projected practical results.” There would be, he pointed out, a considerable number of what were known as Transcendentalists in and about Boston, who, under the leadership of the Reverend George Ripley, a Unitarian clergyman of eminence, would plan and put in operation the Roxbury Community, generally known as the “Brook Farm” Association. A company of radical reformers who had come out from the church on account of its alleged complicity with Slavery and other abominations, and hence called Come-Outers, would institute a sort of family Community near Providence, Rhode Island. Other progressives, with George W. Benson at their head, would found the Northampton Community at the present village of Florence, a suburb of Northampton.

One of the debates of the 18th Century was what human nature might be, under its crust of civilization, under the varnish of culture and manners. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had an answer. Thomas Jefferson had an answer. One of the most intriguing answers was that of Charles Fourier, who was born in Besançon two years before the Shakers arrived in New York. He grew up to write twelve sturdy volumes designing a New Harmony for mankind, an experiment in radical sociology that began to run parallel to that of the Shakers. Fourierism (Horace Greeley founded the New-York Tribune to promote Fourier’s ideas) was Shakerism for intellectuals. Brook Farm was Fourierist, and such place-names as Phalanx, New Jersey, and New Harmony, Indiana, attest to the
movement’s history. Except for one detail, Fourier and Mother Ann Lee were of the same mind; they both saw that humankind must return to the tribe or extended family and that it was to exist on a farm. Everyone lived in one enormous dormitory. Everyone shared all work; everyone agreed, although with constant revisions and refinements, to a disciplined way of life that would be most harmonious for them, and lead to the greatest happiness. But when, of an evening, the Shakers danced or had “a union” (a conversational party), Fourier’s Harmonians had an orgy of eating, dancing, and sexual high jinks, all planned by a Philosopher of the Passions. There is a strange sense in which the Shakers’ total abstinence from the flesh and Fourier’s total indulgence serve the same purpose. Each creates a psychological medium in which frictionless cooperation reaches a maximum possibility. It is also wonderfully telling that the modern world has no place for either.
According to the dissertation of Maurice A. Crane, “A Textual and Critical Edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Blithedale Romance” at the University of Illinois in 1953, various scholars have fingered Zenobia as:

- Mrs. Almira Barlow
- Margaret Fuller
- Fanny Kemble
- Mrs. Sophia Willard Dana Ripley
- Caroline Sturgis Tappan

while various other scholars have been fingering Mr. Hollingsworth as:

- Bronson Alcott
- Albert Brisbane
- Elihu Burritt
- Charles A. Dana
- Waldo Emerson
- Horace Mann, Sr.
- William Pike
- the Reverend Orestes Augustus Brownson, or maybe
- the Reverend William Henry Channing, or maybe
- the Reverend Theodore Parker

Hawthorne should really have told us more than Zenobia’s nickname, and should really have awarded Hollingsworth a first name more definitive than “Mr.”? Go figure!

Lest we presume that an association of this William Henry Channing with Hollingsworth is utterly void of content, let us listen, as Marianne Dwight did, to the reverend stand and deliver on the topic of “devotedness to the cause; the necessity of entire self-surrender”:¹

He compared our work with ... that of the crusaders.... He compared us too with the Quakers, who see God only in the inner light,... with the Methodists, who seek to be in a state of rapture in their sacred meetings, whereas we should maintain in daily life, in every deed, on all occasions, a feeling of religious fervor; with the perfectionists, who are, he says, the only sane religious people, as they believe in perfection, and their aim is one with ours. Why should we, how dare we tolerate ourselves or one another in sin?

¹ Reed, Amy L., ed. LETTERS FROM BROOK FARM, 1844-1847, BY MARIANNE DWIGHT Poughkeepsie NY, 1928.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Hints towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life* ... Ed. by Seth B. Watson (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard), written in the period 1816-1823, was published posthumously in America. Coleridge drew on Heinrich Steffens (1773-1845) for the adage “The insect world is the exponent of irritability, as the vegetable is of reproduction.”

Henry Thoreau transcribed several extracts of Coleridge’s just-published “treatise on the use of natural history as means to the discovery of underlying laws of creation” into his literary notebook under the rubric “Coleridge’s Idea of Life.” and in addition made a copy of Spenser’s *MISOPOTOMOS OR THE FATE OF THE BUTTERFLIE*, in which the lives of insects are viewed from as great a distance as Olympians look down upon humanity — or, rather, from as great a distance as Thoreau watching himself! David Spooner regards Coleridge’s *Hints* as Thoreau’s starting point for his exploration of what is today known as cladistics.

At about this point Thoreau made notes in his Literary Notebook on *A Year of Consolation*. By Mrs. Butler, Late Fanny Kemble. (New-York: Wiley & Putman).

4. For background, see Barfield, Owen. *What Coleridge Thought*. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1971. Robert Sattelmeyer has suggested that this reading was important in helping Thoreau form his attitude toward natural history. Although she does acknowledge that the extracts Thoreau made from Alexander von Humboldt were “far more perfunctory” than those he made from Coleridge and from Steffens, Laura Dassow Walls disagrees with Robert Sattelmeyer and with Richard A. Hocks and insists that at this point Coleridge was merely offered Thoreau “the solace of the familiar,” “nothing new.”
March 14, Tuesday: At a “select party” the Sage of Concord encountered the Queen of Theatre: Ralph Waldo Emerson was introduced to the celebrated Francis Kemble Butler:

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**“Specimen Days”**

All through these years, off and on, I frequented the old Park, the Bowery, Broadway and Chatham-square theatres, and the Italian operas at Chambers-street, Astor-place or the Battery — many seasons was on the free list, writing for papers even as quite a youth. The old Park theatre — what names, reminiscences, the words bring back! Placide, Clarke, Mrs. Vernon, Fisher, Clara P., Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Seguin, Ellen Tree, Hackett, the younger Kean, Macready, Mrs. Richardson, Rice — singers, tragedians, comedians. What perfect acting! Henry Placide in “Napoleon’s Old Guard” or “Grandfather Whitehead,” — or “the Provoked Husband” of Cibber, with Fanny Kemble as Lady Townley — or Sheridan Knowles in his own “Virginius” — or inimitable Power in “Born to Good Luck.” These, and many more, the years of youth and onward. Fanny Kemble — name to conjure up great mimic scenes withal — perhaps the greatest. I remember well her rendering of Bianca in “Fazio,” and Marianna in “the Wife.” Nothing finer did ever stage exhibit — the veterans of all nations said so, and my boyish heart and head felt it in every minute cell. The lady was just matured, strong, better than merely beautiful, born from the footlights, had had three years’ practice in London and through the British towns, and then she came to give America that young maturity and roseate power in all their noon, or rather forenoon, flush. It was my good luck to see her nearly every night she play’d at the old Park — certainly in all her principal characters.

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**WHAT I’M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND**

**YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**

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Frances Anne Kemble (Butler)  
“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project
Fanny Kemble Butler gave Shakespeare readings to support herself during and after her divorce from her slaveowning and indolent American husband, in Boston, New-York, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Philadelphia, and used her savings after this divorce to purchase a cottage she named “Perch,” in Lenox, Massachusetts near the Hawthorne and Melville families. She would grow increasingly eccentric and would, for instance, be seen fishing locally while attired in a man’s shirt and hat.

(Presumably it would have been during this period that she, Gerrit Smith of the Secret “Six”, and Frederick Douglass would attend a dinner party at the home of Friends James and Lucretia Mott in Philadelphia.)

Richard Henry Dana, Sr. gave a highly successful lecture series in Philadelphia.
May: Bidding “farewell forever to this abominable city,” the Hawthornes moved to Lenox in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts, a colony of intellectuals which included James Russell Lowell, Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes, the novelist G.P.R. James, and Fanny Kemble Butler. Nathaniel Hawthorne began working on his The House of Seven Gables ms, which would become a later romance or prose-tragedy of the Puritan-American community as he had himself known it—“starving for symbols” as Waldo Emerson put it—defrauded of art and of the joy of life.

5. While in retirement at Lenox, Massachusetts, Fanny would author such autobiographical works as Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation (1863), Record of a Childhood (1878), and Records of Later Life (1882).
September 11, Wednesday: Jenny Lind began a series of six sold-out performances at the 6,000-seat Castle Garden municipal concert hall. “Welcome Sweet Warbler,” the banner in the upper balcony proclaimed. The cheapest seat was $3. The audience broke into a “tempest of cheers.”

The Swedish nightingale was under the sponsorship of Phineas Taylor Barnum as she opened her American tour at this vast auditorium at the foot of Manhattan Island. The impresario, despite being a determined racist, showed up for the concert in the company of a touring delegation of tribemen of the Crow nation, “a lazy,
shiftless set of brutes, though they will **draw.**

### “Specimen Days”

**PLAYS AND OPERAS TOO**

And certain actors and singers, had a good deal to do with the business. All through these years, off and on, I frequented the old Park, the Bowery, Broadway and Chatham-square theatres, and the Italian operas at Chambers-street, Astor-place or the Battery — many seasons was on the free list, writing for papers even as quite a youth. The old Park theatre — what names, reminiscences, the words bring back! Placide, Clarke, Mrs. Vernon, Fisher, Clara F., Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Seguin, Ellen Tree, Hackett, the younger Kean, Macready, Mrs. Richardson, Rice — singers, tragedians, comedians. What perfect acting! Henry Placide in “Napoleon’s Old Guard” or “Grandfather Whitehead,” — or “the Provoked Husband” of Cibber, with Fanny Kemble Butler as Lady Townley — or Sheridan Knowles in his own “Virginius” — or inimitable Power in “Born to Good Luck.” These, and many more, the years of youth and onward. Fanny Kemble — name to conjure up great mimic scenes withal — perhaps the greatest. I remember well her rendering of Bianca in “Fazio,” and Marianna in “the Wife.” Nothing finer did ever stage exhibit — the veterans of all nations said so, and my boyish heart and head felt it in every minute cell. The lady was just matured, strong, better than merely beautiful, born from the footlights, had had three years’ practice in London and through the British towns, and then she came to give America that young maturity and roseate power in all their noon, or rather forenoon, flush. It was my good luck to see her nearly every night she play’d at the old Park — certainly in all her principal characters.

I heard, these years, well render’d, all the Italian and other operas in vogue, “Sonnambula,” “the Puritans,” “Der Freischutz,” “Huguenots,” “Fille d’Regiment,” “Faust,” “Etoile du Nord,” “Poliuto,” and others. Verdi’s “Ernani,” “Rigoletto,” and “Trovatore,” with Donnizetti’s “Lucia” or “Favorita” or “Lucrezia,” and Auber’s “Massaniello,” or Rossini’s “William Tell” and “Gazza Ladra,” were among my special enjoyments. I heard Alboni every time she sang in New York and vicinity — also Grisi, the tenor Mario, and the baritone Badiali, the finest in the world.

This musical passion follow’d my theatrical one. As boy or young man I had seen, (reading them carefully the day beforehand,) quite all Shakspeare’s acting dramas, play’d wonderfully well. Even yet I cannot conceive anything finer than old Booth in “Richard Third,” or “Lear,” (I don’t know which was best,) or Iago, (or Pescara, or Sir Giles Overreach, to go outside of Shakspeare) — or Tom Hamblin in “Macbeth” — or old Clarke, either as the ghost in “Hamlet,” or as Prospero in “the Tempest,” with Mrs. Austin as Ariel, and Peter Richings as Caliban. Then other dramas, and fine players in them, Forrest as **METAMORA** or Damon or Brutus — John R. Scott as Tom Cringle or Rolla — or Charlotte Cushman’s Lady Gay Spanker in “London Assurance.” Then of some years later, at Castle Garden, Battery, I yet recall the splendid seasons of the Havana musical troupe under Maretzek — the fine band, the cool sea-breezes, the unsurpass’d vocalism — Steffanone, Bosio, Truffi, Marini in “Marino Paliero,” “Don Pasquale,” or “Favorita.” No better playing or singing ever in New York. It was here too I afterward heard **Jenny Lind.** (The Battery — its past associations — what tales those old trees and walks and sea-walls could tell!)
Phineas Taylor Barnum had had to provide Jenny Lind, who was already a big deal as a singer in Europe, the sum of $187,500.00 up front (cash in advance), before she would consent to get on the boat for her American tour, and in the middle of the voyage she already felt like turning around and going back. Only the fact that she did not enjoy performing in the European operas, and the fact that she was on a passenger liner that would not turn back, had conveyed this temperamental musical prodigy to our shores even for this grand reward.7

Wednesday sept 11th The river higher than I ever knew it at this season as high as in the spring.

September 11: Autumnal mornings, when the feet of countless sparrows (Sparrow Fringillidae) are heard like rain-drops on the roof by the boy who sleeps in the garret.

6. Only later would this auditorium be converted into a huge immigration office, and then become dear to New Yorkers as “The Aquarium.”
7. Phineas Taylor Barnum had had a really rough time coming up with this money but would—before his performer would dump him and go it alone—obtain $700,000.00 return on that investment.
March: Franklin Benjamin Sanborn brought John Brown to speak at the Concord City Hall and introduced him to Henry Thoreau during the noon meal, which they had at the Thoreau boarding house. Thoreau spent the afternoon discoursing with Brown (Brown told Thoreau about the battle in Kansas of June 1856) and, as Waldo Emerson had just returned from a lecture tour, introduced them to one another. It is likely, however, that Emerson and Brown had already met at an earlier, privileged meeting at the home of the millionaire railroader John Murray Forbes in Milton, Massachusetts, a meeting to which they would not been likely to refer in the presence of Thoreau. Brown spoke of the struggle in Kansas in June of the previous year. In visiting the Thoreau home, he met John Thoreau, Senior. We may notice in Emerson’s journal that he sided with John Brown the strong white defender of the victim negro, against the Sermon on the Mount. In the following snippet from his journal, the Reverend Emerson is proclaiming in effect that the injunction “resist not evil” is a dangerous piece of mushyheadedness, and that what we need to do to make our nation into a kinder gentler America is to go out and kill some of the people who are preventing our nation from being a kind gentle
The elder John Thoreau helped purchase for Brown one of Christian Sharps’s “ten rounds per minute” 1853-model breech-loading cap-and-ball carbine, 37 3/4 inches overall with a 21 3/4-inch rifled barrel, that used a “pellet without cut-off” primer.

Captain John Brown of Kansas gave a good account of himself in the Town Hall, last night, to a meeting of Citizens. One of his good points was, the folly of the peace party in Kansas, who believed, that their strength lay in the greatness of their wrongs, & so discountenanced resistance. He wished to know if their wrong was greater than the negro’s, & what kind of strength that gave to the negro?

After they would take Captain John Brown’s Sharps rifle away from him at Harpers Ferry, they would allow this little boy to pose with it. Grow up, son, and be a Christian like us: kill people, own slaves.

We may remind ourselves, as we read the above, that back during February 1854 Waldo Emerson had been scheming with the saintly Bronson Alcott on a different-but-strangely-similar final solution to the American race problem, a solution in which white men would castrate all their black men so that only the white owners would be able to fecundate their black women. We might therefore want to turn the above jotting quite around, and inquire of Mr. Emerson and Mr. Alcott what kind of strength it gave to the black man to be castrated as they had been musing in February 1854, and what kind of strength it gave to the black woman to bear children which would be in successive generations lighter and purer, until finally their taint had been erased and we had arrived at an America of blond beastly angels. It is interesting to juxtapose the musing of 1854, in which we note that the Sermon on the Mount is quite disregarded, and the musing of 1857, in which we note that the Sermon on the Mount is quite disregarded. The musing of 1857 seem to be defending the black American but the musing of 1854 seemed to have been attacking the black American — so how did we get from the malevolence-against-the-black one to the succeeding malevolence-against-the-white one while continuing to quite disregard the Sermon on the Mount? (This is nothing if not perplexing. Perhaps someone can explain the transition.)
This weapon was being manufactured in Hartford CT, although the fishy Christian Sharps was then in the process of selling out and moving to Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, where he would set up another weapons manufactory. Thoreau also “subscribed a trifle.”\(^\text{10}\) We should not evade anything here: it is clear that Waldo Emerson, donating $25,\(^\text{10}\), and the Thoreaus, did know at the time they made their donations that their money was to be applied not to provisions such as food or clothing but to the purchase of rifles and ammunition. Here are two company-solicited testimonials to this “hot thing” killing machine which Waldo Emerson, John Thoreau, Senior, and Henry David Thoreau helped to provide to John Brown. The first is dated “Magoffansville, Texas, June, 1853”:

\begin{quote}
The ten Sharps’ carbines purchased of you were all put to immediate use in arming my escort, and for range, accuracy, and rapidity of firing, they are far superior to any arm known. They have gone through what an ordinance officer would term a pretty severe field test, without the least injury.

In all of our shooting of bear, deer, wolves, &c., I have never known the ball to be found in the animal. Having been a frontier man for fourteen years, I had occasion to look after a bosom companion to stand by me in case of life or death; and hence I have given some little attention to the subject of fire arms, and think I can tolerably well appreciate their excellence; and in my search after such a comforter, I have found no arm that in all its attributes begins to compare with the Sharps’ arm and for army, navy, caravan or sporting service, it is sure to take and hold the front rank.

Capt. Henry Skillman,
U.S. Mail Contractor.
\end{quote}

9. The version of this weapon sold to the Chinese government was inscribed “Old Reliable” in Chinese characters.
10. This phrase “subscribed a trifle” comes from his Journal entry of October 22, 1860 in which he is evidently wrestling with his conscience, perhaps feeling that he was unduly influenced in going along with his father in this matter: “I subscribed a trifle when he was here three years ago, I had so much confidence in the man –that he would do right, – ... I do not wish to kill or to be killed, but I can foresee circumstances in which both of these things would be by me unavoidable. In extremities I could even be killed.” (XII, 437) We must bear in mind that it would have been especially painful for Thoreau to have had a falling-out with his father during this period, as Thoreau’s father was going into a period of sickness which would last some two years and would end in his taking to his room for a few weeks, and then peacefully dying. During this period he would be, as Thoreau later described, “going down-town in pleasant weather, doing a little business from time to time, hoeing a little in the garden, etc.” He was coughing and raising material from his lungs. Normally a taciturn man, he was becoming noticeably more silent even than usual.
The second of these company-solicited testimonials is datelined Washington, January, 1855:

In answer to your inquiries, I take great pleasure in bearing testimony to the great value and use of Sharps’ rifles. Upon two expeditions across the continent to California, I have had the ten rifles in active use the whole time in the field. With ten men armed with these rifles we felt equal to thirty. Its simplicity enabled the men to understand it at a glance, and they loaded and fired it with great accuracy and rapidity, killing game at four hundred and fifty yards. It inspired the men with great confidence in their strength and power to defend themselves against superior numbers. With ten men, a negro and a Mexican, I kept at bay one hundred and forty Apache warriors, all fully armed, just on the eve of an attack on Gov. Gardner’s ranch in Sonora. I look upon it as far the best rifle and the only proper one for mounted men that I have ever seen.

Andrew B. Gray.

We must bear in mind that it would have been especially painful for Thoreau to have had a falling-out with his father during this period, as Thoreau’s father John Thoreau was going into a period of sickness which would last some two years and would end in his taking to his room for a few weeks, and then peacefully dying. During this period he would be, as Thoreau later described, “going down-town in pleasant weather, doing a little business from time to time, hoeing a little in the garden, etc.” He was coughing and raising material from his lungs. Normally a taciturn man, he was becoming noticeably even more silent than usual.

Would the John Murray Forbes that Emerson had been meeting, the railroad magnate, be the daddy of the Forbes who would marry Emerson’s daughter? Would he have been related to the Scottish adventurer Hugh Forbes who at one time was John Brown’s principal lieutenant?11

During this month, at a racetrack in Savannah, Georgia, there was being transacted the largest auction of human beings in the history in the United States of America. During the two days it took to dispose of 436 men, women, and children, it was as if the heavens were crying, the rain fell so unceasingly. This auction would come to be known, appropriately, as “the weeping time.”

11. Captain John Brown’s scheme, which he referred to as the “Subterranean Pass Way,” was that the escaped, armed slaves were to “swarm” into and set up a center of resistance in the Alleghenies from which they could liberate Virginia and then invade Tennessee and northern Alabama. Such a scoping of the situation never met with much respect from other of the other schemers. In particular, the Scottish adventurer Hugh Forbes, Brown’s onetime principal lieutenant, regarding blacks as inherently childlike, credulous, and cowardly, believed such a scheme to be doomed to failure from its inception. The scenario preferred by Forbes would have involved the herding of the slaves together by armed bands of white men and the driving of such herds of humans up the mountain chain toward Canada, neatly disposing of America’s entire race problem — by simple relocation of it to another country. Evidently the two planners parted company over issues such as this after Forbes had functioned in Tabor, Iowa as the leader of military training for the recruits, and then Forbes attempted blackmail. When not offered a payoff, he wrote long, detailed letters to congressmen and to others, and it is one of the unresolved issues, how anyone in high office in Washington DC could have avoided knowing in advance that Brown was plotting a strike of some sort against slavery.
Some twenty years earlier the owners, the brothers Pierce and John Butler, had inherited their family’s plantations, but Pierce, Fanny Kemble Butler’s ex-husband, had squandered his $700,000 portion and, beyond that, gotten deeply into debt. Management of the estate was transferred to trustees who sold off Pierce’s once grand but now dilapidated Philadelphia mansion for $30,000. Other Butler properties were sold as well, but it was not enough to obtain for Pierce a continuation of his luxury, so he had the trustees turn to the Georgia plantations and their “moveable” property.

At the time, the overall holdings of the Butler family included 900 slaves. Half of them, 450, were assigned to the estate of the brother John, who had since died, and would remain on the plantations. Of the other 450 – Pierce’s half – about 20 would be allowed to continue to live in slavery on Butler property. The remainder were herded onto railway cars and steamboats and brought to the Broeck racetrack to be sold to the highest bidder. Philadelphia socialite Sidney George Fisher would note in his diary that “It is highly honorable to [Butler] that he did all he could to prevent the sale, offering to make any personal sacrifice to avoid it,” but we don’t know of any such sacrifice actually made. The two-day sale of 436 human beings netted $303,850 for Butler, amply more than he needed to satisfy all his creditors. Of the auction, Fisher wrote:

It is a dreadful affair, however, selling these hereditary Negroes.... Families will not be separated, that is to say, husbands and wives, parents and young children. But brothers and sisters of mature age, parents and children of mature age, all other relations and the ties of home and long association will be violently severed. It will be a hard thing for Butler to witness and it is a monstrous thing to do. Yet it is done every day in the South. It is one among the many frightful consequences of slavery and contradicts our civilization, our Christianity, or Republicanism. Can such a system endure, is it consistent with humanity, with moral progress? These are difficult questions, and still more difficult is it to say, what can be done? The Negroes of the South must be slaves or the South will be Africanized. Slavery is better for them and for us than such a result.

Mortimer “Doesticks” Thomson, a popular newsman, wrote a lengthy, uncomplimentary article about the auction for the New-York Tribune under the headline “What Became of the Slaves on a Georgia Plantation.” He reported how the slaves, eager to impress potential masters who they perceived as likely to be kind, would sometimes cheerfully respond to buyers “pulling their mouths open to see their teeth, pinching their limbs to find how muscular they were, walking them up and down to detect any signs of lameness, making them stoop and bend in different ways that they might be certain there was no concealed rupture or wound....” This white columnist commiserated with the unfortunate slaves after the sale, stating, “On the faces of all was an expression of heavy grief; some appeared to be resigned to the hard stroke of Fortune that had torn them from their homes, and were sadly trying to make the best of it; some sat brooding moodily over their sorrows, their chins resting on their hands, their eyes staring vacantly, and their bodies rocking to and fro, with a restless motion that was never stilled....” The highest price paid for one family – a mother with five grown children – had been $6,180. The highest price for one individual had been $1,750. The lowest price for one person was $250. Soon after the last slave was sold, the rain stopped and champagne bottles were popped in celebration. Pierce, once again wealthy, would be able to make a trip to southern Europe before returning to reside to Philadelphia.

The Reverend Samuel Joseph May wrote to his cousin the Reverend Samuel J. May, Jr. to declare his embarrassment at having supported a party which had in effect to obtain votes for its candidate John Charles.
Frémont been pandering to racists, and had then despite such an extreme sacrifice failed to succeed at the national polls. He declared himself to be
glad the Republican Party did not succeed.

Thoreau wrote to someone named Adams. 12

At the invitation of Governor Salmon Portland Chase, Moncure Daniel Conway lectured the Ohio legislature, promising worldly success to those like himself who were willing to risk all by taking their stand upon the firm bedrock of moral principle. (A pleasant fantasy, that! Civil War days would demonstrate that Conway was truly a master of the pleasant fantasy, could truly tell people what they longed to hear: Hark! Hark! I can see the light at the end of the tunnel! I have a plan for ending the bloodshed! All you need to do is pay some attention to me!)

12. There was a Frank Adams in the Concord area.
FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE (BUTLER)  FANNY KEMBLE

1863

Fanny Kemble Butler’s PLANTATION JOURNAL.
January 15, Sunday: Fanny Kemble Butler died in London.

THE PERFECT HUMAN VOICE

“Some Laggards Yet”

Stating it briefly and pointedly I should suggest that the human voice is a cultivation or form’d growth on a fair native foundation. This foundation probably exists in nine cases out of ten. Sometimes nature affords the vocal organ in perfection, or rather I would say near enough to whet one’s appreciation and appetite for a voice that might be truly call’d perfection. To me the grand voice is mainly physiological — (by which I by no means ignore the mental help, but wish to keep the emphasis where it belongs.) Emerson says manners form the representative apex and final charm and captivation of humanity: but he might as well have changed the typicality to voice.

Of course there is much taught and written about elocution, the best reading, speaking, etc., but it finally settles down to best human vocalization. Beyond all other power and beauty, there is something in the quality and power of the right voice (timbre the schools call it) that touches the soul, the abysms. It was not for nothing that the Greeks depended, at their highest, on poetry’s and wisdom’s vocal utterance by tete-a-tete lectures — (indeed all the ancients did.)

Of celebrated people possessing this wonderful vocal power, patent to me, in former days, I should specify the contralto Alboni, Elias Hicks, Father Taylor, the tenor Bettini, Fanny Kemble, and the old actor Booth, and in private life many cases, often women. I sometimes wonder whether the best philosophy and poetry, or something like the best, after all these centuries, perhaps waits to be rous’d out yet, or suggested, by the perfect physiological human voice.

January 20, Friday: The body of Fanny Kemble Butler was placed at Kensal Green Cemetery in London.
Several themes run through Fanny Kemble’s life: her independence, her devotion to her family, her love of writing, and her concern for the unfortunate. In her marriage to Pierce Butler, these themes would come into conflict, bringing her bitter unhappiness.

Although born into one of the leading families of the British theater, Kemble did not intend to pursue an acting career; she was more comfortable on the literary stage. Family reverses, however, forced a teenage Fanny Kemble to become the economic mainstay of her family, leading to her celebrated debut on the London stage in 1829. As her family looked to stave off creditors, Kemble and her father Charles toured the United States in 1832, bringing about Kemble’s introduction to Butler. Butler’s thoughtful devotion charmed Kemble, but after their marriage in 1834 the relationship quickly soured. Anticipating a companionate marriage, Kemble bitterly resented Butler’s patriarchal view of conjugal life. Displaying her independence, Kemble refused to renege on a contract she had signed before marriage to publish a journal of her travels in America. After weeks of wrangling, Kemble packed her belongings and left her husband just four months into their marriage; unsure of what to do next, however, she returned to their Philadelphia home that evening. Kemble’s first flight from her husband’s home would not be her last. Shortly after the birth of her first child, Kemble wrote Butler a letter explaining she was “weary of my useless existence” and offering to surrender claims on their daughter in return for her release from marriage (p. 82). Kemble’s letter reflected her frustration with a life in which she did not pursue her acting career, could no longer publish, could not choose her friends, and had few responsibilities for her household or child. Yet, when Kemble found a vocation in antislavery writing, her choice only exacerbated tensions with her husband. Upon inheriting their uncle’s estate in 1836, Pierce Butler and his brother became the second largest slaveholders in Georgia. Kemble, whose antislavery sentiments were long held and openly expressed, nevertheless shared her husband’s racial attitudes and was willing “to believe that her husband’s family were ‘good’ slaveholders, indulgent and paternalistic” (p. 111). Her journey to her husband’s plantation in the fall of 1838, however, disabused her of the possibility of benevolent slaveholding. Recognizing that her own financial well-being rested on slavery, Kemble issued her husband an ultimatum: she would not stay with him if he continued to earn his money from...
slavery, and she used against him the strongest weapon she could, the denial of sex.

Kemble finally sought a legal separation from Butler in 1843, after finding letters proving his marital infidelities. Butler retaliated by denying her almost all access to their two daughters; Kemble did not fully regain visitation rights until each girl reached her majority. The Butler-Kemble marriage clearly reveals the legal obstacles faced by nineteenth-century wives: prior to their divorce, a cash-strapped Pierce Butler was entitled to any money Kemble earned to support herself, and, even more galling, despite his adultery Butler gained a judgment against Kemble for desertion and won custody of their daughters. Catherine Clinton’s biography reveals a more complex portrait of the Kemble-Butler union than that of a defenseless victim and a domineering spouse. Kemble’s independence and outspokenness could make her difficult for others to tolerate. Both of her daughters had closer relationships with their father than with their mother. As a teenager, Kemble herself had confided her doubts about her suitability for marriage, questioning whether she could be “an obedient wife or affectionate mother” (p. 73). Moreover, while no abolitionist, Butler himself was not entirely comfortable with slavery. When forced to sell half his slaves to repay his debts, Butler met personally with each of the five hundred slaves and gave each four quarters as a farewell token. Butler argued that Kemble was herself a hypocrite, for upon marrying him she had accepted her status as a slaveowner.

Clinton offers a detailed narrative of Kemble’s life, yet her story also undercuts Kemble’s significance as an abolitionist. While an opponent of slavery and a resident of Philadelphia, where women founded a Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1837, Kemble never associated herself with an antislavery group. More critically, Kemble refrained from publishing her antislavery journal in the antebellum period because she feared angering her estranged husband and losing all access to her daughters; instead, Kemble circulated her work privately among abolitionist friends. Not until 1863, after President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, did Kemble publish her _Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation_. In Great Britain, which had a strong abolitionist tradition, citizens read her journal avidly, but, as Clinton acknowledges, “it would be safe to say that the book has more greatly influenced twentieth-century historians than Civil War-era politicians” (p. 179).

Catherine Clinton writes that she has been intrigued by Fanny Kemble’s life since her undergraduate years, and she has done meticulous research for this biography, especially in Kemble’s prolific writings. Kemble’s best-known _Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation_ is only a small portion of her eleven volumes of autobiographical work. In addition to her journals, Kemble also published plays, poems, and essays that further illuminate her life and ideas. Moreover, since Kemble frequently criss-crossed the Atlantic, visiting family and friends in both Great Britain and the United States, her correspondence is
large, and well-mined by Clinton. Despite her extensive use of sources and quotations from Kemble’s writings, however, Clinton dispenses with footnotes or endnotes, and her bibliography includes few monographs. Writing to a lay audience, Clinton does not engage the historiography nor does she attempt to place Kemble’s life and work in the context of other antislavery advocates, such as Abby Kelley Foster or the Grimke sisters.\(^13\) Instead, this biography focuses narrowly on Kemble and her family. Had Clinton broadened her scope, of course, she would have revealed the limited impact of Kemble on her contemporaries. Her marital battle was a private one, marked by her resignation to contemporary laws and customs that favored husbands in conjugal disputes. The work for which she is best known, her writing against slavery, had little real influence because it was published during the Civil War when slavery’s death knell had already sounded. Despite these limitations, Clinton’s biography reveals Fanny Kemble as a woman who stood on the cusp between wifely duty and independence, between private distaste for slavery and abolition, between acceptance of a patriarchal society and a preference for one marked by a more egalitarian spirit. Her clashes with her husband illuminate the difficulties that free spirited women faced in the restrictive society of nineteenth-century America.

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“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY

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

- Remark by character “Garin Stevens” in William Faulkner’s Intruder in the Dust

Prepared: March 5, 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.
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