WILLIAM JAMES STILLMAN

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY
William James Stillman was born in a family of 7th-Day Baptists in Schenectady, New York.
William James Stillman graduated from the Union College of Schenectady. He would study art under Frederic Edwin Church.
Influenced by MODERN PAINTERS, William James Stillman sailed for England, where he would seek out John Ruskin. He would have an opportunity also to meet J.M.W. Turner, and would fall under the influence of Rossetti and Millais. After his return to America he would come to be described as “the American Pre-Raphaelite.”
In London, Lajos Kossuth became an intimate of Giuseppe Mazzini, and joined his revolutionary committee.

Thomas Mayne Reid, Jr.’s THE YOUNG VOYAGEURS; OR, THE BOY HUNTERS IN THE NORTH. The author engaged in a plan for Kossuth to travel incognito across Europe as his man-servant “James Hawkins” under a Foreign Office passport “for the free passage of Captain Mayne Reid, British subject, travelling on the Continent with a man-servant.”

In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE there was talk of the reading of THE DIAL:

Being much alone, during my recovery, I read interminably [page 677] in Mr. Emerson’s Essays, the Dial, Carlyle’s works, George Sand’s romances, (lent me by Zenobia,) and other books which one or another of the brethren or sisterhood had brought with them. Agreeing in little else, most of these utterances were like the cry of some solitary sentinel, whose station was on the outposts of the advance-guard of human progression; or, sometimes, the voice came sadly from among the shattered ruins of the past, but yet had a hopeful echo in the future. They were well adapted (better, at least, than any other intellectual products, the volatile essence of which had heretofore tinctured a printed page) to pilgrims like ourselves, whose present bivouc was considerably farther into the waste of chaos than any mortal army of crusaders had ever marched before. Fourier’s works, also, in a series of horribly tedious volumes, attracted a good deal of my attention, from the analogy which I could not but recognize between his system and our own. There was far less resemblance, it is true, than the world chose to imagine; inasmuch as the two theories differed, as widely as the zenith from the nadir, in their main principles.

At some point during this year the proud author sat for his portrait in the studio of G.P.A. Healy at West Street and Washington Street in Boston. His new book was in part about “the Juvenalian and Thoreauvian ideology of Blithedale,” an experiment in community which was “in spite of its Edenic pretensions, located in an area of market gardens catering to the needs of the expanding ‘New England metropolis’.”

When “Wakefield” was published in 1836, most of Hawthorne’s audience, like Hawthorne himself, would only have known of the conditions of urban life treated in the sketch by having read about them. Hawthorne takes advantage of the exoticism of a
European metropolitan setting, just as Poe was to have done a few years later in "The Man of the Crowd" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Yet by 1852, when THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE was published, the urbanization of America was no longer an abstract possibility; it was, thanks to economic growth, industrial development, and large-scale immigration, an increasingly insistent reality. The intellectual and social movements represented by the Blithedale community were, in large measure, a response to these historic changes. The process of urbanization is therefore never entirely out of sight in THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE. Expressing the ideas implicit in the agrarian experiment, Coverdale offers several standard Transcendentalist criticisms of urban life. Driving through the streets of Boston, he describes "how the buildings, on either side, seemed to press too closely upon us, insomuch that our mighty hearts found barely room enough to throb between them" (3:11). Observing how the snow falling upon the city is blackened by smoke, and molded by boots, Coverdale makes it into a metaphor for the way in which human nature is corrupted by the "falsehood, formality, and error" (3:11) of city life. In addition, Coverdale identifies cities as the sources of the "selfish competition," which powers the "weary treadmill of established society" (3:19). Yet, although Coverdale will occasionally express the Juvenalian and Thoreauvian ideology of Blithedale, he implicitly recognizes, late in the book, that it may be futile to attempt to arrest the advance of urban civilization. When he observes a crowd at a village lyceum, it seems to him to be "rather suburban than rural" (3:197). The decline of authentic rusticity has been implied earlier when we learn that Blithedale, in spite of its Edenic pretensions, is located in an area of market gardens catering to the needs of the expanding "New England metropolis." From the very beginning of THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE, we know that the utopian experiment has failed and that Coverdale has returned to the urban existence he originally fled.

During this year Kossuth was fundraising practically everywhere in America, including in the First Church at Northampton. He had a letter of introduction to the Motts of Philadelphia, and they invited him to dinner at their home. The Governor’s advisers insisted that he call there only for an informal chat while refraining from breaking bread with any such notorious abolitionists — lest news of such an indiscretion get out and he be embarrassed. During his visit and chat, Friend Lucretia somehow formed the opinion that although this politician was afraid to say so, in his heart he would have to be opposed to human slavery in any form. (Madam Pulzysky, Kossuth’s sister, also visited the Motts, and by way of contrast she was willing to argue the advantages of human slavery with them.)

What sort of man was this Kossuth? Utterly ruthless. Cold-blooded murder was not beyond him, when the result would prove useful. When he had needed to safeguard the royal gems of Hungary, for instance, including the crown of St. Stephen which was held to be necessary for the coronation of any true king of Hungary, he had had them buried at a spot on the banks of the Danube, and he had employed for this work “a detachment of prisoners who were shot after the concealment was complete.” His plot was that this portable property was to be recovered later, packed in marmalade, and carried via Constantinople to “the well-known Philhellene”
of Boston. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe. However, when it came to be time, during this year, to dig up the jewels and pack them in marmalade for shipment to Boston, the man whom he would entrust to do this would betray his trust. Eventually the jewels, including the crown of St. Stephen, would come into the control of the government of Austria.

Kossuth somehow suborned the cooperation of William James Stillman in his abortive scheme to recover the jewels, and this American artist sailed off to Hungary on this wild-goose chase.

According to page 153 and pages 161-6 of Larry J. Reynolds’s influence study EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE AMERICAN LITERARY RENAISSANCE (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988), virtually everything about Henry Thoreau during this period is to be accounted for in terms of the manifold influences upon him and upon the times, of European revolutionaries such as Kossuth here:

Faced with this threat of mental contamination, our guy allegedly has become literally obsessed with maintaining his self-concept and his self-satisfaction:

Thoreau, stirred by Lajos Kossuth’s visit and news of European affairs, returned to the manuscript of WALDEN and revised and expanded it throughout 1852. Although engaged by current events, Thoreau fought a spiritual battle to remain aloof, “to preserve the mind’s chastity” by reading “not the Times” but “the Eternities.” Imagining that he had won, he celebrated his victory in WALDEN.... Kossuth’s visit to the United States and Concord brought to a head a struggle Thoreau had been engaged in for some time. During the years following the European revolutions of 1848-1849, Thoreau struggled to develop his spiritual side and rid himself of what he considered a degrading interest in current events. He also tried to communicate to Waldo Emerson and the world his own capacity for heroism. After the disappointing reception of A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS in the summer of 1849, Thoreau had become uncertain about how to proceed with his life. Setting the third draft of WALDEN aside as unpublishable, he studied Hinduism, visited Cape Cod several times, took a trip to Canada, and began his Indian book project. The next year, 1851, he started to focus his energies, and, as Lewis Leary has said, these twelve months were a watershed in his life, a time of consolidation, of self-discovery, of preparation for some important new effort. “I find myself uncommonly prepared for some literary work....,” he wrote.
in his journal on September 7, 1851. "I am prepared not so much for contemplation, as for forceful expression." Subsequently, 1852 became Thoreau's *annus mirabilis*, the year his months of living deliberately yielded a value of its own, he lavished upon it the care and craft that turned it into his richest literary achievement; he also wrote at this time most of his essay "Life without Principle," which, as Walter Harding has observed, "contains virtually all the fundamental principles upon which he based his life"; and, more important, he radically revised and reshaped *Walden*, changing it from a factual account of his life in the woods into the embryo of a profound spiritual autobiography, illuminated by the idea of spiritual renewal, shaped and informed by the cycle of the seasons.

The catalyst for the metamorphosis of *Walden* was Thoreau's desire to resolve, in writing if not in fact, the conflict he felt between the spiritual and the animal in himself. On the one hand, his recent communion with nature had yielded, as it had in his youth, transcendence — not of the world of material fact, but rather of the world of trivial fact. At times he achieved a state of pure spirituality in the woods. On August 17, 1851, for example, he recorded in his journal, "My heart leaps into my mouth at the sound of the wind in the woods. I, whose life was but yesterday so desultory and shallow, suddenly recover my spirits, my spirituality, through my hearing.... I did not despair of worthier moods, and now I have occasion to be grateful for the flood of life that is flowing over me." At such times, he reexperienced the ecstasy of his youth, when, as he put it, "the morning and the evening were sweet to me, and I led a life aloof from society of men." Despite these experiences, which he valued greatly, another aspect of Thoreau's personality cared about society, cared passionately about justice, about the actions of governments, about the fate of actual men in the nineteenth century. This part of him, however, he associated with his impure animal nature, and he sought to purge it.

Thoreau had no way of knowing whether the body was Margaret Fuller's or not, but she was surely on his mind, and her endeavor to convince others of the legitimacy of her "title" may have been as well. His description, which obviously contrasts with his earlier one, reveals the power and significance the facts possessed in his eyes. Here as always he cared too much about the human to dismiss its annihilation with convincing disdain.

During the last months of 1850 and all of 1851, Thoreau dedicated himself to living deliberately, to fronting what he called the essential. During these months, he spent many hours walking through the fields and woods of Concord, recording his observations in his journal. At the same time, he read the newspapers and found himself engaged by what he found. The political news from Europe focused upon the failure of the republican movement, the reaction and reprisals, the futile attempts by exiles such as Mazzini and Kossuth to enlist aid in the struggle for a new round of upheavals. Austria, meanwhile,
charged that the United States, especially its new Secretary of State Daniel Webster, was encouraging anti-Austrian sentiment and intruding in the affairs of Europe. On November 17, 1850, Thoreau revealed both his disdain for the news of the day and his concern about its power to capture his attention: “It is a strange age of the world this, when empires, kingdoms, and republics come a-begging to our doors and utter their complaints at our elbows. I cannot take up a newspaper but I find that some wretched government or other, hard pushed and on its last legs, is interceding with me, the reader, to vote for it, — more importunate than an Italian beggar.” At times the newspapers contributed to the problem he called “the village,” which kept him from getting to the woods in spirit, although he walked miles into it bodily. One way he tried to overcome this problem was through the process of diminution, which can be seen in the following outburst of May 1, 1851: “Nations! What are nations? Tartars! and Huns! and Chinamen! Like insects they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a man that there are so many men.” Quoting from “The Spirit of Lodin,” “… he claims to “look down from my height on nations, / And they become ashes before me.” By adopting an Olympian point of view, Thoreau elevates himself and diminishes men both in size and importance. Like Waldo Emerson in the “Mind and Manners” lectures, he also reaffirms his belief that the regeneration of the self, the building up of the single solitary soul, is far more important than the activities of masses of men, be they parties, tribes, or nations.

Throughout 1851, as Thoreau continued to read the papers, he developed a loathing for them linked to that part of himself unable to ignore them. The news, he came to assert, could profane the “very sanctum sanctorum” of the mind:

> I find it so difficult to dispose of the few facts which to me are significant, that I hesitate to burden my mind with the most insignificant, which only a divine mind could illustrate. Such is, for the most part, the news, — in newspapers and conversation. It is important to preserve the mind’s chastity in this respect.... By all manners of boards and traps, threatening the extreme penalty of the divine law, ... it behooves us to preserve the purity and sanctity of the mind.... It is so hard to forget what it is worse than useless to remember. If I am to be a channel or thoroughfare, I prefer that it be of the mountain springs, and not the town sewers, — the Parnassian streams.

> “I do not think much of the actual,” he wrote himself. “It is something which we have long since done with. It is a sort of vomit in which the unclean love to wallow.” During the writing of the 4th version of WALDEN, which coincided with Kossuth’s tour of the country, Thoreau created a myth about himself as someone who had risen above the affairs of men, someone who felt the animal dying out in him and the spiritual being established.
In *Walden*, the European revolutions of 1848-1849, the reaction and reprisals that followed, all the attention given in the newspapers to Kossuth’s visit, to Louis Napoleon’s *coup d’état*, to a possible war between France and Great Britain, all these go unmentioned, and the absence reveals how earnestly, perhaps even how desperately, Thoreau sought to diminish their importance to his life. In his journals we see his fascination with and antagonism toward the news of national and international affairs. He devotes half of his essay “Life without Principle,” moreover, to a castigation of the news, telling the reader about its dangers, its foulness, its profanity — even mentioning Kossuth by name and ridiculing the “stir” about him: “That excitement about Kossuth, consider how characteristic, but superficial, it was!... For all the fruit of that stir we have the Kossuth hat.”¹ In *Walden*, however, he purifies his book and his persona by ignoring contemporary world affairs. Characterizing himself (untruthfully) as one “who rarely looks into the newspapers,” he claims that “nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted.”

Thoreau’s struggle to achieve an oriental aloofness from the affairs of men seems to have first become a serious endeavor for him in the summer of 1850, when Emerson asked him to go to Fire Island to retrieve the body and possessions of Margaret Fuller. As Robert D. Richardson, Jr. has pointed out, “Death gave life a new imperative for Thoreau.” Despite Fuller’s rejections of his *Dial* contributions in the early 1840s, Thoreau became her friend and admirer, and during her last summer in Concord, he took her boat riding at dawn on the river. The task he faced at Fire Island thus could not have been pleasant, yet in his journal and in letters to others, he strove to project a philosophical serenity about what he found. In a letter to his admirer H.G.O. Blake, he wrote that he had in his pocket a button torn from the coat of Giovanni Angelo, marchese d’Ossoli: “Held up, it intercept the light, — and actual button, — and yet all the life it is connected with is less substantial to me, and interests me less, than my faintest dream. Our thoughts are the epochs in our lives: all else is but a journal of the winds that blew while we were here.” Thoreau had not known Ossoli, so his aloof serenity here comes easily; he had known Fuller though, and his attempt to rise above the fact of her death shows strain.

When Thoreau arrived at the site of the wreck, Fuller’s body had not been found, but he stayed in the area and a week later learned that something once human had washed ashore. As he approached it, he saw bones, and in the draft of this letter to Blake he asserted, “There was nothing at all remarkable about them. They were simply some bones lying on the beach. They would

¹ The Kossuth hat was a black, low-crowned felt hat with left brim fastened to crown, having a peacock feather. The story of its “invention” by John Nicholas Genin (1819-1878) and its rise to high fashion is told in Donald S. Spencer’s *Louis Kossuth and Young America — A Study in Sectionalism and Foreign Policy, 1848-1852* (Columbia, London: U of Missouri P, 1977, pages 59-61). This proprietor of a hat shop on Broadway in New-York next to the American Museum, Genin, also designed a best-selling Jenny Lind Riding Hat.
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not detain the walker there more than so much seaweed. I should think that the fates would not take the trouble to show me any bones again, I so slightly appreciated the favor." He recalled the experience in his journal some three months later, however, and there revealed the difficulty he had in dismissing what he had seen: "I once went in search of the relics of a human body...," he wrote, "which had been cast up the day before on the beach, though the sharks had stripped off the flesh.... It was as conspicuous on that sandy plain as if a generation had labored to pile up a cairn there.... It reigned over the shore. That dead body possessed the shore as no living one could. It showed a title to the sands which no living ruler could."

In the winter of 1851-1852, Thoreau's struggle to assure his own purity became obsessive. Sherman Paul has traced his dissatisfaction with himself to surveying, which Thoreau found trivial and coarsening. Mary Elkins Moller has speculated that Thoreau was also having sexual fantasies about Mrs. Lidian Emerson and felt ashamed of them. Whatever the truth of these views (and I think the second takes Thoreau's references to chastity too literally), the fact remains that Thoreau at this time was also struggling to escape from his interest in current events. Surprisingly, this private denouncer of the press had become a subscriber to Horace Greeley's Weekly Tribune, a fact that heightened the tension he felt about preserving his mind's chastity. On January 20, 1852, he wrote,

I do not know but it is too much to read one newspaper in a week, for I now take the weekly Tribune, and for a few days past, it seems to me, I have not dwelt in Concord; the sun, the clouds, the snow, the trees say not so much to me. You cannot serve two masters.... To read the things distant and sounding betrays us into slighting these which are then apparently near and small. We learn to look abroad for our mind and spirit's daily nutriment, and what is this dull town to me? ...All summer and far into the fall I unconsciously went by the newspapers and the news, and now I find it was because the morning and the evening were full of news to me. My walks were full of incidents. I attended not to the affairs of Europe, but to my own affairs in Concord fields.

Thoreau's quest for purity and serenity had become particularly difficult because of the excitement surrounding Lajos Kossuth's visit and the new interest Waldo Emerson had taken in things Thoreau considered trivial, including Kossuth. The gradual estrangement of the two men may have begun while Emerson was in England in 1847-1848, writing letters home for Lidian and Thoreau which were little more than catalogues of the great people he had met. Although we know this was his way of providing himself a record of his activities, it probably disappointed. After his return from Europe, Emerson had lectured throughout the country, praising England and its people, but when he
engaged Thoreau in a conversation on the topic, Henry, not surprisingly, said that the English were “mere soldiers” and their business was “winding up.” In the summer of 1851, Emerson, unaware of the new scope and grandeur of Thoreau’s journal, unaware of the growth in his spiritual development, wrote off his friend as one who “will not stick.” “He is a boy,” Emerson added, “& will be an old boy. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding Empires, but not, if at the end of years, it is only beans.”

In a like manner, Thoreau at about this time began to see that his friend would continue to disappoint him. He bristles at Emerson’s patronizing attitude; he disagreed with his treatment of Margaret Fuller in the MEMOIRS; and most of all he resented his new worldliness. In ENGLISH TRAITS (1856) Emerson, drawing on his lectures of 1848-1850, would celebrate the manners of the British aristocracy and assert that “whatever tends to form manners or to finish men, has a great value. Every one who has tasted the delight of friendship will respect every social guard which our manners can establish.” For Thoreau, there was “something devilish in manners” that could come between friends, and writing of Emerson in the winter of 1851, he complained, “One of the best men I know often offends me by uttering made words — the very best words, of course, or dinner speeches, most smooth and gracious and fluent repartees.... O would you but be simple and downright! Would you but cease your palaver! It is the misfortune of being a gentleman and famous." As Joel Porte has observed, the failure of A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS and Emerson’s “manifest success” had probably contributed to Thoreau’s bitterness.

A pushy little ultra-conservative mofo, the Reverend Francis Bowen had what was termed at the time “a remarkable talent for giving offense.” Precisely while Kossuth was riding the crest of the wave of American political correctness, Bowen publicly denounced that revolutionary. ([Nota Bene: This differs from Thoreau’s reaction not merely as public denunciation differs from private distaste but also as cheap motivation differs from abundant reason.])

But this is all very easy to figure out, at least as far as Larry J. Reynolds is concerned. What has happened is merely that Kossuth has come between Waldo Emerson and Thoreau!

Wow, now that we understand that, it all becomes perfectly clear. Continuing to quote, from pages 166-70 of this extraordinarily confident EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS AND THE AMERICAN LITERARY RENAISSANCE influence study:

In the early months of 1852, Kossuth’s visit to Concord widened the separation between Thoreau and Emerson into a permanent gulf. As Thoreau spent more and more time communing with nature, trying to cleanse himself of what he called the “news,” Emerson saw fit to criticize him for these efforts. Frustrated, Thoreau declared in his journal, “I have got to that pass with my friend that our words do not pass with each other for what they are worth. We speak in vain; there is none to hear. He finds fault
with me that I walk alone, when I pine for want of a companion; that I commit my thoughts to a diary even on my walks, instead of seeking to share them generously with a friend; curses my practice even." Emerson, who would soon lecture on the "Conduct of Life" in Canada and then deliver his "Address to Kossuth" in Concord, could not see the heroism in Thoreau’s aloofness. Thoreau, meanwhile, who sought to become a better man through his solitary walks, felt unappreciated and frustrated. On May 4, in an entry both defensive and immodest, he dismissed the great Kossuth and those like Emerson who honored him:

This excitement about Kossuth is not interesting to me, it is so superficial. It is only another kind of dancing or of politics. Men are making speeches to him all over the country, but each expresses only the thought, or the want of thought, of the multitude. No man stands on truth.... You can pass your hand under the largest mob, a nation in revolution even, and, however solid a bulk they may make, like a hail-cloud in the atmosphere, you may not meet so much as a cobweb of support. They may not rest, even by a point, on eternal foundations. But an individual standing on truth you cannot pass your hand under, for his foundations reach to the centre of the universe. So superficial these men and their doings, it is life on a leaf or a chip which has nothing but air or water beneath.

The length and tone of this entry reveals the importance of the matter to him; obviously, he considers himself the "individual standing on truth," whose depth far exceeds that of any "nation in revolution" or military hero. And one week later, during the excitement surrounding Kossuth’s visit to Concord, during the afternoon of Emerson’s speech and reception, Thoreau, in order to show how little he thought of these matters, entered only the following in his journal: “P.M. — Kossuth here.”

All of Thoreau’s struggle with current events, with Kossuth’s visit, with Emerson’s worldliness and disesteem lay behind the important fourth version of Walden. As he revised and expanded his manuscript throughout 1852, Thoreau endowed his persona with a serene aloofness, creating a hero interested in eternal truths, not pointless political ones. Having discovered that “a sane and growing man revolutionizes every day” and that no “institutions of man can survive a morning experience,” he fashioned an answer to his best friend, who thought Kossuth a great man and Henry Thoreau an unsociable boy.

As he revised Walden, Thoreau made major additions.... The thrust of almost all of these additions is to show how nature, which is holy and heroic, can bestow those virtues on one who practices chastity. His central statement on chastity was added, of course, to “Higher Laws” and asserts that “we are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as out higher nature slumbers.... Chastity is the flowering of man; and what
are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open.... He is blessed who is assured that the animal is dying out in him day by day, and the divine being established. Not surprisingly, Thoreau presents himself as having achieved this assuredness. He is among the blessed.

The chastity Thoreau has in mind is as much intellectual as physical, and to attain it one must abstain not merely from sexual intercourse but also from trivial thoughts and interests. In his addition to “Solitude” he explains the process it involves: “By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent.” The result is a feeling of doubleness, whereby a person “may be either a drift-wood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it.” He admits that “this doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes,” but he makes it clear that it is worth the price. In “The Ponds” he adds paragraphs stressing the “serenity and purity” of Walden and suggests a correspondence between it and himself. “Many men have been likened to it,” he writes, “But few deserve that honor.” That he has earned the honor through his way of life is a point made repeatedly. In his addition to “Baker Farm”, Thoreau highlights the blessedness which communion with nature has accorded him. Like Walt Whitman’s persona in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” or more recently Loren Eiseley’s star thrower, Thoreau’s hero becomes literally illuminated by nature. He stands one day at the base of a rainbow’s arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tinged the grass and leaves around, and dazzling [him] as if [he] looked through colored crystal.” To emphasize the religious implications of the experience, he adds, “As I walked on the railroad causeway, I used to wonder at the halo of light around my shadow, and would fain fancy myself one of the elect.” In the additions to the “Conclusion,” Thoreau makes explicit the successful effort to achieve spiritual renewal through aloofness. “I delight to come to my bearings, —” he declares, “not walk in procession with pomp and parade, in a conspicuous place, but to walk even with the Builder of the universe, if I may, — not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by.”

The place he would sit, of course, is far above men and their doings, which diminishes them in his eyes. And this particular view is the one dramatized in his most famous addition, the classic battle of the ants in “Brute Neighbors.” The episode comes from an entry made in his journal on January 22, 1852, while Kossuth was visiting Washington and while Horace Greeley in his Tribune and James Watson Webb in his Courier and Enquirer were debating the nature of the Hungarian War. Thoreau, like most of his contemporaries, found himself engaged (against his will, however) by what called “the great controversy now going on in the world between the despotic and the republican
principle,” and this is why he associates the two tribes of warring ants with the European revolutionary scene and calls them “the red republicans and the black despots or imperialists.” His description of their war has become famous because of its frequent use in anthologies, and is surely right when he says that one reason for its selection is that it is “easily taken from its context.”

Raymond Adams errs though in adding that “it is an episode that hardly has so much as a context.” By virtue of both its hidden connection to revolutionary Europe and its subtle connection to the theme of spiritual serenity, the episode is part of larger contexts that shaped its features.

As Thoreau describes the battle of the ants, he reveals that side of his personality engaged by physical heroism in the actual world. The ferocity and resolve of the combatants, the mutilation and gore that attend their life-and-death struggle thoroughly engage him. “I felt for the rest of that day,” he admits, “as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door.” On the other hand, through the use of the mock-heroic, Thoreau generates an irony that allows him to stress once more the spiritual side of his persona, the side that dismisses politics, revolutions, and wars as trivial. The mother of a single red ant, we are told, has charged her son “to return with his shield or upon it,” and the fighting ants, the narrator speculates, could, not to his surprise, have “had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and played their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants.” With such irony Thoreau diminishes the importance, not of the ants, but of the men they resemble. Just as he claimed that Kossuth and his American admirers were involved in “life on a leaf or a chip,” he here brings the metaphor to life and makes the same statement about warring nations. The purpose of this addition, and of his others, is to show that true heroism is associated with aloof serenity, not brutal warfare.

When Thoreau revised his journal entry for inclusion in WALDEN, he claimed the ant battle occurred “in the Presidency of James Knox Polk, five years before the passage of Daniel Webster’s Fugitive-Slave Bill,” thus making it contemporaneous with his stay at the pond and registering his criticism, as he had in “Civil Disobedience,” of the Mexican War. Ultimately, the issue of slavery disturbed him far more than revolution in Europe, and he found it difficult to resist the temptation to speak out against it. In later versions of WALDEN, Thoreau expanded upon the ideas he introduced in 1852, extending his treatment of the triumph of the spiritual over the animal and filling out his account of the progress of the seasons, which, of course, complements the theme of renewal. Meanwhile, paradoxically, he remained a deeply passionate man, more engaged than others of his acquaintance by the “trivial Nineteenth Century.” When the
slave Anthony Burns was arrested in 1854, Thoreau, burning with rage, publicly denounced the Massachusetts authorities in his inflammatory "Slavery in Massachusetts": "I walk toward one of our ponds," he thundered, "but what signifies the beauty of nature when men are base? ... Who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk. My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her." Five years later, of course, he stepped forward to defend John Brown more ardently than anyone else in the country. Clearly then, in 1852, when Thoreau endowed the persona of WALDEN with remarkable purity and serenity, he was mythologizing himself; he was, in response to the "tintinnabulum from without," creating a new kind of hero for a revolutionary age.

Have we got this very clear now? According to Larry J. Reynolds, it has been demonstrated that Thoreau, a boy playing at life, was not merely fighting a spiritual battle to remain aloof but indeed was fantasizing that he had won this battle, and celebrating his final victory. But Thoreau has been detected as nevertheless full of bitterness, as resentful, as feeling unappreciated and frustrated. Fundamentally a “defensive and immodest” pretense rather than any sort of record of a spiritual journey, WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS merely celebrated cheaply in words what its author could not accomplish in fact: the big win in a struggle between the spiritual in its author and the warrior-wannabee. This is Thoreau as a mere self-deluding boy who, when confronted by a real life hero out of the real world of struggle, struggles to stand “aloof” in order to console himself by considering himself to be the true hero, to be indeed the “individual standing on truth” whose real worth far exceeds the appreciation offered to any such mere celebrity wrapped up in mere mundane push-and-shove concerns. It is hard to imagine that Reynolds is not terming Thoreau a self-deluded coward.
January: William James Stillman began The Crayon, a heavily theory-oriented journal devoted to the graphic arts and the literature related to them, to champion in America the aesthetic theories of the English art critic John Ruskin. This publication would attempt to oppose not only the aesthetics of Frederic Edwin Church but also those of Church’s teacher Thomas Cole. It would characterize the “Voyage of Life” series of paintings as bad landscapes, “false, artificial, and conventional,” and as not being “faithful” studies of “Nature,” as failing to be suitably “reverent toward those truths which it is made the duty of the landscape-painter to tell us.” (Then, in 1859 when sections of AESTHETIK were translated into English, this journal would go Hegelian in a big way, embracing a new doctrine known as “subjective idealism.”)
August 23, Monday: Waldo Emerson wrote his poem “The Adirondacks” about his visit to the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York with the artist William James Stillman, Professor Louis Agassiz of Harvard College,

Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft
In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,
Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
And greet unanimous the joyful change.
2. Here is a painting which Stillman produced in this year, “The Philosophers' Camp in the Adirondacks,” now at the Concord Free Public Library, depicting these immortals at their target practice, with Emerson watching in the center of the frame:
Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar of Concord, Samuel Gray Ward, John Holmes (brother of Oliver Wendell Holmes), Professor Jeffries Wyman (Comparative Anatomy, Harvard College), and four Boston physicians (see painting), in which he had been so utterly alienated by Nature. After spending some time at Stillman’s hunting lodge, the group had taken a boat across Lake Champlain and had ridden in farm carts to Follansbee Lake in upstate New York, where they had camped out.

There is a range of questions which neither Thoreau scholars nor Emerson scholars seem to have considered: 1.) Had Thoreau been invited to participate in this well-organized camping trip? 2.) If he’d been invited to take part — why didn’t he? (The reason commonly given for his failure to participate in the Saturday Club, to wit cigar smoke in the hotel rooms, wouldn’t seem to apply in the great outdoors.) 3.) If he hadn’t been invited — why not? Had he, like Frederick Douglass, somehow been blackballed?

August 23, 1858. Emerson says that he and Agassiz and Company broke some dozens of ale bottles, one after another, with their bullets, in the Adirondack country, using them for marks! It sounds rather Cockneyish. He says that he shot a peetweet [Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*] for Agassiz, and this, I think he said, was the first game he ever bagged. He carried a double-barrelled gun – rifle and shotgun – which he bought for the purpose, which he says received much commendation – all parties thought it a very pretty piece. Think of Emerson shooting a peetweet (with shot) for Agassiz, and cracking an ale bottle (after emptying it) with his rifle at six rods! They cut several pounds of lead out of the tree. It is just what Mike Saunders, the merchant’s clerk, did when he was there.

The writer needs the suggestion and correction that a correspondent or companion is. I sometimes remember something which I have told another as worth telling to myself, i. e. writing in my Journal. Channing, thinking of walks and life in the country, says, “You don’t want to discover anything new, but to discover something old,” i. e. be reminded that such things still are.

3. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once bailed out of a hunting trip with his sidekick Louis Agassiz upon being told that Waldo Emerson would be along and would be armed. “Somebody will be shot,” he declared.
In August, Stillman, their variously fit and attractive captain, led the Adirondack Club, not yet to their Lake Ampersand, the purchase of which was probably not quite completed, but to a lake easier of access from Bill Martin’s, on Lower Saranac, the end of the long wagon drive from Keeseville, New York. Stillman wrote:

The lake where our first encampment was made was known as Follansbee Pond, and it lies in a cul-de-sac of the chain of lakes and streams named after one of the first of the Jesuit explorers of the Northern States, Père Raquette. Being elected captain of the hunt, and chief guide of the Club, it depended on me also, as the oldest woodsman, to select the locality and superintend the construction of the camp, and the choice was determined by the facility of access, the abundance of game, and the fact that the lake was out of any route to regions beyond, giving the maximum of seclusion, as the etiquette of the woods prevented another party camping near us. Follansbee was then a rare and beautiful piece of untouched nature, divided from the highway, the Raquette, by a marsh of several miles of weary navigation, shut in by the hills on all sides but that by which we entered, the forest still unscarred, and the tall white pines standing in files along the lake shores and up over the ridges, not a scar of axe or fire being visible as we searched the shore for a fitting spot to make our vacation lodging-place. Many things are requisite for a good camping-ground, and our camp was one of the best I have ever seen, at the head of the lake, with beach, spring, and maple grove. Two of the hugest maples I ever saw gave us the shelter of their spreading branches and the supports to the camp walls. Here we placed our ridge-pole, laid our roof of bark of firs (stripped from trees far away in the forest, not to disfigure our dwelling-place with stripped and dying trees), cut an open path to the lakeside, and then left our house to the naiads and dryads, and hurried back forty miles to meet our guests. Tradition has long known it as the “Philosophers’ Camp,” though, like Troy, its site is unknown to all the subsequent generations of guides, and I doubt if in all the Adirondack country there is a man except my old guide, Steve Martin, who could point out the place where it stood.” However surely Oblivion was following in the wake of those Argonauts of the forest chain of lakes, the freshness
of their joy still lingers in the verses of one.

“Welcome!” the wood-god murmured through the leaves,-
“Welcome, though late, unknowing, yet known to me.”
Evening drew on; stars peeped through maple boughs,
Which o’er-hung, like a cloud, our camping-fire.
Decayed millennial trunks, like moonlight flecks,
Lit with phosphoric crumbs the forest floor.

“Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft
In well-hung chambers, daintily bestowed,
Lie here on hemlock boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
And greet unanimous the joyful change,
Sleep on the fragrant brush as on down-beds.
Up with the dawn, they fancied the light air
That circled freshly in their forest-dress
Made them to boys again.”

Stillman painted on the spot an admirable picture of the morning
hours’ work or diversions, before the excursions by boat or on
foot began, the sun filtering down between the foliage of the
vast, columnar trunks of pine, maple, and hemlock. There are two
groups; on one side, Agassiz and Dr. Jeffries Wyman dissecting
a fish on a stump, with John Holmes, doubtless with humorous
comment, and Dr. Estes Howe, as spectators; on the other,
Lowell, Judge Hoar, Dr. Amos Binney, and Woodman trying their
marksmanship with rifles, under the instruction of the tall Don
Quixote-like Stillman; between the groups, interested, but
apart, stands Waldo Emerson
Prolonging the shooting party towards the edge of the picture
two or three guides are gathered, silent critics.4

In recruiting this company the rifle had proved both attractive
and repellent. Stillman’s skill whether as marksman or hunter
was unusual, and he was an admirable instructor for amateurs.
Of his experiences in recruiting the party he wrote: “I had done
all I could to induce Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes to
join the party, but the latter was too closely identified with
the Hub in all its mental operations to care for unhumanized
nature, and Longfellow was too strongly attached to the
conditions of completely civilized life to enjoy roughing it in
flannels and sleeping on fir boughs. The company of his great-
brained friends was a temptation at times, I think; but he hated
killing animals, had no interest in fishing, and was too settled
in his habits to enjoy so great a change. Possibly he was decided
in his refusal by Emerson’s purchase of a rifle. “Is it true
that Emerson is going to take a gun.” he asked me. “Yes,” I
replied. “Then I shall not go,” he said; “somebody will be
shot.”5

Though Emerson was once paddled noiselessly by night into a
remote bay, “jack hunting” (that is, with a torch and reflector
in the bow of the skiff), and the guide pointed to the water’s
edge, where a deer was gazing at the wondrous light, and
whispered “Shoot,” Emerson could only see a “square mist,” and
his rifle remains until now guiltless of blood of man or beast.

4. This picture was bought by Judge Hoar, and bequeathed by him to the Concord Public Library.
5. It would be a cheap shot to mention Dick Cheney in this context, so I won’t do it.
Each man of the company had a special guide assigned to him by Stillman, but he asked and received the privilege of doing that service in full for Agassiz, rowing him in his own boat on the water journey, and almost daily on his collecting excursions. He wrote: —

For I had the feeling which all had who came under the magic of his colossal individuality, — the myriad-minded one to whom nothing came amiss or unfamiliar, and who had a facet for every man he came in contact with. His inexhaustible bonhomie won even the guides to a personal fealty they showed no other of our band; his wide science gave us continual lectures on all the elements of nature — no plant, no insect, no quadruped hiding its secret from him. The lessons he taught us of the leaves of the pine, and of the vicissitudes of the Laurentine Range, in one of whose hollows we lay; the way he drew new facts from the lake, and knew them when he saw them, as though he had set his seal on them before they were known; the daily dissection of the fish, the deer, the mice (for which he had brought his traps), were studies in which we were his assistants and pupils. All this made being with him not only "a liberal education," but perpetual sunshine and good fortune. When we went out, I at the oars and he at the dredge or insect-net, or examining the plants by the marsh-side, his spirit was a perpetual spring of science. When he and Wyman entered on the discussion of a scientific subject (and they always worked together), science seemed as easy as versification when Lowell was in the mood, and all sat around inhaling wisdom with the mountain air. Nothing could have been, to any man with the scientific bent, more intensely interesting than the academy of two of the greatest scientists of their day.

Stillman’s high estimate of the wise, gentle, judicial, and modest Jeffries Wyman will be given in the sketch of him later.

At our dinners, the semblance of which life will never offer me again, the gods sent their best accompaniments and influences — health, appetite, wit, and poetry, with good digestion.

Our foaming ale we drank from hunters’ pans —
Ale, and a sup of wine. Our steward gave
Venison and trout, potatoes, beans, wheat-bread.
All ate like abbots, and, if any missed
Their wonted convenance, cheerly hid the loss
With hunter’s appetite and peals of mirth.

Lowell was the Magnus Apollo of the camp. His Castalian humour, his unceasing play of wit and erudition — poetry and the best of the poets always on tap at the table — all know them who knew him well, though not many as I did; but when he sat on one side of the table, and Judge Hoar (the most pyrotechnical wit I have
ever known) and he were matching table-talk, with Emerson and Agassiz to sit as umpires and revive the vein as it menaced to flag, Holmes and Estes Howe not silent in the well-matched contest, the forest echoed with such laughter as no club ever knew, and the owls came in the trees overhead to wonder. These were symposia to which fortune has invited few men, and which no one invited could ever forget....

For Lowell I had a passionate personal attachment to which death and time have only given a twilight glory.

Here Stillman’s narrative must be interrupted to put on record a story of Lowell, showing a quality in him that would hardly have been divined in the Cambridge poet. Emerson wrote it in his pocket notebook on the day after the daring venture.

On the top of a large white pine in a bay was an osprey’s nest around which the ospreys were screaming, five or six. We thought there were young birds in it, and sent Preston to the top. This looked like an adventure. The tree might be a hundred and fifty feet high, at least; sixty feet clean straight stem, without a single branch, and, as Lowell and I measured it by the tape as high as we could reach, fourteen feet, six inches in girth. Preston took advantage of a hemlock close by it and climbed till he got on the branches, then went to the top of the pine and found the nest empty, though the great birds wheeled and screamed about him. He said he could climb the bare stem of the pine, “though it would be awful hard work.” When he came down, I asked him to go up it a little way, which he did, clinging to the corrugations of the bark. Afterwards Lowell watched long for a chance to shoot the osprey, but he soared magnificently, and would not alight.... Lowell, next morning, was missing at breakfast, and, when he came to camp, told me he had climbed Preston’s pine tree.

To resume Stillman’s record: –

To Emerson, as to most men who are receptive to Nature’s message, the forest was the overpowering fact.

We climb the bank,
And in the twilight of the forest noon
Wield the first axe these echoes ever heard.

The “twilight of the forest noon” is the most concentrated expression of the one dominant sentiment of a poetic mind on first entering this eternal silence and shadow.... We were much together. I rowed him into the innermost recesses of Follansbee Water, and would, at his request, sometimes land him in a solitary part of the lake-shore, and leave him to his emotions or studies. We have no post, and letters neither came nor went, and so, probably, none record the moment’s mood; but well I remember how he marvelled at the completeness of the circle of life in the forest. He examined the
guides, and me as one of them, with the interest of a discoverer of a new race. Me he had known in another phase of existence — at the Club, in the multitude, one of the atoms of the social whole. To find me axe in hand, ready for the elementary functions of a savage life, — to fell the trees, to kill the deer, or catch the trout, and at need to cook them, — in this to him new phenomenon of a rounded and self-sufficient individuality, waiting for, and waited on, by no one, he received a conception of life which had the same attraction in its completeness and roundness that a larger and fully organized existence would have had. It was a form of independence which he had never realized before, and he paid it the respect of a new discovery....

What seems to me the truth is, that Emerson instinctively divided men into two classes, with one of which he formed personal attachments which, though tranquil and undemonstrative, as was his nature, were lasting; in the other he simply found his objects of study, problems to be solved and their solutions recorded. There was the least conceivable self-assertion in him; he was the best listener a genuine thinker, or one whom he thought to be such, ever had; and always seemed to prefer to listen rather than to talk, to observe and study rather than to discourse. So he did not say much before Nature; he took in her influences as the earth takes the rain. He was minutely interested in seeing how the old guides reversed the tendencies of civilization....

Looking back across the gulf which hides all the details of life, the eternal absence which forgets personal qualities, the calm, platonic serenity of Emerson stands out from all our company as a crystallization of impersonal and universal humanity; no vexation, no mishap, could disturb his philosophy, or rob him of its lesson.

The magical quality of the forest is that of oblivion of all that is left in the busy world, of past trouble and coming care. The steeds that brought us in had no place behind for black Care. We lived, as Emerson says,—

Lords of this realm,
Bounded by dawn and sunset, and the day
Rounded by hours where each outdid the last
In miracles of pomp, we must be proud,
As if associates of the sylvan gods.

We seemed the dwellers of the zodiac,
So pure the Alpine element we breathed,
So light, so lofty pictures came and went.

Stillman, writing the above happy memories of a golden prime in
the last years of the century, said: —

A generation has gone by since that unique meet, and of those who were at it only John Holmes and I now survive. The voices of that merry assemblage of “wise and polite” vacation-keepers come to us from the land of dreams; the echoes they awakened in the wild wood give place to the tender and tearful evocation of poetic memory; they and their summering have passed into the traditions of the later camp-fires, where the guides tell of the “Philosophers’ Camp,” of the very location of which they have lost the knowledge. Hardly a trace of it now exists as we then knew it. The lumberer, the reckless sportsman with his camp-fires and his more reckless and careless guide, the axe and the fire, have left no large expanse of virgin forest in all the Adirondack region, and every year effaces the original aspect of it more completely.

Emerson, on the spot, thus strove to picture Stillman’s heroic figure: —

“Gallant artist, head and hand.
Adopted of Tahawus grand,
In the wild domesticated,
Man and Mountain rightly mated,
Like forest chief the forest ranged
As one who had exchanged
After old Indian mode
Totem and bow and spear
In sign of peace and brotherhood
With his Indian peer.
Easily chief, who held
The key of each occasion
In our designed plantation,
Can hunt and fish and rule and row.
And out-shoot each in his own bow,
And paint and plan and execute
Till each blossom became fruit;
Earning richly for his share
The governor’s chair,
Bore the day’s duties in his head.
And with living method sped.
Firm, unperplexed,
By no flaws of temper vexed,
Inspiring trust.
And only dictating because he must.
And all he carried in his heart
He could publish and define
Orderly line by line
On canvas by his art.
I could wish
So worthy Master worthier pupils had —
The best were bad.”

One day, that August, a thrill of human communication shot under the Atlantic Ocean from continent to continent. By a strange chance the quick-travelling report of it reached the campers among the primeval woods while on a lake excursion. Emerson
tells, in his forest notebook, how

“Loud exulting cries
From boat to boat, and in the echoes round.
Greet the glad miracle. Thought’s new-found path
Shall supplement henceforth all trodden ways.
Match God’s equator with a zone of art,
And lift man’s public action to a height
Worthy the enormous cloud of witnesses,
When linked hemispheres attest the deed.

A spasm throbbing through the pedestals
Of Alp and Andes, isle and continent
Urging astonished Chaos with a thrill
To be a brain, or serve the brain of man.
The lightning has run masterless too long;
He must to school and learn his verb and noun
And teach his nimbleness to earn his wage.”

This miracle had, indeed, been shown to be possible, yet almost immediately some mischance that befel the cable in the depths of the sea, interrupted its use for seven years. When this occurred, another of our poets, “The Professor,” sent forth the question on everybody’s lips as to who in the Provinces had received and transmitted the few words that emerged from the ocean at the western landing-place. He published the whole conversation, as follows: —

DE SAUTY
An Electro-Chemical Eclogue

Professor:

Tell me, O Provincial! speak, Ceruleo-Nasal!
Lives there one De Sauty extant now among you,
Whispering Boanerges, son of silent thunder,
Holding talk with nations?

Is there a De Sauty,7 ambulant on Tellus,
Bifid-cleft like mortals, dormient in nightcap,
Having sight, smell, hearing, food-receiving feature
Three times daily patent?

Breathes there such a being, Ceruleo-Nasal?
Or is he a Mythus, — ancient word for “humbug.”
Such as Livy told about the wolf that wet-nursed
Romulus and Remus?

Was he born of woman, this alleged De Sauty?
Or a living product of galvanic action,
Like the acarus bred in Crosse’s flint-solution?
Speak, thou Cyano-Rhinal!

6. In his poem “The Adirondacs” the reception of this wonderful news is told at greater length.
7. The first messages received through the submarine cable were sent by an electrical expert, a mysterious personage who signed himself De Sauty.
Blue-Nose:

Many things thou askest, jackknife-bearing stranger,
Much-conjecturing mortal, pork-and-treacle-waster!
Pretermit thy whittling, wheel thine ear-flap toward me,
Thou shalt hear them answered.

When the charge galvanic tingled through the cable,
At the polar focus of the wire electric
Suddenly appeared a white-faced man among us;
Called himself “De Sauty.”

As the small opossum, held in pouch maternal,
Grasps the nutrient organ whence the term mammalia,
So the unknown stranger held the wire electric,
Sucking in the current.

When the current strengthened, bloomed the pale-faced stranger, —
Took no drink nor victual, yet grew fat and rosy, —
And from time to time, in sharp articulation.
Said, “All right! De Sauty.”

From the lonely station passed the utterance, spreading
Through the pines and hemlocks to the groves of steeples.
Till the land was filled with loud reverberations
O! All Tight! De Sauty.”

When the current slackened, drooped the mystic stranger, —
Faded, faded, faded, as the stream grew weaker, —
Wasted to a shadow, with a hartshorn odour
Of disintegration.

Drops of deliquescence glistened on his forehead.
Whitened round his feet the dust of efflorescence.
Till one Monday morning, when the flow suspended,
There was no De Sauty.

Nothing but a cloud of elements organic,
C.O.H.N., Ferrum, Chlor., Flu., Sil., Potassa,
Calc. Sod. Phosph. Mag. Sulphur, Mang. (?) Alumin. (?) Cuprum, (?)
Such as man is made of.

Born of stream galvanic, with it he had perished!
There is no De Sauty now there is no current!
Give us a new cable, then again we’ll hear him
Cry, “All right! De Sauty.”

Waldo Emerson also wrote about this jolly camp adventure, without ever claiming to be in any sense a leader:

A JOURNAL.

DEDICATED TO MY FELLOW-TRAVELLERS IN AUGUST, 1858.

Wise and polite,—and if I drew
Their several portraits, you would own
Chaucer had no such worthy crew,
Nor Boccace in Decameron.

We crossed Champlain to Keeseville with our friends,
Thence, in strong country carts, rode up the forks
Of the Ausable stream, intent to reach
The Adirondac lakes. At Martin’s Beach
We chose our boats; each man a boat and guide,—
Ten men, ten guides, our company all told.

Next morn, we swept with oars the Saranac,
With skies of benediction, to Round Lake,
Where all the sacred mountains drew around us,
Tahawus, Seaward, MacIntyre, Baldhead,
And other Titans without muse or name.
Pleased with these grand companions, we glide on,
Instead of flowers, crowned with a wreath of hills,
And made our distance wider, boat from boat,
As each would hear the oracle alone.

By the bright morn the gay flotilla slid
Through files of flags that gleamed like bayonets,
Through gold-moth-haunted beds of pickerel-flower,
Where the deer feeds at night, the teal by day,
On through the Upper Saranac, and up
Pere Raquette stream, to a small tortuous pass
Winding through grassy shallows in and out,
Two creeping miles of rushes, pads, and sponge,
To Follansbee Water, and the Lake of Loons.

Northward the length of Follansbee we rowed,
Under low mountains, whose unbroken ridge
Ponderous with beechen forest sloped the shore.
A pause and council: then, where near the head
On the east a bay makes inward to the land
Between two rocky arms, we climb the bank,
And in the twilight of the forest noon
Wield the first axe these echoes ever heard.
We cut young trees to make our poles and thwarts,
Barked the white spruce to weatherfend the roof,
Then struck a light, and kindled the camp-fire.

The wood was sovran with centennial trees,—
Oak, cedar, maple, poplar, beech and fir,
Linden and spruce. In strict society
Three conifers, white, pitch, and Norway pine,
Five-leaved, three-leaved, and two-leaved, grew thereby.
Our patron pine was fifteen feet in girth,
The maple eight, beneath its shapely tower.

“What! the wood god murmured through the leaves,—
Welcome, though late, unknowing, yet known to me.”

Evening drew on; stars peeped through maple-boughs,
Which o’erhung, like a cloud, our camping fire.
Decayed millennial trunks, like moonlight flecks,
Lit with phosphoric crumbs the forest floor.

Ten scholars, wonted to lie warm and soft
In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,
Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
And greet unanimous the joyful change.
So fast will Nature acclimate her sons,
Though late returning to her pristine ways.
Off soundings, seamen do not suffer cold;
And, in the forest, delicate clerks, unbrowned,
Sleep on the fragrant brush, as on down-beds.
Up with the dawn, they fancied the light air
That circled freshly in their forest dress
Made them to boys again. Happier that they
Slipped off their pack of duties, leagues behind,
At the first mounting of the giant stairs.
No placard on these rocks warned to the polls,
No door-bell heralded a visitor,
No courier waits, no letter came or went,
Nothing was ploughed, or reaped, or bought, or sold;
The frost might glitter, it would blight no crop,
The falling rain will spoil no holiday.
We were made freemen of the forest laws,
All dressed, like Nature, fit for her own ends,
Essaying nothing she cannot perform.

In Adirondac lakes,
At morn or noon, the guide rows bareheaded:
Shoes, flannel shirt, and kersey trousers make
His brief toilette: at night, or in the rain,
He dons a surcoat which he doffs at morn:
A paddle in the right hand, or an oar,
And in the left, a gun, his needful arms.
By turns we praised the stature of our guides,
Their rival strength and suppleness, their skill
To row, to swim, to shoot, to build a camp,
To climb a lofty stem, clean without boughs
Full fifty feet, and bring the eaglet down:
Temper to face wolf, bear, or catamount,
And wit to track or take him in his lair.
Sound, ruddy men, frolic and innocent,
In winter, lumberers; in summer, guides;
Their sinewy arms pull at the oar untired
Three times ten thousand strokes, from morn to eve.

Look to yourselves, ye polished gentlemen!
No city airs or arts pass current here.
Your rank is all reversed: let men of cloth
Bow to the stalwart churls in overalls:
They are the doctors of the wilderness,
And we the low-prized laymen.
In sooth, red flannel is a saucy test
Which few can put on with impunity.
What make you, master, fumbling at the oar?
Will you catch crabs? Truth tries pretension here.
The sallow knows the basket-maker’s thumb;
The oar, the guide’s. Dare you accept the tasks
He shall impose, to find a spring, trap foxes,
Tell the sun’s time, determine the true north,
Or stumbling on through vast self-similar woods
To thread by night the nearest way to camp?

Ask you, how went the hours?
All day we swept the lake, searched every cove,
North from Camp Maple, south to Osprey Bay,
Watching when the loud dogs should drive in deer,
Or whipping its rough surface for a trout;
Or bathers, diving from the rock at noon;
Challenging Echo by our guns and cries;
Or listening to the laughter of the loon;
Or, in the evening twilight’s latest red,
Beholding the procession of the pines;
Or, later yet, beneath a lighted jack,
In the boat’s bows, a silent night-hunter
Stealing with paddle to the feeding-grounds
Of the red deer, to aim at a square mist.
Hark to that muffled roar! a tree in the woods
Is fallen: but hush! it has not scared the buck.
Who stands astonished at the meteor light,
Then turns to bound away,—is it too late?

Sometimes we tried our rifles at a mark,
Six rods, sixteen, twenty, or forty-five;
Sometimes our wits at sally and retort,
With laughter sudden as the crack of rifle;
Or parties scaled the near accivities
Competing seekers of a rumoured lake,
Whose unauthenticated waves we named
Lake Probability,—our carbuncle,
Long sought, not found.

Two Doctors in the camp
Dissected the slain deer, weighed the trout’s brain,
Captured the lizard, salamander, shrew,
Crab, mice, snail, dragon-fly, minnow, and moth;
Insatiate skill in water or in air
Waved the scoop-net, and nothing came amiss;
The while, one leaden pot of alcohol
Gave an impartial tomb to all the kinds.
Not less the ambitious botanist sought plants,
Orchis and gentian, fern, and long whip-scrupus,
Rosy polygonum, lake-margin’s pride,
Hypnum and hydnum, mushroom, sponge, and moss,
Or harebell nodding in the gorge of falls.
Above, the eagle flew, the osprey screamed,
The raven croaked, owls hooted, the woodpecker
Loud hammered, and the heron rose in the swamp.
As water poured through the hollows of the hills
To feed this wealth of lakes and rivulets,
So Nature shed all beauty lavishly
From her redundant horn.

Lords of this realm,
Bounded by dawn and sunset, and the day
Rounded by hours where each outdid the last
In miracles of pomp, we must be proud,
As if associates of the sylvan gods.
We seemed the dwellers of the zodiac,
So pure the Alpine element we breathed,
So light, so lofty pictures came and went.
We trode on air, contemned the distant town,
Its timorous ways, big trifles, and we planned
That we should build, hard-by, a spacious lodge,
And how we should come hither with our sons,
Hereafter,—willing they, and more adroit.

Hard fare, hard bed, and comic misery,—
The midge, the blue-fly, and the mosquito
Painted our necks, hands, ankles, with red bands:
But, on the second day, we heed them not,
Nay, we saluted them Auxiliaries,
Whom earlier we had chid with spiteful names.
For who defends our leafy tabernacle
From bold intrusion of the travelling crowd,—
Who but the midge, mosquito, and the fly,
Which past endurance sting the tender cit,
But which we learn to scatter with a smudge,
Or baffle by a veil, or slight by scorn?

Our foaming ale we drunk from hunters’ pans,
Ale, and a sup of wine. Our steward gave
Venison and trout, potatoes, beans, wheat-bread;
All ate like abbots, and, if any missed
Their wonted convenance, cheerly hid the loss
With hunters’ appetite and peals of mirth.
And Stillman, our guides’ guide, and Commodore,
Crusoe, Crusader, Pius Æneas, said aloud,
“Chronic dyspepsia never came from eating
Food indigestible”; — then murmured some,
Others applauded him who spoke the truth.

Nor doubt but visitings of graver thought
Checked in these souls the turbulent heyday
’Mid all the hints and glories of the home.
For who can tell what sudden privacies
Were sought and found, amid the hue and cry
Of scholars furloughed from their tasks, and let
Into this Oreads’ fended Paradise,
As chapels in the city’s thoroughfares,
Whither gaunt Labour slips to wipe his brow,
And meditate a moment on Heaven’s rest.
Judge with what sweet surprises Nature spoke
To each apart, lifting her lovely shows
To spiritual lessons pointed home.
And as through dreams in watches of the night,
So through all creatures in their form and ways
Some mystic hint accosts the vigilant,
Not clearly voiced, but waking a new sense
Inviting to new knowledge, one with old.
Hark to that petulant chirp! what ails the warbler?
Mark his capricious ways to draw the eye.
Now soar again. What wilt thou, restless bird,
Seeking in that chaste blue a bluer light,
Thirsting in that pure for a purer sky?

And presently the sky is changed; O world!
What pictures and what harmonies are thine!
The clouds are rich and dark, the air serene,
So like the soul of me, what if’t were me?
A melancholy better than all mirth.
Comes the sweet sadness at the retrospect,
Or at the foresight of obscurer years?
Like yon slow-sailing cloudy promontory,
Whereon the purple iris dwells in beauty
Superior to all its gaudy skirts.
And, that no day of life may lack romance,
The spiritual stars rise nightly, shedding down
A private beam into each several heart.
Daily the bending skies solicit man,
The seasons chariot him from this exile,
The rainbow hours bedeck his glowing chair,
The storm-winds urge the heavy weeks along,
Suns haste to set, that so remoter lights
Beckon the wanderer to his vaster home.

With a vermilion pencil mark the day
When of our little fleet three cruising skiffs
Entering Big Tupper, bound for the foaming Falls
Of loud Bog River, suddenly confront
Two of our mates returning with swift oars.
One held a printed journal waving high
Caught from a late-arriving traveller,
Big with great news, and shouted the report
For which the world had waited, now firm fact,
Of the wire-cable laid beneath the sea,
And landed on our coast, and pulsating
With ductile fire. Loud, exulting cries
From boat to boat, and to the echoes round,
Greet the glad miracle. Thought’s new-found path
Shall supplement henceforth all trodden ways,
Match God’s equator with a zone of art,
And lift man’s public action to a height
Worthy the enormous clouds of witnesses,
When linked hemispheres attest his deed.
We have few moments in the longest life
Of such delight and wonder as there grew,—
Nor yet unsuited to that solitude:
A burst of joy, as if we told the fact
To ears intelligent; as if gray rock
And cedar grove and cliff and lake should know
This feat of wit, this triumph of mankind;
As if we men were talking in a vein
Of sympathy so large, that ours was theirs,
And a prime end of the most subtle element
Were fairly reached at last. Wake, echoing caves!
Bend nearer, faint day-moon! Yon thundertops,
Let them hear well! ’t is theirs as much as ours.

A spasm throbbing through the pedestals
Of Alp and Andes, isle and continent,
Urging astonished Chaos with a thrill
To be a brain, or serve the brain of man.
The lightning has run masterless too long;
He must to school, and learn his verb and noun,
And teach his nimbleness to earn his wage,
Spelling with guided tongue man’s messages
Shot through the weltering pit of the salt sea.
And yet I marked, even in the manly joy
Of our great-hearted Doctor in his boat,
(Perchance I erred,) a shade of discontent;
Or was it for mankind a generous shame,
As of a luck not quite legitimate,
Since fortune snatched from wit the lion’s part?
Was it a college pique of town and gown,
As one within whose memory it burned
That not academicians, but some lout,
Found ten years since the Californian gold?
And now, again, a hungry company
Of traders, led by corporate sons of trade,
Perversely borrowing from the shop the tools
Of science, not from the philosophers,
Had won the brightest laurel of all time.
’Twas always thus, and will be; hand and head
Are ever rivals: but, though this be swift,
The other slow, —this the Prometheus,
And that the Jove, —yet, howsoever hid,
It was from Jove the other stole his fire,
And, without Jove, the good had never been.
It is not Iroquois or cannibals,
But ever the free race with front sublime,
And these instructed by their wisest too,
Who do the feat, and lift humanity.
Let not him mourn who best entitled was,
Nay, mourn not one: let him exult,
Yea, plant the tree that bears best apples, plant,
And water it with wine, nor watch askance
Whether thy sons or strangers eat the fruit:
Enough that mankind eat, and are refreshed.

We flee away from cities, but we bring
The best of cities with us, these learned classifiers,
Men knowing what they seek, armed eyes of experts.
We praise the guide, we praise the forest life;
But will we sacrifice our dear-bought lore
Of books and arts and trained experiment,
Or count the Sioux a match for Agassiz?
O no, not we! Witness the shout that shook
Wild Tupper Lake; witness the mute all-hail
The joyful traveller gives, when on the verge
Of craggy Indian wilderness he hears
From a log-cabin stream Beethoven’s notes
On the piano, played with master’s hand.
"Well done!" he cries; "the bear is kept at bay,
The lynx, the rattlesnake, the flood, the fire;
All the fierce enemies, ague, hunger, cold,
This thin spruce roof, this clayed log-wall,
This wild plantation will suffice to chase.
Now speed the gay celerities of art,
What in the desert was impossible
Within four walls is possible again,—
Culture and libraries, mysteries of skill,
 Traditioned fame of masters, eager strife
Of keen competing youths, joined or alone
To outdo each other, and extort applause.
Mind wakes a new-born giant from her sleep.
Twirl the old wheels? Time takes fresh start again
On for a thousand years of genius more.

The holidays were fruitful, but must end;
One August evening had a cooler breath;
Into each mind intruding duties crept;
Under the cinders burned the fires of home;
Nay, letters found us in our paradise;
So in the gladness of the new event
We struck our camp, and left the happy hills.
The fortunate star that rose on us sank not;
The prodigal sunshine rested on the land,
The rivers gambolled onward to the sea,
And Nature, the inscrutable and mute,
Permitted on her infinite repose
Almost a smile to steal to cheer her sons,
As if one riddle of the Sphinx were guessed.
Sections of G.W.F. Hegel’s *Aesthetik* were translated into English. The heavily theory-oriented art journal which had been founded in 1855 by William James Stillman to champion in America the aesthetic theories of the English art critic John Ruskin in opposition to those of Frederic Edwin Church and his teacher Thomas Cole, *The Crayon*, embraced the doctrine of “subjective idealism.”
Italy was united –except for Venice and Rome– but as a kingdom rather than a republic — which was, for the likes of Giuseppe Mazzini, a final disappointment.

The artist William James Stillman, who happened to be in Paris when the American civil war broke out, was appointed US consul at Rome.
Forced to resign as US consul in Rome, William James Stillman was instead appointed as US consul on the island of Crete.
September: William James Stillman resigned as US consul on the island of Crete and departed for Athens.

There his wife (a daughter of David Mack of Cambridge) would commit suicide.
His 1st wife having committed suicide, [William James Stillman](#) eloped with Marie Spartali, an artistic daughter of Greek consul-general Michael Spartali.

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT
William James Stillman became an editor of Scribner’s Magazine. After a short period he would resign and relocate to London, where he would reside with Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
William James Stillman’s The Cretan Insurrection of 1866-1868.
William James Stillman went off to cover the insurrection in Herzegovina for The Times of London.
Poetic Localities of Cambridge
William James Stillman became the Athens correspondent for *The Times* of London. He would serve in that capacity until 1883 and then in 1886 would become that newspaper’s Rome correspondent.
William James Stillman became the Rome correspondent for The Times of London. He would serve in that capacity until his retirement in 1898.
William James Stillman's ON THE TRACK OF ULYSSES.

1888
William James Stillman’s *Billy and Hans*. 

1897
William James Stillman retired as the Rome correspondent to The Times of London. He would reside in Surrey.
William James Stillman’s Francesco Crispi.

1899
September 19, Friday: Charles G. Willis, Brad Ruhfel, Richard B. Primack, Abraham J. Miller-Rushing, and Charles C. Davis’s “Phylogenetic patterns of species loss in Thoreau’s woods are driven by climate change.”

This study informs us that despite the fact that ~60% of all natural areas in Concord are undeveloped or have remained well protected, 27%, more than one in each four, of the species documented by Henry Thoreau have by now become locally extinct, and 36%, more than one in each three, exist at such a low population density that local extinction may be imminent. In one century the mean annual temperature of Concord has risen by 2.4 degrees Centigrade, resulting in the fact that species now flower an average of a week earlier than recorded by Thoreau.
The New York Times reported, in an article written by Martin Espinoza and headlined “Preserving Adirondack Land Where Emerson Camped,” that in 1858 Waldo Emerson “led” the Philosophers’ camp on the shore of Follensby Pond in the Adirondack mountains. Leadership! Emerson scholars have long been renowned for their presumptuousness, but no accredited Emerson scholar, to my knowledge, has ever been so ridiculously presumptuous as to suggest any such thing. Is he supposed to have led them in the lunch line, or in the race toward the camp latrine? Emerson had visited there along with a passel of other blokes for perhaps a couple of weeks one autumn, and that’s all she wrote. This is the William James Stillman painting “The Philosophers’ Camp in the Adirondacks”:

Follensby Pond in the Adirondack mountains. Leadership! Emerson scholars have long been renowned for their presumptuousness, but no accredited Emerson scholar, to my knowledge, has ever been so ridiculously presumptuous as to suggest any such thing. Is he supposed to have led them in the lunch line, or in the race toward the camp latrine? Emerson had visited there along with a passel of other blokes for perhaps a couple of weeks one autumn, and that’s all she wrote. This is the William James Stillman painting “The Philosophers’ Camp in the Adirondacks”:

Here was Henry Thoreau’s comment on this grand nature escapade:

August 23, 1858. Emerson says that he and Agassiz and Company broke some dozens of ale bottles, one after another, with their bullets, in the Adirondack country, using them for marks! It sounds rather Cockneyish. He says that he shot a peetweet [Spotted Sandpiper Actitis macularia] for Agassiz, and this, I think he said, was the first game he ever bagged. He carried a double-barrelled gun – rifle and shotgun – which
he bought for the purpose, which he says received much commendation – all parties thought it a very pretty piece. Think of Emerson shooting a peetweet (with shot) for Agassiz, and cracking an ale bottle (after emptying it) with his rifle at six rods! They cut several pounds of lead out of the tree. It is just what Mike Saunders, the merchant’s clerk, did when he was there.

“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: January 29, 2014
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot “Laura” (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.
Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology—but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

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