

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN WALDEN

PEOPLE (NOT QUITE) MENTIONED IN WALDEN:

KING SOLOMON



WALDEN: According to Evelyn, "the wise Solomon prescribed ordinances for the very distances of trees; and the Roman praetors have decided how often you may go into your neighbor's land to gather the acorns which fall on it without trespass, and what share belongs to that neighbor."

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WALDEN

JOHN EVELYN

SOLON OF ATHENS

(This was a mistake. Thoreau should not have indicated the by-tradition-wise King Solomon of Judaea, for Evelyn had been referring in *SYLVA*, OR A DISCOURSE OF FOREST-TREES, to this by-tradition-wise originator of Athenian democracy.)

"I would thus from time to time take advice of the birds..."

At this point in his 1857 journal, Thoreau is making use of a Jewish story about the by-tradition-wise King Solomon of Judaea: that this ruler had been enabled by God to understand the language of the birds. With the birds always perceptive and never dissembling, King Solomon was uniquely able to take advice of the truth, and he became filled with an insight ordinarily denied to mortals.¹



1. Refer to Ellen Frankel's *THE CLASSIC TALES: 4,000 YEARS OF JEWISH LORE* (Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson, 1989, 1993).



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848 BCE

Solomon allegedly was born, as the 2d son of King David. He would die, it is said, at age 52 in 796 BCE after ruling as King of the Jews for the best 40 years in all of Israel's history. There is not, however, any archeological evidence for the existence of such a monarch, or of such a Jewish kingdom of magnificent extent. According to Jewish folk legend, this ruler had been enabled by God to understand the language of the birds, so that, with the birds always perceptive and never dissembling, he was uniquely able to take advice of the truth, and became filled with an insight ordinarily denied to mortals (refer to Ellen Frankel's THE CLASSIC TALES: 4,000 YEARS OF JEWISH LORE, Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson, 1989, 1993). According to 1 KINGS 5:11-14, his fame spread through all the surrounding nations and kings dropped by to hear his wisdom (if that is true, none of these kings appear to have made any record of the fact.)²

2. Alternative dates for this "[King Solomon](#)" figure have been given as *circa* 992-*circa* 925 BCE.



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836 BCE

Solomon allegedly became King of Israel at the age of 12. He would die, it is said, at age 52 in 796 BCE after ruling as King of the Jews for the best 40 years in all of Israel's history. (There is not, however, any archeological evidence for the existence of such a monarch, or of such a Jewish kingdom of magnificent extent. According to 1 KINGS 5:11-14, his fame spread through all the surrounding nations and kings dropped by to hear his wisdom — if that is true, none of these kings appear to have made any record of the fact.) The story as passed down in 1 KINGS 2:2-3 is that before King David died, he appointed his son as king, with the following words: “I go the way of all the earth. You shall be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes and His commandments and His testimonies. As it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you

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do and wherever you turn.”



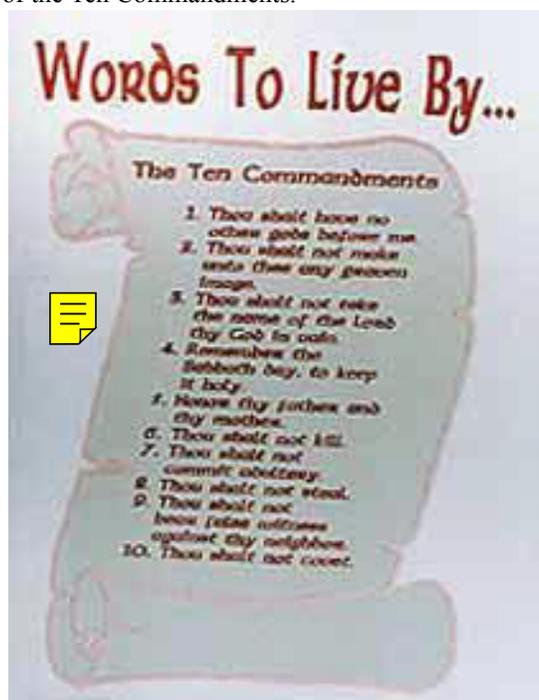
Shortly after Solomon was anointed, according to 1 KINGS 3:7-13, God would appear to him in a dream and promise to grant him one wish. [King Solomon](#)'s wish was "Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people...." (Jewish folk legend would have it that God responded to this prayer by allowing Solomon to learn the language of the birds, with the birds far-seeing and never dissembling). Comprehending that the special interests of the 12 tribes of Israel threatened the unity of the kingdom, in dividing the realm into administrative districts he would intentionally make these internal borders differ from previous tribal boundaries. He allegedly had many wives whom he allegedly allowed to worship as they wished, and he is the

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putative author of the SONG OF SONGS THAT IS SOLOMON'S, ECCLESIASTES, and PROVERBS.³



Probable historic origin of the Ten Commandments.

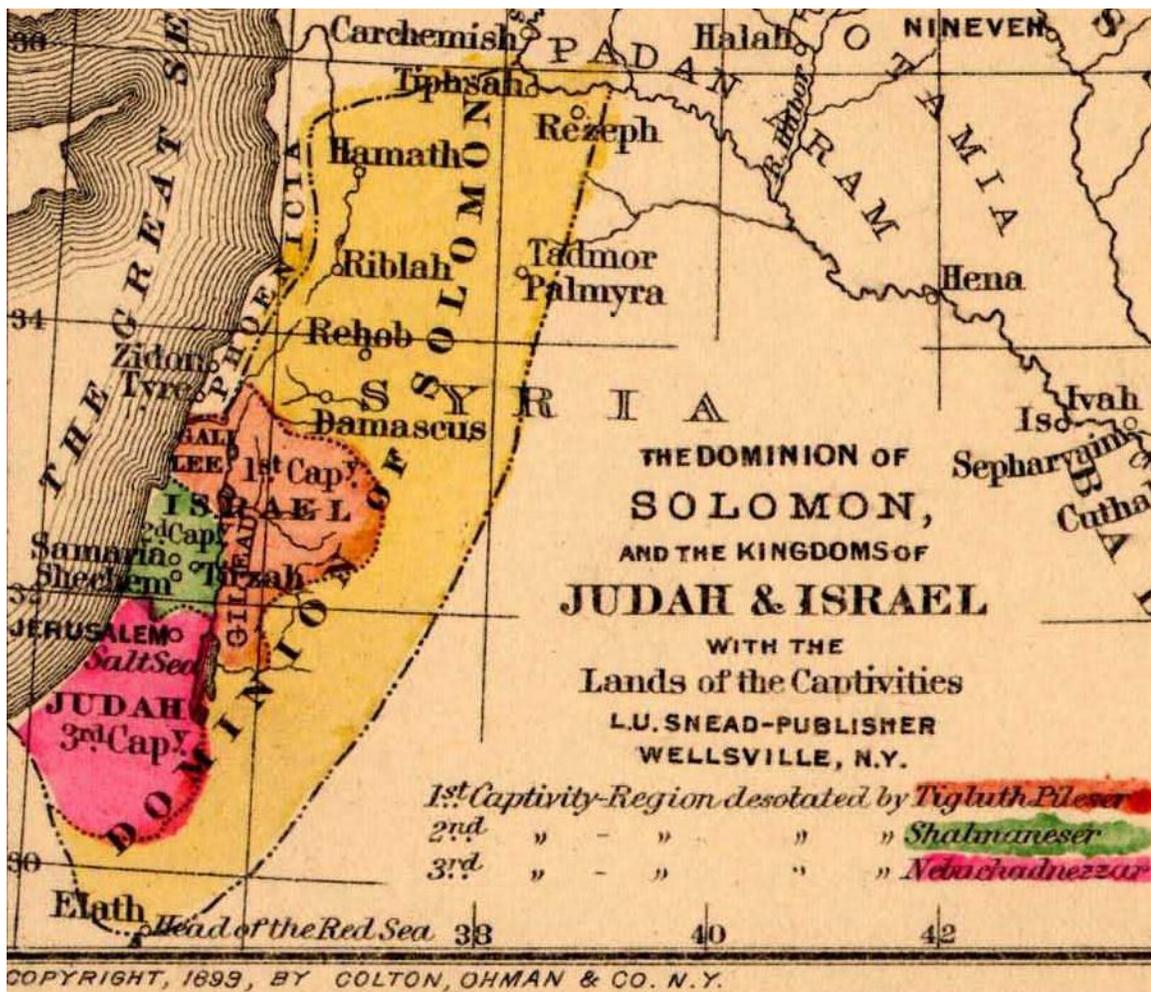


3. Alternative dates for this reign have been given as circa 965-circa 928 BCE.

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796 BCE

Solomon allegedly died at age 52, after allegedly ruling as King of the Jews for the best four decades in all of Israel's history. (There is not, however, any archeological evidence for the existence of such a monarch, or of such a Jewish kingdom so very much more extensive than the regions that had been desolated by Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Nebuchadnezzar. According to 1 KINGS 5:11-14, [King Solomon](#)'s fame had spread through all the surrounding nations and kings dropped by to hear his wisdom — if that is true, none of these surrounding kingdoms appear to have made any record of the fact.)



High taxes plus alliances with heathen courts would allegedly produce disruption under his son Rehoboam, so even if this grand kingdom did ever exist other than in someone's hot fancy, it did not last for very long.⁴

4. Alternative dates for this figure have been given as circa 992-circa 925 BCE.



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649 BCE

Jeremiah, Hebrew Prophet in Judah, was author of the Old Testament book that bears his name. Jeremiah's message was of impending doom (we use the word "jeremiad" today for such dystopian prophecies), but he made the original promise of a God of universal righteousness. Jeremiah warned the Judaeans of Babylonian invasion, and prophesied that the Temple of [King Solomon](#) would be destroyed in that invasion. When Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar attacked Israel, the Temple was indeed burned. Leading citizens were taken into captivity, but Jeremiah was allowed to stay. Once the Babylonian governor was assassinated, Jeremiah was brought to [Egypt](#) by the rebels.

50 BCE

The PSALMS OF SOLOMON were written in Hebrew in Jerusalem. [Henry Thoreau](#) would make us of the "thousands hills" trope of PSALMS 50:10 and the "skip like rams" trope of PSALMS 114:4 in his [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#):



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WALDEN: While these things go up other things come down. Warned by the whizzing sound, I look up from my book and see some tall pine, hewn on far northern hills, which has winged its way over the Green Mountains and the Connecticut, shot like an arrow through the township within ten minutes, and scarce another eye beholds it; going

“to be the mast
Of some great ammiral.”

And hark! here comes the cattle-train bearing the cattle of a thousand hills, sheepcots, stables, and cow-yards in the air, drovers with their sticks, and shepherd boys in the midst of their flocks, all but the mountain pastures, whirled along like leaves blown from the mountains by the September gales. The air is filled with the bleating of calves and sheep, and the hustling of oxen, as if a pastoral valley were going by. When the old bell-wether at the head rattles his bell, the mountains do indeed skip like rams and the little hills like lambs. A car-load of drovers, too, in the midst, on a level with their droves now, their vocation gone, but still clinging to their useless sticks as their badge of office. But their dogs, where are they? It is a stampede to them; they are quite thrown out; they have lost the scent. Methinks I hear them barking behind the Peterboro' Hills, or panting up the western slope of the Green Mountains. They will not be in at the death. Their vocation, too, is gone. Their fidelity and sagacity are below par now. They will slink back to their kennels in disgrace, or perchance run wild and strike a league with the wolf and the fox. So is your pastoral life whirled past and away. But the bell rings, and I must get off the track and let the cars go by;-

What's the railroad to me?
I never go to see
Where it ends.
It fills a few hollows,
And makes banks for the swallows,
It sets the sand a-blowing,
And the blackberries a-growing,

but I cross it like a cart-path in the woods. I will not have my eyes put out and my ears spoiled by its smoke and steam and hissing. Now that the cars are gone by, and all the restless world with them, and the fishes in the pond no longer feel their rumbling, I am more alone than ever. For the rest of the long afternoon, perhaps, my meditations are interrupted only by the faint rattle of a carriage or team along the distant highway.

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The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?

Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.



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1852

April 6, Tuesday: When [Henry Thoreau](#) appeared to lecture as scheduled at Cochituate Hall in downtown Boston, a heavy snow was falling. He had come from the Boston Society of Natural History where he had checked out [John Evelyn](#)'s *SYLVA*, OR A DISCOURSE OF FOREST-TREES, AND THE PROPAGATION OF TIMBER.... TO WHICH IS ANNEXED *POMONA*.... ALSO *KALENDARIVM HORTENSE*....

JOHN EVELYN'S SYLVA

(see the following screen)

This lecture date had been set up by the Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson.



Due to the snowstorm only 5 or 6 persons showed up, among whom was [Doctor Walter Channing](#), the father of [Ellery Channing](#) of Concord. [Bronson Alcott](#) got the meeting moved to the Mechanics Apprentices Library next door, in hopes that some of the young men reading there could be persuaded to join the audience, but these young men proved to be hard to interest in a lecture on "Reality."

WALDEN: According to Evelyn, "the wise Solomon prescribed ordinances for the very distances of trees; and the Roman praetors have decided how often you may go into your neighbor's land to gather the acorns which fall on it without trespass, and what share belongs to that neighbor."

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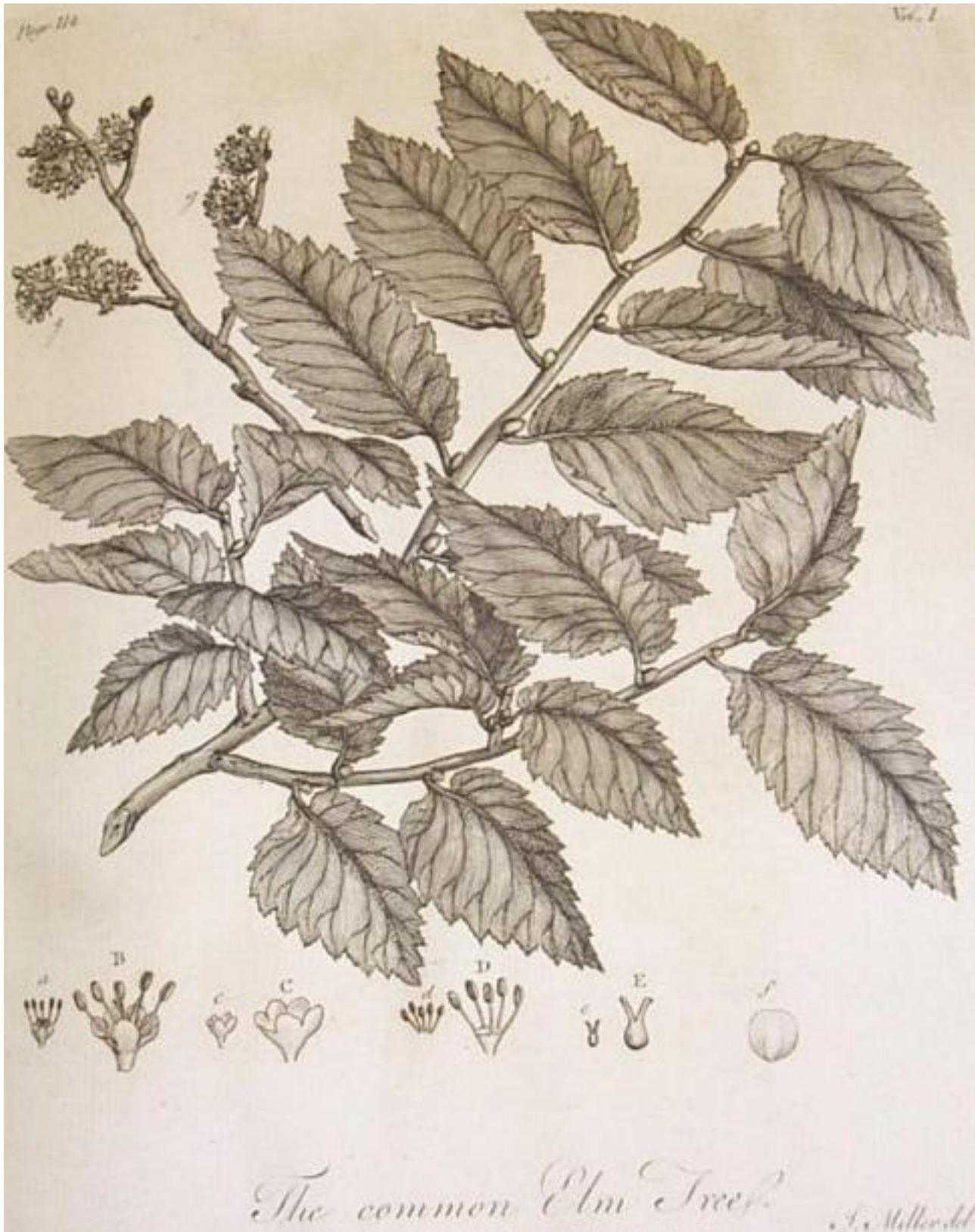
JOHN EVELYN
SOLON OF ATHENS

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WALDEN: Though I gave them no manure, and did not hoe them all once, I hoed them unusually well as far as I went, and was paid for it in the end, "there being in truth," as Evelyn says, "no compost or latation whatsoever comparable to this continual motion, repastination, and turning of the mould with the spade." "The earth," he adds elsewhere, "especially if fresh, has a certain magnetism in it, by which it attracts the salt, power, or virtue (call it either) which gives it life, and is the logic of all the labor and stir we keep about it, to sustain us; all dungings and other sordid temperings being but the vicars succedaneous to this improvement." Moreover, this being one of those "worn-out and exhausted lay fields which enjoy their sabbath," had perchance, as Sir Kenelm Digby thinks likely, attracted "vital spirits" from the air. I harvested twelve bushels of beans.

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SIR KENELM DIGBY

JOHN EVELYN

TIMELINE OF WALDEN



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One of my most amusing impressions of Thoreau relates to a time when, in the Quixotism of youthful admiration, I had persuaded him to give a lecture in Boston, at my risk. He wrote (April 3, 1852) in a tone of timidity which may surprise those who did not know him, "I certainly do not feel prepared to offer myself as a lecturer to the Boston public, and hardly know whether more to dread a small audience or a large one. Nevertheless I will repress this squeamishness, and propose no alteration in your arrangements." The scene of the lecture was to be a small hall in a court, now vanished, opening from Tremont street, opposite King's Chapel, the hall itself being leased by an association of young mechanics, who had a reading-room opening out of it. The appointed day ushered in a furious snow-storm before which the janitor of the building retreated in despair, leaving the court almost blockaded. When Thoreau and I ploughed through, we found a few young mechanics reading newspapers; and when the appointed hour came, there were assembled only Mr. Alcott, Dr. Walter Channing and at most three or four ticket-holders. No one wished to postpone the affair and Mr. Alcott suggested that the thing to be done was to adjourn to the reading-room, where, he doubted not, the young men would be grateful for the new gospel offered; for which he himself undertook to prepare their minds. I can see him now, going from one to another, or collecting them in little groups and expounding to them, with his lofty Socratic mien, the privileges they were to share. "This is his life; this is his book; he is to print it presently; I think we shall all be glad, shall we not, either to read his book or to hear it?" Some laid down their newspapers, more retained them; the lecture proved to be one of the most introspective chapters from "Walden." A few went to sleep, the rest rustled their papers; and the most vivid impression which I retain from the whole enterprise is the profound gratitude I felt to one auditor ([Doctor Walter Channing](#)), who forced upon me a five-dollar bill towards the expenses of the disastrous entertainment.⁵



April 6, Tuesday: Last night a snow storm & this morning we find the ground covered again 6 or 8 inches deep-& drifted pretty badly beside. The conductor in the cars which have been detained more than an hour-says it is a dry snow up country- Here it is very damp.

5. The Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson's "Glimpses of Authors" ([Brains](#) I, December 1, 1891, page 105)



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1857

May 12, Tuesday: [Sam Houston](#) declared himself a candidate for the office of Governor of [Texas](#).



News of the Sepoy mutiny reached the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, Sir George Anson, by telegraph at Simla, [India](#). It is rather likely that he fantasized what was going on, in his mentation, in approximately the manner depicted in this period illustration of a bunch of anarchic ragheads struggling among

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themselves and posturing and threatening each other over the spoils of conquest:



In honor of the 37th birthday of her friend Florence Nightingale, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell chose this day for the relocation of her clinic and dispensary on East 7th Street in New-York City at which “medical practitioners [*sic*] of either sex” could serve the poor and sick, to its new quarters in an old house at 64 Bleeker Street. This facility, now honored in Beth Israel Medical Center at Stuyvesant Square East and 15th Street, would become known as the New York Infirmary for Indigent Women and Children.



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May 12, Tuesday. How rarely I meet with a man who can be free, even in thought! We live according to rule. Some men are bedridden; all, world-ridden. I take my neighbor, an intellectual man, out into the woods and invite him to take a new and absolute view of things, to empty clean out of his thoughts all institutions of men and start again; but he can't do it, he sticks to his traditions and his crotchets. He thinks that governments, colleges, newspapers, etc., are from everlasting to everlasting.

The *Salix cordata* var. *Torreyana* is distinguished by its naked ovaries more or less red-brown, with flesh-colored stigmas, with a distinct slender woolly rachis and conspicuous stalks, giving the ament a loose and open appearance.

When I consider how many species of willow have been planted along the railroad causeway within ten years, of which no one knows the history, and not one in Concord beside myself can tell the name of one, so that it is quite a discovery to identify a single one in a year, and yet within this period the seeds of all these kinds have been conveyed from some other locality to this, I am reminded how much is going on that man wots not of.

While dropping beans in the garden at Texas just after sundown (May 13th), I hear from across the fields the note of the bay-wing [Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*]. Come *here here there quick quick quick or I'm gone* (which I have no doubt sits on some fence-post or rail there), and it instantly translates me from the sphere of my work and repairs all the world that we jointly inhabit. It reminds me of so many country afternoons and evenings when this bird's strain was heard far over the fields, as I pursued it from field to field. The spirit of its earth-song, of its serene and true philosophy, was breathed into me, and I saw the world as through a glass, as it lies eternally. Some of its aboriginal contentment, even of its domestic felicity, possessed me. What he suggests is permanently true.

As the bay-wing [Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*] sang many a thousand years ago, so sang he tonight. In the beginning God heard his song and pronounced it good, and hence it has endured. It reminded me of many a summer sunset, of many miles of gray rails, of many a rambling pasture, of the farmhouse far in the fields, its milk-pans and well-sweep, and the cows coming home from pasture.

I would thus from time to time take advice of the birds, correct my human views by listening to their volucral [*sic*]. He is a brother poet, this small gray bird (or bard), whose muse inspires mine. His lay is an idyl or pastoral, older and sweeter than any that is classic. He sits on some gray perch like himself, on a stake, perchance, in the midst of the field, and you can hardly see him against the plowed ground. You advance step by step as the twilight deepens, and lo! he is gone, and in vain you strain your eyes to see whither, but anon his tinkling strain is heard from some other quarter. One with the rocks and with us.

Methinks I hear these sounds, have these reminiscences, only when well employed, at any rate only when I have no reason to be ashamed of my employment. I am often aware of a certain compensation of this kind for doing something from a sense of duty, even unconsciously. Our past experience is a never-failing capital which can never be alienated, of which each kindred future event reminds us. If you would have the song of the sparrow inspire you a thousand years hence, let your life be in harmony with its strain to-day.

I ordinarily plod along a sort of whitewashed prison entry, subject to some indifferent or even grovelling mood. I do not distinctly realize my destiny. I have turned down my light to the merest glimmer and am doing some task which I have set myself. I take incredibly narrow views, live on the limits, and have no recollection of absolute truth. Mushroom institutions hedge me in. But suddenly, in some fortunate moment, the voice of eternal wisdom reaches me, even in the strain of the sparrow, and liberates me, whets and clarifies my senses, makes me a competent witness.

The second amelanchier out, in garden. Some fir balsams, as Cheney's. Is not ours in the grove, with the chip-bird's nest in it, the *Abies Fraseri*? Its cones are short. I hear of, and also find, a ground-bird's (song sparrow's) nest with five eggs.

P. M.— To Miles Swamp, Conantum.

I hear a yorrick, apparently anxious, near me, utter from time to time a sharp grating *char-r-r*, like a fine watchman's rattle. As usual, I have not heard them sing yet. A night-warbler, plainly light beneath. It always flies to a new perch immediately after its song. Hear the *screeep* of the parti-colored warbler.

Veronica serpyllifolia is abundantly out at Corner Spring. As I go along the hillside toward Miles Swamp, I mistake the very light gray cliff-sides east of the river at Bittern Cliff for amelanchier in bloom.

The brother of Edward Garfield (after dandelions!) tells me that two years ago, when he was cutting wood at Bittern Cliff in the winter, he saw something dark squatting on the ice, which he took to be a mink, and taking a stake he went to inspect it. It turned out to be a bird, a new kind of duck, with a long, slender, pointed bill (he thought red). It moved off backwards, hissing at him, and he threw his stake about a rod and partly broke its neck, then killed it. It was very lean and the river was nowhere open. He sent it to Waltham and sold it for twenty-five cents.



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Black ash, maybe a day.

Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum. I see a whitish cocoon on a small carpinus. It is artfully made, where there is a short crook in the main stem, so as to just fill the hollow and make an even surface, the stick forming one side.

1860

[The Reverend Dr. Andrew Preston Peabody, Harvard College's Plummer Professor of Christian Morals](#) reviewed (anonymously) the Reverend [Leonard Withington's](#) SOLOMON'S SONG: TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED IN THREE PARTS. The review was a favorable one.

KING SOLOMON

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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: August 12, 2013



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



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



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which 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 your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.