"Within A Circle

Which No Other Of Mortal Race Could Enter,

Nor Himself Escape From"[1]

I knew a man who under a certain religious frenzy cast off this drapery, and omitting all compliment and commonplace, spoke to the conscience of every person he encountered, and that with great insight and beauty.
— Emerson (Friendship)

1. This was Nathaniel Hawthorne's phrase in 1843. It would be interesting to know how a student like Jones Very would fare now at Harvard College. In 1994 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the DSM, was being re-evaluated for generation of an 880-page "DSM-IV" edition to replace the "DSM-III-R" edition of 1987 which had been grossing its publishers, along with all its family of quick reference guides, pocket guides, etc., some $22,000,000 per year. During all this psychiatric activity to determine what was "normal" and what was categorizable within one or another pigeonhole of identifiable deviance from the norm, an organization name of Support Coalition International, made up of self-described "psychiatric survivors," was active. One of the co-coordinators of that SCI group was David Oaks, who as a sophomore at Harvard in 1975 experienced emotional distress and "mystic experiences" and wound up in a psycho ward being pigeonholed by one psychiatrist a Schizophrenic and by another psychiatrist a Manic-Depressive. He tells us that the two psychiatrists handled the situation remarkably: they stepped into the hall, conferred, and returned to impress Mr. Oaks with a negotiated plea bargain: he was going to be a Schizophreniform, lucky he, a person who was the victim of something resembling schizophrenia which could be expected to be gone in less than six months. Presumably at the end of the six months, all the little schizophreniform demons would go inhabit a band of swine, and run into Boston harbor and be drowned. Would the treatment given a Very, in 1975 or in 1994, substantially differ from this sort of "benignancy"?

Elizabeth Peabody diagnosed Very's problem as temporary insanity "induced by intense application ... a passing frenzy caused by overtaxing his brain in the attempt to look from the standpoint of Absolute Spirit."

— Carlos Baker, EMERSON AMONG THE ECCENTRICS: A GROUP PORTRAIT

The Absent

Thou art not yet at home in thine own house,
But to one room I see thee now confined;
Having one hold like rat or skulking mouse,
And as a mole to all the others blind;
Does the great Day find preference when he shines
In at each window, lighting every room?
No selfish wish the moon's bright glance confines,
And each in turn the stars' faint rays illume;
Within they sleeping room thou dost abide,
And thou the social parlor dost prefer;
All other wilt thou in the cupboard hide,
And this or that's the room for him or her;
But the same sun, and moon with silver face,
Loom in on all, and lighten every place.

1812

Lydia Very (1794-1867), pregnant, and Captain Jones Very of the privateer *Montgomery*, her first cousin, set up an "irregular household" or common-law marriage in Salem MA. Here is an account of Lydia Very of 154 Federal Street, Salem MA, which Elizabeth Palmer Peabody created during the period in which people were most concerned for the mental stability of her son Jones Very:

She was a person of great energy — was said to have more than doubts of another world and of the existence of God — having had a severe experience of life, and being at odds with the existing state of Society — a disciple of Fanny Wright....

FANNY WRIGHT

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1813

August 28, Saturday: Lydia Very of Salem MA gave birth and named her infant after its father, her first cousin and common-law husband, the captain of the privateer *Montgomery*, Jones Very.

1814

August: William Wordsworth's THE EXCURSION. (This contained "Despondency Corrected," the poem which would in 1835 so influence Jones Very.)

HERE closed the Tenant of that lonely vale
His mournful narrative — commenced in pain,
In pain commenced, and ended without peace:
Yet tempered, not unfrequently, with strains
Of native feeling, grateful to our minds;
And yielding surely some relief to his,
While we sate listening with compassion due.
A pause of silence followed; then, with voice
That did not falter though the heart was moved,
The Wanderer said:—
"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists — one only; an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.
— The darts of anguish 'fix' not where the seat
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the Will supreme
For time and for eternity; by faith,
Faith absolute in God, including hope,
And the defence that lies in boundless love
Of his perfections; with habitual dread
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured
Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,
To the dishonour of his holy name.
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto thee and thine!"

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes
To heaven: — "How beautiful this dome of sky;
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! Shall the Soul,
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these? — Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice:
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here; where thou hast built,
For thy own glory, in the wilderness!
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,
In such a temple as we now behold
Reared for thy presence: therefore, am I bound
To worship, here, and everywhere — as one
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,
From childhood up, the ways of poverty;

From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
And from debasement rescued. — By thy grace
The particle divine remained unquenched;
And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
From paradise transplanted: wintry age
Impends; the frost will gather round my heart;
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead!
— Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath; come, disease and want;
And sad exclusion through decay of sense;
But leave me unabated trust in thee —
And let thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things—
Father of heaven and earth! and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content!

And what are things eternal? — powers depart,"
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,
Answering the question which himself had asked,
"Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists; — immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,
Do, with united urgency, require,
What more that may not perish? — Thou, dread source,
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all
That in the scale of being fill their place;
Above our human region, or below,
Set and sustained; — thou, who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that thyself,
Therein, with our simplicity awhile
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed;
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense
And reason's stedfast rule — thou, thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves:
For adoration thou endur'st; endure
For consciousness the motions of thy will;
For apprehension those transcendent truths
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
(Submission constituting strength and power)
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty!
This universe shall pass away — a work
Glorious! because the shadow of thy might,
A step, or link, for intercourse with thee.
Ah! if the time must come, in which my feet
No more shall stray where meditation leads,
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,
Loved haunts like these; the unimprisoned Mind
May yet have scope to range among her own,
Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.
If the dear faculty of sight should fail,
Still, it may be allowed me to remember
What visionary powers of eye and soul
In youth were mine; when, stationed on the top
Of some huge hill — expectant, I beheld
The sun rise up, from distant climes returned
Darkness to chase, and sleep; and bring the day
His bounteous gift! or saw him toward the deep
Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds
Attended; then, my spirit was entranced

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With joy exalted to beatitude;
The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,
And holiest love; as earth, sea, air, with light,
With pomp, with glory, with magnificence!

Those fervent raptures are for ever flown;
And, since their date, my soul hath undergone
Change manifold, for better or for worse:
Yet cease I not to struggle, and aspire
Heavenward; and chide the part of me that flags,
Through sinful choice; or dread necessity
On human nature from above imposed.
'Tis, by comparison, an easy task[2]
Earth to despise; but, to converse with heaven—
This is not easy: — to relinquish all
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,
And stand in freedom loosened from this world,
I deem not arduous; but must needs confess
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires;
And the most difficult of tasks to 'keep'
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
— Man is of dust: ethereal hopes are his,
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.
From this infirmity of mortal kind
Sorrow proceeds, which else were not; at least,
If grief be something hallowed and ordained,
If, in proportion, it be just and meet,
Yet, through this weakness of the general heart,
Is it enabled to maintain its hold
In that excess which conscience disapproves.
For who could sink and settle to that point
Of selfishness; so senseless who could be
As long and perseveringly to mourn
For any object of his love, removed
From this unstable world, if he could fix
A satisfying view upon that state
Of pure, imperishable, blessedness,
Which reason promises, and holy writ
Ensures to all believers? — Yet mistrust
Is of such incapacity, methinks,
No natural branch; despondency far less;
And, least of all, is absolute despair.
— And, if there be whose tender frames have drooped
Even to the dust; apparently, through weight
Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power
An agonizing sorrow to transmute;
Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld
When wanted most; a confidence impaired
So pitiably, that, having ceased to see
With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love
Of what is lost, and perish through regret.
Oh! no, the innocent Sufferer often sees
Too clearly; feels too vividly; and longs
To realize the vision, with intense
And over-constant yearning, — there — there lies
The excess, by which the balance is destroyed.
Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,
This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,
Though inconceivably endowed, too dim
For any passion of the soul that leads
To ecstasy; and, all the crooked paths
Of time and change disdaining, takes its course
Along the line of limitless desires.

2. "'Tis, by comparison, an easy task
Earth to despise," etc. — See, upon this subject, Baxter's most interesting review of his own opinions and sentiments in the decline of life. It may be found (lately reprinted) in Dr. Wordsworth's "Ecclesiastical Biography."

I, speaking now from such disorder free,
Nor rapt, nor craving, but in settled peace,
I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In mercy, carried infinite degrees
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts:
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
That finds no limits but her own pure will.

Here then we rest; not fearing for our creed
The worst that human reasoning can achieve,
To unsettle or perplex it: yet with pain
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,
That, though immovably convinced, we want
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith
As soldiers live by courage; as, by strength
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.
Alas! the endowment of immortal power[3]
Is matched unequally with custom, time,
And domineering faculties of sense
In 'all'; in most, with superadded foes,
Idle temptations; open vanities,
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world;
And, in the private regions of the mind,
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,
Distress and care. What then remains? — To seek
Those helps for his occasions ever near
Who lacks not will to use them; vows, renewed
On the first motion of a holy thought;
Vigils of contemplation; praise; and prayer—
A stream, which, from the fountain of the heart
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows
Without access of unexpected strength.
But, above all, the victory is most sure
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of conscience — conscience reverenced and obeyed,
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world.
— Endeavour thus to live; these rules regard;
These helps solicit; and a stedfast seat
Shall then be yours among the happy few
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away;
With only such degree of sadness left
As may support longings of pure desire;
And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced
A plot of greensward, seemingly preserved
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones,
And from encroachment of encircling heath:
Small space! but, for reiterated steps,
Smooth and commodious; as a stately deck
Which to and fro the mariner is used
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.
Stillness prevailed around us: and the voice
That spake was capable to lift the soul

3. "Alas! the endowment of immortal Power
Is matched unequally with custom, time," etc.: — This subject is treated at length in the Ode – Intimations of Immortality.

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Toward regions yet more tranquil. But, methought,
That he, whose fixed despondency had given
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,
Was less upraised in spirit than abashed;
Shrinking from admonition, like a man
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.
Yet not to be diverted from his aim,
The Sage continued:—
"For that other loss,
The loss of confidence in social man,
By the unexpected transports of our age
Carried so high, that every thought, which looked
Beyond the temporal destiny of the Kind,
To many seemed superfluous — as, no cause
Could e'er for such exalted confidence
Exist; so, none is now for fixed despair:
The two extremes are equally disowned
By reason: if, with sharp recoil, from one
You have been driven far as its opposite,
Between them seek the point whereon to build
Sound expectations. So doth he advise
Who shared at first the illusion; but was soon
Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks
Which Nature gently gave, in woods and fields;
Nor unreproved by Providence, thus speaking
To the inattentive children of the world:
'Vainglorious Generation! what new powers
'On you have been conferred? what gifts, withheld
'From your progenitors, have ye received,
'Fit recompense of new desert? what claim
'Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees
'For you should undergo a sudden change;
'And the weak functions of one busy day,
'Reclaiming and extirpating, perform
'What all the slowly-moving years of time,
'With their united force, have left undone?
'By nature's gradual processes be taught;
'By story be confounded! Ye aspire
'Rashly, to fall once more; and that false fruit,
'Which, to your overweening spirits, yields
'Hope of a flight celestial, will produce
'Misery and shame. But Wisdom of her sons
'Shall not the less, though late, be justified.'

"Such timely warning," said the Wanderer, "gave
That visionary voice; and, at this day,
When a Tartarean darkness overspreads
The groaning nations; when the impious rule,
By will or by established ordinance,
Their own dire agents, and constrain the good
To acts which they abhor; though I bewail
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart
Prevents me not from owning, that the law,
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.
For by superior energies; more strict
Affiance in each other; faith more firm
In their unhallowed principles; the bad
Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,
The vacillating, inconsistent good.
Therefore, not unconsoled, I wait — in hope
To see the moment, when the righteous cause
Shall gain defenders zealous and devout
As they who have opposed her; in which Virtue
Will, to her efforts, tolerate no bounds
That are not lofty as her rights; aspiring
By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.
That spirit only can redeem mankind;
And when that sacred spirit shall appear,
Then shall 'four' triumph be complete as theirs.
Yet, should this confidence prove vain, the wise
Have still the keeping of their proper peace;

Are guardians of their own tranquillity.
They act, or they recede, observe, and feel;
'Knowing the heart of man is set to be[4]
The centre of this world, about the which
Those revolutions of disturbances
Still roll; where all the aspects of misery
Predominate; whose strong effects are such
As he must bear, being powerless to redress;
"And that unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is Man!"

Happy is he who lives to understand,
Not human nature only, but explores
All natures, — to the end that he may find
The law that governs each; and where begins
The union, the partition where, that makes
Kind and degree, among all visible Beings;
The constitutions, powers, and faculties,
Which they inherit, — cannot step beyond,—
And cannot fall beneath; that do assign
To every class its station and its office,
Through all the mighty commonwealth of things
Up from the creeping plant to sovereign Man.
Such converse, if directed by a meek,
Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love:
For knowledge is delight; and such delight
Breeds love: yet, suited as it rather is
To thought and to the climbing intellect,
It teaches less to love, than to adore;

4. "Knowing the heart of man is set to be," etc.: — The passage quoted from Daniel is taken from a poem addressed to the Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and the two last lines, printed in Italics, are by him translated from Seneca. The whole Poem is very beautiful. I will transcribe four stanzas from it, as they contain an admirable picture of the state of a wise Man's mind in a time of public commotion.

Nor is he moved with all the thunder-cracks
Of tyrant's threats, or with the surly brow
Of Power, that proudly sits on others' crimes;
Charged with more crying sins than those he checks.
The storms of sad confusion that may grow
Up in the present for the coming times,
Appal not him; that hath no side at all,
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.

Although his heart (so near allied to earth)
Cannot but pity the perplexed state
Of troublous and distressed mortality,
That thus make way unto the ugly birth
Of their own sorrows, and do still beget
Affliction upon Imbecility:
Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,
He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.

And whilst distraught ambition compasses,
And is encompassed, while as craft deceives,
And is deceived: whilst man doth ransack man,
And builds on blood, and rises by distress;
And th' Inheritance of desolation leaves
To great-expecting hopes: He looks thereon,
As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,
And bears no venture in Impiety.

Thus, Lady, fares that man that hath prepared
A rest for his desires; and sees all things
Beneath him; and hath learned this book of man,
Full of the notes of frailty; and compared
The best of glory with her sufferings:
By whom, I see, you labour all you can
To plant your heart! and set your thoughts as near
His glorious mansion as your powers can bear.

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If that be not indeed the highest love!”

“Yet,” said I, tempted here to interpose,
“The dignity of life is not impaired
By aught that innocently satisfies
The humbler cravings of the heart; and he
Is a still happier man, who, for those heights
Of speculation not unfit, descends;
And such benign affections cultivates
Among the inferior kinds; not merely those
That he may call his own, and which depend,
As individual objects of regard,
Upon his care, from whom he also looks
For signs and tokens of a mutual bond;
But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,
Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.
Nor is it a mean praise of rural life
And solitude, that they do favour most,
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain,
These pure sensations; that can penetrate
The obstreperous city; on the barren seas
Are not unfelt; and much might recommend,
How much they might inspirit and endear,
The loneliness of this sublime retreat!”

“Yes,” said the Sage, resuming the discourse
Again directed to his downcast Friend,
“If, with the froward will and grovelling soul
Of man, offended, liberty is here,
And invitation every hour renewed,
To mark ‘their’ placid state, who never heard
Of a command which they have power to break,
Or rule which they are tempted to transgress:
These, with a soothed or elevated heart,
May we behold; their knowledge register;
Observe their ways; and, free from envy, find
Complacence there: — but wherefore this to you?
I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,
The redbreast, ruffled up by winter’s cold
Into a ‘feathery bunch,’ feeds at your hand:
A box, perchance, is from your casement hung
For the small wren to build in; — not in vain,
The barriers disregarding that surround
This deep abiding place, before your sight
Mounts on the breeze the butterfly; and soars,
Small creature as she is, from earth’s bright flowers,
Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns
In the waste wilderness: the Soul ascends
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,
This shaded valley leaves; and leaves the dark
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing
A proud communication with the sun
Low sunk beneath the horizon! — List! — I heard,
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth
As if the visible mountain made the cry.
Again!” — The effect upon the soul was such
As he expressed: from out the mountain’s heart
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling
The blank air — for the region all around
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent
Save for that single cry, the unanswered bleat
Of a poor lamb — left somewhere to itself,
The plaintive spirit of the solitude!
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
Through consciousness that silence in such place
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.

"Ah! if the heart, too confidently raised,
Perchance too lightly occupied, or lulled
Too easily, despise or overlook
The vassalage that binds her to the earth,
Her sad dependence upon time, and all
The trepidations of mortality,
What place so destitute and void — but there
The little flower her vanity shall check;
The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride?

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,
Does that benignity pervade, that warms
The mole contented with her darksome walk
In the cold ground; and to the emmet gives
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes
The tiny creatures strong by social league;
Supports the generations, multiplies
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves;
Thousands of cities, in the desert place
Built up of life, and food, and means of life!
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,
Creatures that in communities exist,
Less, as might seem, for general guardianship
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,
Than by participation of delight
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.
What other spirit can it be that prompts
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave
Their sports together in the solar beam,
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy?
More obviously the self-same influence rules
The feathered kinds; the fieldfare's pensive flock,
The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,
Hovering above these inland solitudes,
By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call
Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales
Their voyage was begun: nor is its power
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay
In silent congress; or together roused
Take flight; while with their clang the air resounds:
And, over all, in that ethereal vault,
Is the mute company of changeful clouds;
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm;
The mild assemblage of the starry heavens;
And the great sun, earth's universal lord!

How bountiful is Nature! he shall find
Who seeks not; and to him, who hath not asked,
Large measure shall be dealt. Three sabbath-days
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights;
And what a marvellous and heavenly show
Was suddenly revealed! — the swains moved on,
And heeded not: you lingered, you perceived
And felt, deeply as living man could feel.
There is a luxury in self-dispraise;
And inward self-disparagement affords
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,
You judge unthankfully: distempered nerves
Infect the thoughts: the languor of the frame
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch—
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell;
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye
Look down upon your taper, through a watch
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling

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In this deep Hollow, like a sullen star
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.
Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways
That run not parallel to nature's course.
Rise with the lark! your matins shall obtain
Grace, be their composition what it may,
If but with hers performed; climb once again,
Climb every day, those ramparts; meet the breeze
Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee
That from your garden thither soars, to feed
On new-blown heath; let yon commanding rock
Be your frequented watch-tower; roll the stone
In thunder down the mountains; with all your might
Chase the wild goat; and if the bold red deer
Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit;
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,
And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted toward the hills
A kindling eye: — accordant feelings rushed
Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth:
"Oh! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
To have a body (this our vital frame
With shrinking sensibility endued,
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)
And to the elements surrender it
As if it were a spirit! — How divine,
The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man
To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps; regions consecrate
To oldest time! and, reckless of the storm
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
Be as a presence or a motion — one
Among the many there; and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument; and while the streams
(As at a first creation and in haste
To exercise their untried faculties)
Descending from the region of the clouds,
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them — what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies;
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
'Rage on ye elements! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!'"

"Yes," said the Wanderer, taking from my lips
The strain of transport, "whosoe'er in youth
Has, through ambition of his soul, given way
To such desires, and grasped at such delight,
Shall feel congenial stirrings late and long,
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,
Its cares and sorrows; he, though taught to own
The tranquillizing power of time, shall wake,
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness—
Loving the sports which once he gloried in.

Compatriot, Friend, remote are Garry's hills,
The streams far distant of your native glen;
Yet is their form and image here expressed
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps
Wherever fancy leads; by day, by night,

Are various engines working, not the same
As those with which your soul in youth was moved,
But by the great Artificer endowed
With no inferior power. You dwell alone;
You walk, you live, you speculate alone;
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,
For you a stately gallery maintain
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,
Have acted, suffered, travelled far, observed
With no incurious eye; and books are yours,
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies
Preserved from age to age; more precious far
Than that accumulated store of gold
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will:
And music waits upon your skilful touch,
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights
Hears, and forgets his purpose; — furnished thus,
How can you droop, if willing to be upraised?

A piteous lot it were to flee from Man—
Yet not rejoice in Nature. He, whose hours
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed
And unenlivened; who exists whole years
Apart from benefits received or done
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd;
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,
Of the world's interests — such a one hath need
Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,
That, for the day's consumption, books may yield
Food not unwholesome; earth and air correct
His morbid humour, with delight supplied
Or solace, varying as the seasons change.
— Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease
And easy contemplation; gay parterres,
And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades
And shady groves in studied contrast — each,
For recreation, leading into each:
These may he range, if willing to partake
Their soft indulgences, and in due time
May issue thence, recruited for the tasks
And course of service Truth requires from those
Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,
And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,
And recognises ever and anon
The breeze of nature stirring in his soul,
Why need such man go desperately astray,
And nurse 'the dreadful appetite of death?'
If tired with systems, each in its degree
Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,
Let him build systems of his own, and smile
At the fond work, demolished with a touch;
If unreligious, let him be at once,
Among ten thousand innocents, enrolled
A pupil in the many-chambered school,
Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.

Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge;
And daily lose what I desire to keep:
Yet rather would I instantly decline
To the traditionary sympathies
Of a most rustic ignorance, and take
A fearful apprehension from the owl
Or death-watch: and as readily rejoice,
If two auspicious magpies crossed my way;—
To this would rather bend than see and hear
The repetitions wearisome of sense,
Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place;
Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark
On outward things, with formal inference ends;

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Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils
At once — or, not recoiling, is perplexed—
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research;
Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat
Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,
On its own axis restlessly revolving,
Seeks, yet can nowhere find, the light of truth.

Upon the breast of new-created earth
Man walked; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,
Alone or mated, solitude was not.
He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice
Of God; and Angels to his sight appeared
Crowning the glorious hills of paradise;
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist
Enkindled by the sun. He sate — and talked
With winged Messengers; who daily brought
To his small island in the ethereal deep
Tidings of joy and love. — From those pure heights
(Whether of actual vision, sensible
To sight and feeling, or that in this sort
Have condescendingly been shadowed forth
Communications spiritually maintained,
And intuitions moral and divine)
Fell Human-kind — to banishment condemned
That flowing years repealed not: and distress
And grief spread wide; but Man escaped the doom
Of destitution; — solitude was not.
— Jehovah — shapeless Power above all Powers,
Single and one, the omnipresent God,
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,
Or cloud of darkness, localised in heaven;
On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark;
Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne
Between the Cherubim — on the chosen Race
Showered miracles, and ceased not to dispense
Judgments, that filled the land from age to age
With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear;
And with amazement smote; — thereby to assert
His scorned, or unacknowledged, sovereignty.
And when the One, ineffable of name,
Of nature indivisible, withdrew
From mortal adoration or regard,
Not then was Deity engulphed; nor Man,
The rational creature, left, to feel the weight
Of his own reason, without sense or thought
Of higher reason and a purer will,
To benefit and bless, through mightier power: —
Whether the Persian — zealous to reject
Altar and image, and the inclusive walls
And roofs of temples built by human hands—
To loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,
With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow,
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,
And to the winds and mother elements,
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him
A sensitive existence, and a God,
With lifted hands invoked, and songs of praise:
Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense
Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed
For influence undefined a personal shape;
And, from the plain, with toil immense, upreared
Tower eight times planted on the top of tower,
That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch
Descending, there might rest; upon that height
Pure and serene, diffused — to overlook
Winding Euphrates, and the city vast
Of his devoted worshippers, far-stretched,
With grove and field and garden interspersed;
Their town, and foodful region for support
Against the pressure of beleaguering war.

Chaldean Shepherds, ranging trackless fields,
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,
Looked on the polar star, as on a guide
And guardian of their course, that never closed
His stedfast eye. The planetary Five
With a submissive reverence they beheld;
Watched, from the centre of their sleeping flocks,
Those radiant Mercuries, that seemed to move
Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,
Decrees and resolutions of the Gods;
And, by their aspects, signifying works
Of dim futurity, to Man revealed.
— The imaginative faculty was lord
Of observations natural; and, thus
Led on, those shepherds made report of stars
In set rotation passing to and fro,
Between the orbs of our apparent sphere
And its invisible counterpart, adorned
With answering constellations, under earth,
Removed from all approach of living sight
But present to the dead; who, so they deemed,
Like those celestial messengers beheld
All accidents, and judges were of all.

The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,
Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores,—
Under a cope of sky more variable,
Could find commodious place for every God,
Promptly received, as prodigally brought,
From the surrounding countries, at the choice
Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,
As nicest observation furnished hints
For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed
On fluent operations a fixed shape;
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.
And yet — triumphant o'er this pompous show
Of art, this palpable array of sense,
On every side encountered; in despite
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets
By wandering Rhapsodists; and in contempt
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged
Amid the wrangling schools — a SPIRIT hung,
Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs;
And emanations were perceived; and acts
Of immortality, in Nature's course,
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed
And armed warrior; and in every grove
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,
When piety more awful had relaxed.
— 'Take, running river, take these locks of mine'—
Thus would the Votary say — 'this severed hair,
'My vow fulfilling, do I here present,
'Thankful for my beloved child's return.
'Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,
'Thy murmurs heard; and drunk the crystal lymph
'With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,
'And, all day long, moisten these flowery fields!'
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;
That hath been, is, and where it was and is
There shall endure, — existence unexposed
To the blind walk of mortal accident;
From diminution safe and weakening age;
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays;
And countless generations of mankind
Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod.

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We live by Admiration, Hope and Love;
And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend.
But what is error?" — "Answer he who can!"
The Sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaimed:
"Love, Hope, and Admiration, — are they not
Mad Fancy's favourite vassals? Does not life
Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin,
Guides to destruction? Is it well to trust
Imagination's light when reason's fails,
The unguarded taper where the guarded faints?
— Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare
What error is; and, of our errors, which
Doth most debase the mind; the genuine seats
Of power, where are they? Who shall regulate,
With truth, the scale of intellectual rank?"

"Methinks," persuasively the Sage replied,
"That for this arduous office you possess
Some rare advantages. Your early days
A grateful recollection must supply
Of much exalted good by Heaven vouchsafed
To dignify the humblest state. — Your voice
Hath, in my hearing, often testified
That poor men's children, they, and they alone,
By their condition taught, can understand
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks
For daily bread. A consciousness is yours
How feelingly religion may be learned
In smoky cabins, from a mother's tongue—
Heard where the dwelling vibrates to the din
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength
At every moment — and, with strength, increase
Of fury; or, while snow is at the door,
Assaulting and defending, and the wind,
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work—
Fearful; but resignation tempers fear,
And piety is sweet to infant minds.
— The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,
On the green turf, a dial — to divide
The silent hours; and who to that report
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,
Throughout a long and lonely summer's day
His round of pastoral duties, is not left
With less intelligence for 'moral' things
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,
Within himself, a measure and a rule,
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,
That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.
Experience daily fixing his regards
On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,
And where they lie, how answered and appeased.
This knowledge ample recompense affords
For manifold privations; he refers
His notions to this standard; on this rock
Rests his desires; and hence, in after life,
Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.
Imagination — not permitted here
To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,
On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,
And trivial ostentation — is left free
And puissant to range the solemn walks
Of time and nature, girded by a zone
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.
Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side
Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,
Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred
(Take from him what you will upon the score
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes
For noble purposes of mind: his heart

Beats to the heroic song of ancient days;
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.
And those illusions, which excite the scorn
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,
Are they not mainly outward ministers
Of inward conscience? with whose service charged
They came and go, appeared and disappear,
Diverting evil purposes, remorse
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,
Or pride of heart abating: and, whene'er
For less important ends those phantoms move,
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve—
On thinly-peopled mountains and wild heaths,
Filling a space, else vacant — to exalt
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?

Once more to distant ages of the world
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts
The face which rural solitude might wear
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.
— In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose:
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.
The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,
Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave,
Swept in the storm of chase; as moon and stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.
The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,
Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side;
And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard,—
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome Deities; or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God!"

The strain was aptly chosen; and I could mark
Its kindly influence, o'er the yielding brow
Of our Companion, gradually diffused;
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream
Detains; but tempted now to interpose,
He with a smile exclaimed:—
"'Tis well you speak
At a safe distance from our native land,
And from the mansions where our youth was taught.
The true descendants of those godly men
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles

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That harboured them, — the souls retaining yet
The churlish features of that after-race
Who fled to woods, caverns, and jutting rocks,
In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,
Or what their scruples construed to be such—
How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain
Uprooted; would re-consecrate our wells
To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne;
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,
To watch again with tutelary love
O'er stately Edinborough throned on crags?
A blessed restoration, to behold
The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,
Once more parading through her crowded streets,
Now simply guarded by the sober powers
Of science, and philosophy, and sense!"

This answer followed. — "You have turned my thoughts
Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose
Against idolatry with warlike mind,
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk
In woods, and dwell under impending rocks
Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food;
Why? — for this very reason that they felt,
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived,
But still a high dependence, a divine
Bounty and government, that filled their hearts
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,
That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,
Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.
Beyond their own poor natures and above
They looked; were humbly thankful for the good
Which the warm sun solicited, and earth
Bestowed; were gladsome, — and their moral sense
They fortified with reverence for the Gods;
And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave.

"Now, shall our great Discoverers," he exclaimed,
Raising his voice triumphantly, "obtain
From sense and reason, less than these obtained,
Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without and world within,
Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious spirits—
Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh
The planets in the hollow of their hand;
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains
Have solved the elements, or analysed
The thinking principle — shall they in fact
Prove a degraded Race? and what avails
Renown, if their presumption make them such?
Oh! there is laughter at their work in heaven!
Inquire of ancient Wisdom; go, demand
Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant
That we should pry far off yet be unraised;
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied
With the perverse attempt, while littleness
May yet become more little; waging thus
An impious warfare with the very life
Of our own souls!

And if indeed there be
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom
Our dark foundations rest, could he design
That this magnificent effect of power,
The earth we tread, the sky that we behold
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals;
That these — and that superior mystery
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,
And the dread soul within it — should exist
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,
Probed, vexed, and criticised? Accuse me not
Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,
If, having walked with Nature threescore years,
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY
Revolts, offended at the ways of men
Swayed by such motives, to such ends employed;
Philosophers, who, though the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe,
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence;
That one, poor, finite object, in the abyss
Of infinite Being, twinkling restlessly!

Nor higher place can be assigned to him
And his compeers — the laughing Sage of France.—
Crowned was he, if my memory do not err,
With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,
In sign of conquest by his wit achieved
And benefits his wisdom had conferred;
His stooping body tottered with wreaths of flowers
Oppress, far less becoming ornaments
Than Spring oft twines about a mouldering tree;
Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain, old Man,
And a most frivolous people. Him I mean
Who penned, to ridicule confiding faith,
This sorry Legend; which by chance we found
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,
Among more innocent rubbish." — Speaking thus,
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,
We had espied the book, he drew it forth;
And courteously, as if the act removed,
At once, all traces from the good Man's heart
Of unbenign aversion or contempt,
Restored it to its owner. "Gentle Friend,"
Herewith he grasped the Solitary's hand,
"You have known lights and guides better than these.
Ah! let not aught amiss within dispose
A noble mind to practise on herself,
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs
Of passion: whatsoe'er be felt or feared,
From higher judgment-seats make no appeal
To lower: can you question that the soul
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice
To be cast off, upon an oath proposed
By each new upstart notion? In the ports
Of levity no refuge can be found,
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.
He, who by wilful disesteem of life
And proud insensibility to hope,
Affronts the eye of Solitude, shall learn
That her mild nature can be terrible;
That neither she nor Silence lack the power
To avenge their own insulted majesty.

O blest seclusion! when the mind admits
The law of duty; and can therefore move

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Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,
Linked in entire complacence with her choice;
When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,
And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed;
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung
In sober plenty; when the spirit stoops
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream
Of unreproved enjoyment; and is pleased
To muse, and be saluted by the air
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.
O, calm contented days, and peaceful nights!
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive
To reconcile his manhood to a couch
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past
For fixed annoyance; and full oft beset
With floating dreams, black and disconsolate,
The vapoury phantoms of futurity?

Within the soul a faculty abides,
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal that they become
Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,
In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own,
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power
Capacious and serene. Like power abides
In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,
From the encumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment — nay, from guilt;
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,
From palpable oppressions of despair."

The Solitary by these words was touched
With manifest emotion, and exclaimed;
"But how begin? and whence? — 'The Mind is free—
Resolve,' the haughty Moralist would say,
'This single act is all that we demand.'
Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn
His natural wings! — To friendship let him turn
For succour, but perhaps he sits alone
On stormy waters, tossed in a little boat
That holds but him, and can contain no more!
Religion tells of amity sublime
Which no condition can preclude; of One
Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,
All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs:
But is that bounty absolute? — His gifts,
Are they not, still, in some degree, rewards
For acts of service? Can his love extend
To hearts that own not him? Will showers of grace,
When in the sky no promise may be seen,
Fall to refresh a parched and withered land?
Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load
At the Redeemer's feet?"
In rueful tone,
With some impatience in his mien, he spake:
Back to my mind rushed all that had been urged
To calm the Sufferer when his story closed;
I looked for counsel as unbending now;

But a discriminating sympathy
Stooped to this apt reply:—
"As men from men
Do, in the constitution of their souls,
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;
And as we fall by various ways, and sink
One deeper than another, self-condemned,
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;
So manifold and various are the ways
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps
Of all infirmity, and tending all
To the same point, attainable by all—
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.
For you, assuredly, a hopeful road
Lies open: we have heard from you a voice
At every moment softened in its course
By tenderness of heart; have seen your eye,
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,
Kindle before us. — Your discourse this day,
That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades
Of death and night, has caught at every turn
The colours of the sun. Access for you
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
Which the imaginative Will upholds
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing!
I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
Devout above the meaning of your will.
— Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.
Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,
To rest upon their circumambient walls;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems, — choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here, — if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers, — Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;
The little rills, and waters numberless,

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Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
One voice — the solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight —
An iron knell! with echoes from afar
Faint — and still fainter — as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seemed
To expire; yet from the abyss is caught again,
And yet again recovered!
But descending
From these imaginative heights, that yield
Far-stretching views into eternity,
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend
Even here, where her amenities are sown
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,
Where on the labours of the happy throng
She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, — and sea with ships
Sprinkled; — be our Companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade
In peace and meditative cheerfulness;
Where living things, and things inanimate,
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,
And speak to social reason's inner sense,
With inarticulate language.
For, the Man—
Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms
Of nature, who with understanding heart
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred — needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.
Accordingly he by degrees perceives
His feelings of aversion softened down;
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.
His sanity of reason not impaired,
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks:
Until abhorrence and contempt are things
He only knows by name; and, if he hear,
From other mouths, the language which they speak,
He is compassionate; and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

And further; by contemplating these Forms
In the relations which they bear to man,
He shall discern, how, through the various means
Which silently they yield, are multiplied
The spiritual presences of absent things.
Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come
When they shall meet no object but may teach
Some acceptable lesson to their minds
Of human suffering, or of human joy.
So shall they learn, while all things speak of man,
Their duties from all forms; and general laws,
And local accidents, shall tend alike

To rouse, to urge; and, with the will, confer
The ability to spread the blessings wide
Of true philanthropy. The light of love
Not failing, perseverance from their steps
Departing not, for them shall be confirmed
The glorious habit by which sense is made
Subservient still to moral purposes,
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe
The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore
The burthen of existence. Science then
Shall be a precious visitant; and then,
And only then, be worthy of her name:
For then her heart shall kindle; her dull eye,
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang
Chained to its object in brute slavery;
But taught with patient interest to watch
The processes of things, and serve the cause
Of order and distinctness, not for this
Shall it forget that its most noble use,
Its most illustrious province, must be found
In furnishing clear guidance, a support
Not treacherous, to the mind's 'excursive' power.
— So build we up the Being that we are;
Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things
We shall be wise perforce; and, while inspired
By choice, and conscious that the Will is free,
Shall move unswerving, even as if impelled
By strict necessity, along the path
Of order and of good. Whate'er we see,
Or feel, shall tend to quicken and refine;
Shall fix, in calmer seats of moral strength,
Earthly desires; and raise, to loftier heights
Of divine love, our intellectual soul."

Here closed the Sage that eloquent harangue,
Poured forth with fervour in continuous stream,
Such as, remote, 'mid savage wilderness,
An Indian Chief discharges from his breast
Into the hearing of assembled tribes,
In open circle seated round, and hushed
As the unbreathing air, when not a leaf
Stirs in the mighty woods. — So did he speak:
The words he uttered shall not pass away
Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up
By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten;
No — they sank into me, the bounteous gift
Of one whom time and nature had made wise,
Gracing his doctrine with authority
Which hostile spirits silently allow;
Of one accustomed to desires that feed
On fruitage gathered from the tree of life;
To hopes on knowledge and experience built;
Of one in whom persuasion and belief
Had ripened into faith, and faith become
A passionate intuition; whence the Soul,
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,
From all injurious servitude was free.

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached,
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,
He had become invisible, — a pomp
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread
Over the mountain sides, in contrast bold
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest;
A dispensation of his evening power.
— Adown the path that from the glen had led
The funeral train, the Shepherd and his Mate
Were seen descending: — forth to greet them ran
Our little Page: the rustic pair approach;

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And in the Matron's countenance may be read
Plain indication that the words, which told
How that neglected Pensioner was sent
Before his time into a quiet grave,
Had done to her humanity no wrong:
But we are kindly welcomed — promptly served
With ostentatious zeal. — Along the floor
Of the small Cottage in the lonely Dell
A grateful couch was spread for our repose;
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we lay,
Stretched upon fragrant heath, and lulled by sound
Of far-off torrents charming the still night,
And, to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

Wordsworth's Poems, in Chronological Sequence

- Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1814
- Suggested by a beautiful ruin upon one of the Islands of Loch Lomond
- Composed at Cora Linn, in sight of Wallace's Tower
- Effusion in the Pleasure-ground on the banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld
- Yarrow Visited, September 1814
- From the dark chambers of dejection freed
- Lines written on a Blank Leaf in a Copy of the Author's Poem, "The Excursion," upon hearing of the Death of the late Vicar of Kendal
- To B. R. Haydon
- Artegal and Elidure

1823

January-August: Captain Jones Very of Salem took his oldest son, Jones Very, Jr., nine years of age and subject, his father considered, to excessive "diffidence," along with him as "cabin boy" of the *Aurelia* on a voyage to North Sea ports, and to the Russian port serving St. Petersburg.

October: An aqueduct designed by David Stanhope Bates was completed in Rochester, to carry the Erie Canal over the Genesee River.

Captain Jones Very took his oldest son, Jones Very, Jr., ten years of age, on a voyage to New Orleans, France, and Portugal. Off Key West, on the first leg of their venture, Captain Jones's ship was pursued by a pirate vessel, which they managed to elude. Wooo-oooo, what an adventure! They would not be returning to Salem until August 31, 1824.

1824

August 31, Tuesday: Hector Berlioz wrote from Paris, replying to a scornful letter from his father: "I am driven involuntarily towards a magnificent career –no other adjective can be applied to the career of artist– and not towards my doom. For I believe I shall succeed; yes, I believe it ... I wish to make a name for myself, I wish to leave some trace of my existence on this earth; and so strong was the feeling –which was an entirely honorable one– that I would rather be Gluck or Mehul dead than what I am in the flower of my age."

On the day that Captain Jones Very and his 11-year-old cabin boy son Jones Very, Jr. arrived back in Salem from their voyage to New Orleans, France, and Portugal, the *Marquis de Lafayette* was being paraded through the streets of Salem along with his American friend, Fanny Wright. Father and son may well have witnessed this event. In addition, the mother, Lydia Very, may on this day have had an opportunity not only to see but also to speak with Fanny Wright, her personal "idol."

The French luminary, who had been to Ipswich before, honored the place that evening with a second visit. Unfortunately he and his suite were delayed en route by rain and mud and, after having been expected most of the day, they did not enter the packed meetinghouse until between seven and eight in the evening. He was addressed by Nathaniel Lord, Esq. and made a short reply before being conducted to Nathaniel Treadwell's inn, where he kibbitzed with some Revolutionary soldiers while obtaining refreshments. The following morning at 10 o'clock he would depart with his suite for Newburyport "amid the benedictions of many hearts." Unlike the canker-worm, this general would not again return.

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

> *3rd day - In the morning attended School Committee & in the Afternoon the Meeting for Sufferings, both which made adjournment till tomorrow - lodged again at MB,*
>
> RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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1830

During the decades of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, religious services in the Touro Synagogue in Newport, on Rhode Island's Aquidneck Island, having been long since discontinued, and the emptied building allegedly placed under the care of a Friend, that conveniently situated empty structure, which had originally been built for reasons unclear to us now over some sort of root cellar, may have been made available for use as a station on the Underground Railroad.

JUDAISM

According to the ProJo (our local excuse for a newspaper):

> Newport ... has the distinction of being the home of several stops on the Underground Railroad.... Newport's Touro Synagogue was a stop along the way.... By the early 1800s, regular services stopped and the synagogue's doors were closed. There would not be another Jewish congregation there until 1883. But from the 1830s through the 1850s, the building's Quaker caretaker offered the use of the empty structure to the free Africans living in Newport. ...it was conveniently located in the center of the free black community. Just how large that community was can be learned from the 1770 census, which reported that nearly a third of the Newport population of 9,000, or 2,800, was of African heritage, and most were free. (The Rhode Island legislature outlawed the importation of slaves to the colony in 1774, though censuses still found more than 300 slaves in Newport County alone in 1790.) ... Over the years, the story has grown that a trap door in the *bimah*, the platform where the rabbi stands to lead the service, was installed as part of the Underground Railroad. Not so. The trap door has been there from the building's beginning. "We feel it was put in by the builders of the synagogue as a symbol of their past persecution," says B. Schlessinger Ross, director of The Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue. Similar trap doors have been found in synagogues in Spain and Portugal and, Ross says, perhaps in those countries they were used as a means of escape from the Catholic church's persecution of Jews during the Inquisition.... At 54 Williams Street, at the corner of Thomas Street, is the Rice family home, Newport's third documented stop on the Underground Railroad. The house was built in the mid-1800s by free black Isaac Rice, whom Charles L. Blockson, author of The Hippocrene Guide to The Underground Railroad, calls "the most prominent African-American in the state of Rhode Island." Blockson calls Rice's home "a haven" for runaway slaves. Rice was a gardener for

Governor William C. Gibbs and planted trees that still grow in Touro Park. Rice was born in Providence in 1794, and his family moved to Newport when he was young. His home was visited by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman.

Note: This structure would not be referred to as the "Touro Synagogue" until, at about the midpoint of the century, Abraham Touro and Judah Touro, sons of the first rabbi Isaac Touro who had moved to New-York and made their fortunes, would donate the exceedingly large sum of $20,000 toward its reconstruction, renovation, and maintenance. (For comparative purposes, the sum of money donated by Nicholas Brown in September 1804 to the College of Rhode Island, which had caused the renaming of that school as "Brown University," had been $5,000.) At this point the structure that is now so lovely was just a decrepit almost-abandoned building that, after the general destruction brought to the island during its Revolutionary War occupation by the British Army, had served not only as a synagogue but also as a Rhode Island Supreme Court building, as a Rhode Island General Assembly building, and as a Newport town meeting hall — and the name "Touro" had been in no way associated with it.

We need to bear in mind that although this was a part of the world from which Jews were generally absent, this was not a part of the world from which Antisemitism was absent. This phenomenon can only be understood in terms of the blatant Antisemitism which the early Christian church had embedded into the gospels according to Mark and then according to Matthew, especially Matthew 27:25. Although this poem by Jones Very had not yet been created, I will employ it here for purposes of illustration of that sad fact:

The Jew

Thou art more deadly than the Jew of old,
Thou hast his weapons hidden in thy speech;
And though thy hand from me thou dost withhold,
They pierce where sword and spear could never reach.
Thou hast me fenced about with thorny talk,
To pierce my soul with anguish while I hear;
And while amid thy populous streets I walk,
I feel at every step the entering spear;[5]
Go, cleanse thy lying mouth of all its guile
That from the will within thee ever flows;
Go, cleanse the temple thou dost now defile,
Then shall I cease to feel thy heavy blows;
And come and tread with me the path of peace,
And from thy brother's harm forever cease.

Now, in regard to that trap door leading down into an underground room: this was an all-seasons building, with a wood furnace. The wood furnace was located in this underground room, along with the cords of wood that were needed to keep the building heated while it was being used for divine worship. It is as simple as that. In modern times, for fire-insurance purposes, the heating plant for the building has been modernized, and relocated to underneath a slab in the lawn. Therefore, the underground room now stands empty. However, it was never intended to serve as a place of refuge, and in point of fact, there is no evidence whatever that it ever served such a function. That is not to say that this structure never, during its antebellum period of abandonment, when a Quaker caretaker had custody of the key, while it was in the middle of the firmly black district of Newport, served as a rent-free haven for black families in need — it is merely to say that, to all intents and purposes, this stuff about the underground room being a part of the Underground Railroad is nothing but stuff and nonsense. There are root cellars all over America with quite as good, or as poor, credentials.

By contrast with this Newport fantasy stuff, we do know that an active Underground Railroad, one of the 1st in the country, would be quietly operated by Paumanok Long Island Quakers, although we do not know the date on which this activity began. They were helping slaves escape through Long Island and upstate New York. The Parsons family were particularly active in this endeavor. Friend Samuel Bowne Parsons, a member of Flushing Monthly Meeting, was later said to be able to brag that he had assisted more slaves to freedom than any other man in Queens County. A number of Quakers associated with that Meeting were both influential and

5. Bear in mind that it is not the poet who is the speaker, but the Jew who experienced on the cross the "entering spear."

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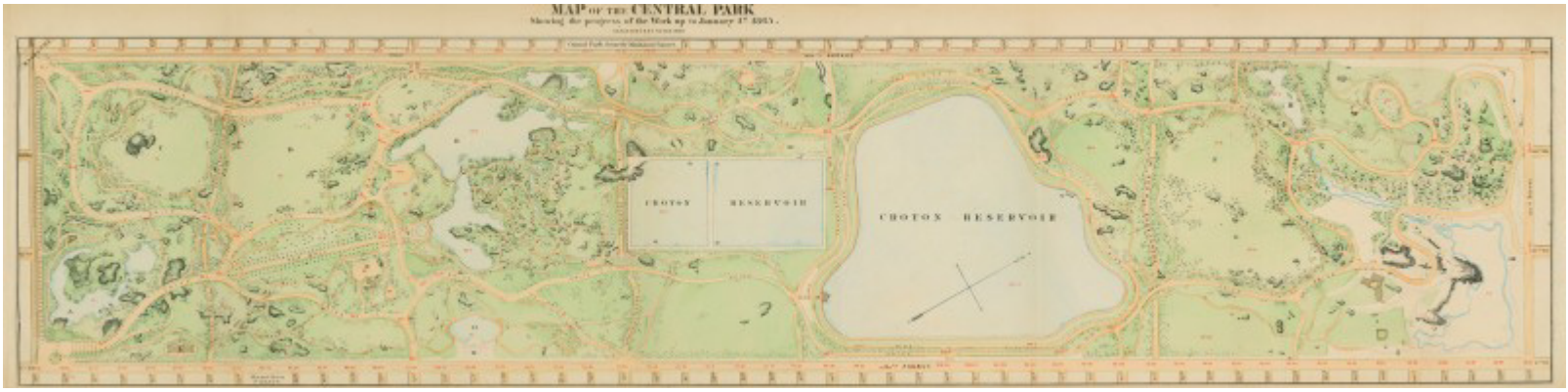
wealthy. Merchants Robert Murray and his son, John Murray, Jr., (married to Friend Catherine Bowne), helped found The New York Society for the Manumission of Slaves and the Free School Society. The Free School Society provided the first public school instruction in New York City. Friend John Murray, Jr. was also known for his acts of benevolence. Both of these men are buried in the graveyard in back of the Flushing meetinghouse. Murray's brother, Friend Lindley Murray, was a well known grammarian whose publishing business was extremely successful. The Parsons family developed a thriving nursery which introduced a number of plants to America, including the Japanese Maple, the flowering dog-wood and the Weeping Beech. Friend Samuel Parsons, Jr., a partner of Calvert Vaux, became the Landscape Architect for the City of New York and provided many of the plantings for Central Park and Prospect Park. He also helped design many important parks and common areas in New York City and across seventeen states.



1833

July 24, Wednesday: Jones Very's earliest known venture into poetry, "The earth is parched with heat."

The army of the Portuguese liberals entered Lisbon.

JONES VERY

JONES VERY

August 10, Saturday: The Salem Observer printed Jones Very's 1st poem, a poem appropriate to the season, "The earth is parched with heat."

In a field in Maryland, during this period, Frederick Douglass was being overcome by the heat:

> On one of the hottest days of the month of August, 1833, Bill Smith, William Hughes, a slave named Eli, and myself, were engaged in fanning wheat. Hughes was clearing the fanned wheat from before the fan. Eli was turning, Smith was feeding, and I was carrying wheat to the fan. The work was simple, requiring strength rather than intellect; yet, to one entirely unused to such work, it came very hard. About three o'clock of that day, I broke down; my strength failed me; I was seized with a violent aching of the head, attended with extreme dizziness; I trembled in every limb. Finding what was coming, I nerved myself up, feeling it would never do to stop work. I stood as long as I could stagger to the hopper with grain. When I could stand no longer, I fell, and felt as if held down by an immense weight.

On the southern end of Lake Michigan, a small settlement of white people held a vote and decided to incorporate itself as a village. Out of a potential of some 300-350 voters, 28 ballots were cast. This settlement would refer to itself as "Chicago." The settlement's initial boundaries have since become DesPlaines Street,

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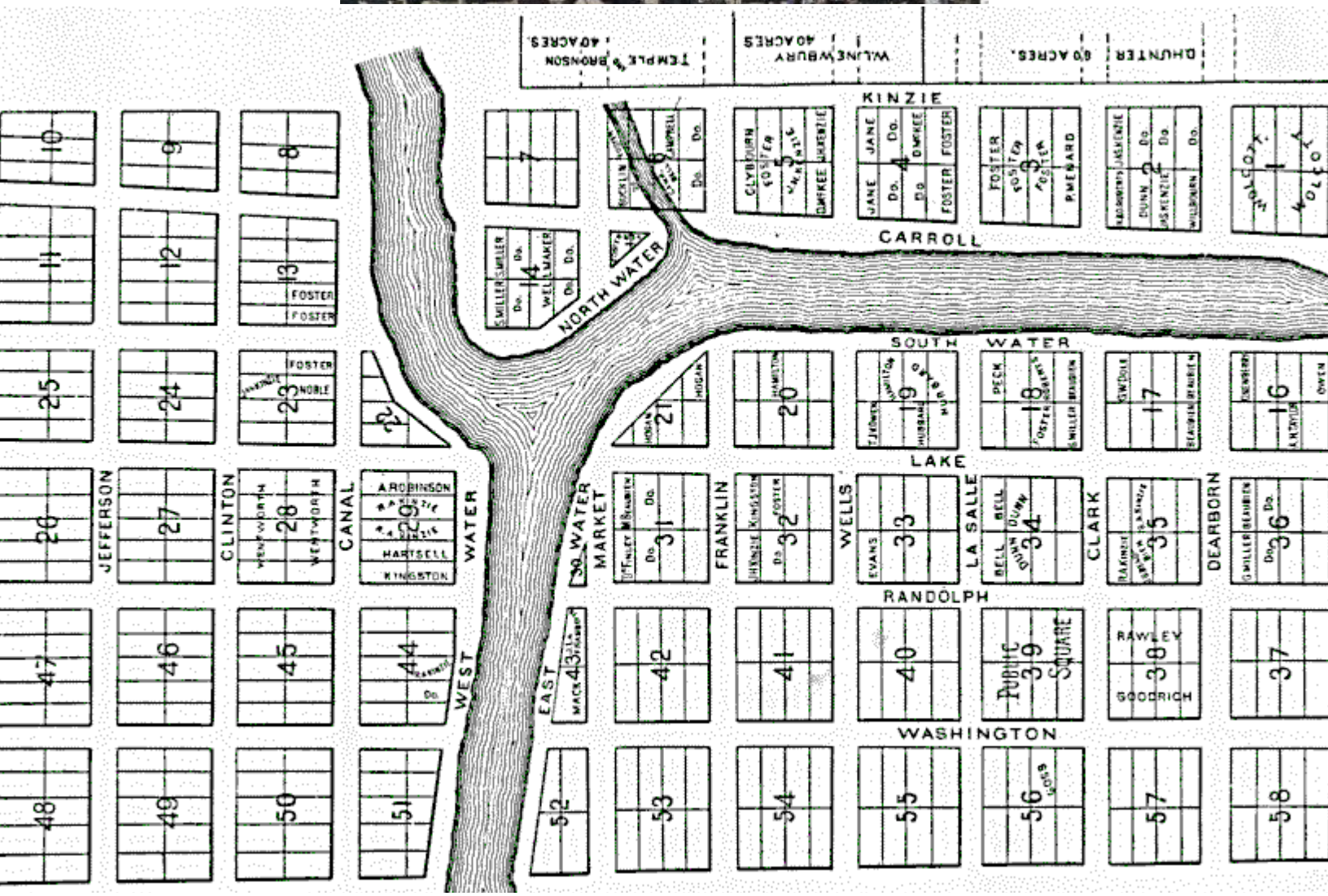
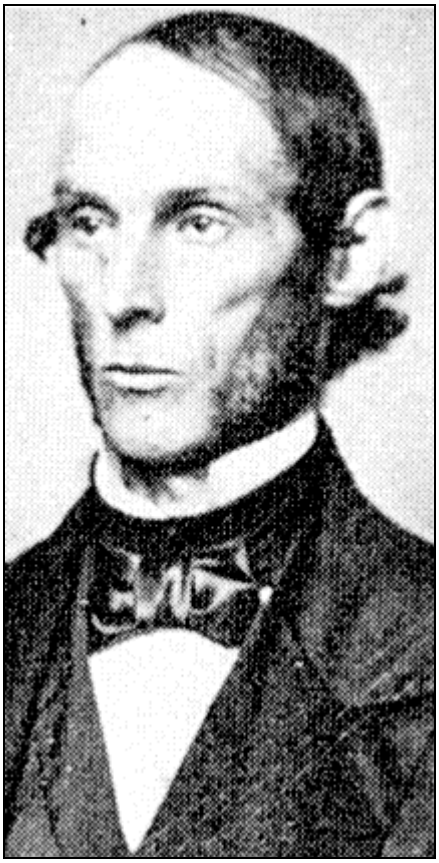
Kinzie Street, Madison Street, and State Street and nowadays look considerably different:



September: Jones Very was accepted as a student at Harvard College, skipping the Freshman year due to his age and preparatory work. Within a couple of weeks of his matriculation, he had paid a $2.00 entrance fee and been recognized as a member of the "Institute of 1770."



1834

Spring: From this point until early in 1835, Jones Very would be chewing and stewing over George Gordon, Lord Byron's CHILDE HAROLD.

August 30, Saturday: Jones Very was permitted to return to Harvard College, as part of the Junior class, on probation.

September 5, Friday: Great Britain and Russia agreed to respect the independence of Persia.

At the end of the first week in September, the "Institute of 1770" resolved to ask "the poet of last year," Jones Very, to deliver a poem at their next meeting.[6] David Henry Thoreau was among those delegated to deliver this request at his room on the top floor of Holworthy Hall.[7]

Question selected for debate at the next meeting: "Ought there to be any restrictions on the publication of opinions?" "A vote of

6. Active member Freshmen and Sophomores automatically became honorary members when, as Jones Very had, they reached their Junior year.
7. I don't show Holworthy Hall on my map of Harvard. Where was it?

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thanks was passed to Mr. Lane for his donation of voting balls. Declaimers, Holmes 2d, Hale, Davis 2d, Clapp, Barnes, Allen. Debaters: Vose, Wheeler, Treat, Thoreau. Treat and Clarke were chosen to constitute a committee to request the poet of last year [Jones Very] *to deliver his poem before this society on the next evening.... Voted to adjourn to Wednesday evening Sept. 17th to the South Inner dining hall.*

Aboard ship, Richard Henry Dana, Jr. gazed as they passed another ship.

AND NOW, FOR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, A REPORT FROM OUR SAILOR:

After speaking the *Carolina*, on the 21st August, nothing occurred to break the monotony of our life until–

Friday, September 5th, when we saw a sail on our weather (starboard) beam. She proved to be a brig under English colors, and passing under our stern, reported herself as forty-nine days from Buenos Ayres, bound to Liverpool. Before she had passed us, sail ho!" was cried again, and we made another sail, far on our weather bow, and steering athwart our hawse. She passed out of hail, but we made her out to be an hermaphrodite brig, with Brazilian colors in her main rigging. By her course, she must have been bound from Brazil to the south of Europe, probably Portugal.

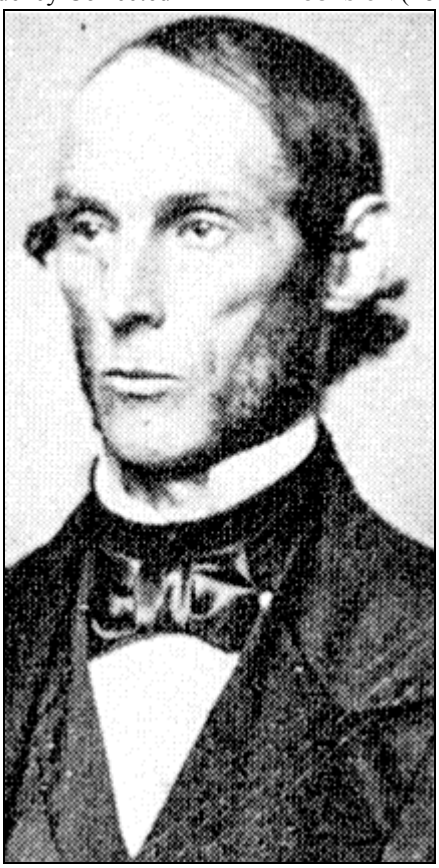
September 15, Monday: The "Occasional business" of the "Institute of 1770" was suspended to allow the reading of the new poem by Jones Very. This rhyming ode has not survived, but the record shows that it was a crowd-pleaser:

Very's poem much applauded.

Fall or Winter: Jones Very and his roommate Thomas Barnard West joined a "small Society" of students who were meeting weekly for "religious improvement." (Since his family simply did not participate in religious observation, this may have been Very's first social contact of a religious nature.)

1835

Spring: Jones Very's preoccupation shifted from George Gordon, Lord Byron's CHILDE HAROLD (1812) to Wordsworth's poem "Despondency Corrected" in THE EXCURSION (1814).



HERE closed the Tenant of that lonely vale
His mournful narrative — commenced in pain,
In pain commenced, and ended without peace:
Yet tempered, not unfrequently, with strains
Of native feeling, grateful to our minds;
And yielding surely some relief to his,
While we sate listening with compassion due.
A pause of silence followed; then, with voice
That did not falter though the heart was moved,
The Wanderer said:—
"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists — one only; an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.
— The darts of anguish 'fix' not where the seat
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the Will supreme
For time and for eternity; by faith,
Faith absolute in God, including hope,
And the defence that lies in boundless love
Of his perfections; with habitual dread
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured

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Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,
To the dishonour of his holy name.
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto thee and thine!"

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes
To heaven: — "How beautiful this dome of sky;
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! Shall the Soul,
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these? — Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice:
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here; where thou hast built,
For thy own glory, in the wilderness!
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,
In such a temple as we now behold
Reared for thy presence: therefore, am I bound
To worship, here, and everywhere — as one
Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,
From childhood up, the ways of poverty;
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
And from debasement rescued. — By thy grace
The particle divine remained unquenched;
And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
From paradise transplanted: wintry age
Impends; the frost will gather round my heart;
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead!
— Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath; come, disease and want;
And sad exclusion through decay of sense;
But leave me unabated trust in thee —
And let thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things—
Father of heaven and earth! and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content!

And what are things eternal? — powers depart,"
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,
Answering the question which himself had asked,
"Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat:
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists; — immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,
Do, with united urgency, require,
What more that may not perish? — Thou, dread source,
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all
That in the scale of being fill their place;
Above our human region, or below,
Set and sustained; — thou, who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that thyself,
Therein, with our simplicity awhile
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed;
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense
And reason's stedfast rule — thou, thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits,
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves:
For adoration thou endur'st; endure

For consciousness the motions of thy will;
For apprehension those transcendent truths
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
(Submission constituting strength and power)
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty!
This universe shall pass away — a work
Glorious! because the shadow of thy might,
A step, or link, for intercourse with thee.
Ah! if the time must come, in which my feet
No more shall stray where meditation leads,
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,
Loved haunts like these; the unimprisoned Mind
May yet have scope to range among her own,
Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.
If the dear faculty of sight should fail,
Still, it may be allowed me to remember
What visionary powers of eye and soul
In youth were mine; when, stationed on the top
Of some huge hill — expectant, I beheld
The sun rise up, from distant climes returned
Darkness to chase, and sleep; and bring the day
His bounteous gift! or saw him toward the deep
Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds
Attended; then, my spirit was entranced
With joy exalted to beatitude;
The measure of my soul was filled with bliss,
And holiest love; as earth, sea, air, with light,
With pomp, with glory, with magnificence!

Those fervent raptures are for ever flown;
And, since their date, my soul hath undergone
Change manifold, for better or for worse:
Yet cease I not to struggle, and aspire
Heavenward; and chide the part of me that flags,
Through sinful choice; or dread necessity
On human nature from above imposed.
'Tis, by comparison, an easy task[8]
Earth to despise; but, to converse with heaven—
This is not easy: — to relinquish all
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,
And stand in freedom loosened from this world,
I deem not arduous; but must needs confess
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires;
And the most difficult of tasks to 'keep'
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
— Man is of dust: ethereal hopes are his,
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.
From this infirmity of mortal kind
Sorrow proceeds, which else were not; at least,
If grief be something hallowed and ordained,
If, in proportion, it be just and meet,
Yet, through this weakness of the general heart,
Is it enabled to maintain its hold
In that excess which conscience disapproves.
For who could sink and settle to that point
Of selfishness; so senseless who could be
As long and perseveringly to mourn
For any object of his love, removed
From this unstable world, if he could fix
A satisfying view upon that state
Of pure, imperishable, blessedness,
Which reason promises, and holy writ
Ensures to all believers? — Yet mistrust

8. "'Tis, by comparison, an easy task
Earth to despise," etc. — See, upon this subject, Baxter's most interesting review of his own opinions and sentiments in the decline of life. It may be found (lately reprinted) in Dr. Wordsworth's "Ecclesiastical Biography."

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Is of such incapacity, methinks,
No natural branch; despondency far less;
And, least of all, is absolute despair.
— And, if there be whose tender frames have drooped
Even to the dust; apparently, through weight
Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power
An agonizing sorrow to transmute;
Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld
When wanted most; a confidence impaired
So pitiably, that, having ceased to see
With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love
Of what is lost, and perish through regret.
Oh! no, the innocent Sufferer often sees
Too clearly; feels too vividly; and longs
To realize the vision, with intense
And over-constant yearning, — there — there lies
The excess, by which the balance is destroyed.
Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,
This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,
Though inconceivably endowed, too dim
For any passion of the soul that leads
To ecstasy; and, all the crooked paths
Of time and change disdaining, takes its course
Along the line of limitless desires.
I, speaking now from such disorder free,
Nor rapt, nor craving, but in settled peace,
I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore
Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In mercy, carried infinite degrees
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts:
Hope, below this, consists not with belief
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,
That finds no limits but her own pure will.

Here then we rest; not fearing for our creed
The worst that human reasoning can achieve,
To unsettle or perplex it: yet with pain
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,
That, though immovably convinced, we want
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith
As soldiers live by courage; as, by strength
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.
Alas! the endowment of immortal power[9]
Is matched unequally with custom, time,
And domineering faculties of sense
In ‘all’; in most, with superadded foes,
Idle temptations; open vanities,
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world;
And, in the private regions of the mind,
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,
Distress and care. What then remains? — To seek
Those helps for his occasions ever near
Who lacks not will to use them; vows, renewed
On the first motion of a holy thought;
Vigils of contemplation; praise; and prayer—
A stream, which, from the fountain of the heart
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows
Without access of unexpected strength.
But, above all, the victory is most sure
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of conscience — conscience reverenced and obeyed,
As God’s most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world.
— Endeavour thus to live; these rules regard;
These helps solicit; and a stedfast seat

9. “Alas! the endowment of immortal Power
Is matched unequally with custom, time,” etc.: — This subject is treated at length in the Ode – Intimations of Immortality.

Shall then be yours among the happy few
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away;
With only such degree of sadness left
As may support longings of pure desire;
And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced
A plot of greensward, seemingly preserved
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones,
And from encroachment of encircling heath:
Small space! but, for reiterated steps,
Smooth and commodious; as a stately deck
Which to and fro the mariner is used
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.
Stillness prevailed around us: and the voice
That spake was capable to lift the soul
Toward regions yet more tranquil. But, methought,
That he, whose fixed despondency had given
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,
Was less upraised in spirit than abashed;
Shrinking from admonition, like a man
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.
Yet not to be diverted from his aim,
The Sage continued:—
"For that other loss,
The loss of confidence in social man,
By the unexpected transports of our age
Carried so high, that every thought, which looked
Beyond the temporal destiny of the Kind,
To many seemed superfluous — as, no cause
Could e'er for such exalted confidence
Exist; so, none is now for fixed despair:
The two extremes are equally disowned
By reason: if, with sharp recoil, from one
You have been driven far as its opposite,
Between them seek the point whereon to build
Sound expectations. So doth he advise
Who shared at first the illusion; but was soon
Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks
Which Nature gently gave, in woods and fields;
Nor unreproved by Providence, thus speaking
To the inattentive children of the world:
'Vainglorious Generation! what new powers
'On you have been conferred? what gifts, withheld
'From your progenitors, have ye received,
'Fit recompense of new desert? what claim
'Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees
'For you should undergo a sudden change;
'And the weak functions of one busy day,
'Reclaiming and extirpating, perform
'What all the slowly-moving years of time,
'With their united force, have left undone?
'By nature's gradual processes be taught;
'By story be confounded! Ye aspire
'Rashly, to fall once more; and that false fruit,
'Which, to your overweening spirits, yields
'Hope of a flight celestial, will produce
'Misery and shame. But Wisdom of her sons
'Shall not the less, though late, be justified.'

"Such timely warning," said the Wanderer, "gave
That visionary voice; and, at this day,
When a Tartarean darkness overspreads

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The groaning nations; when the impious rule,
By will or by established ordinance,
Their own dire agents, and constrain the good
To acts which they abhor; though I bewail
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart
Prevents me not from owning, that the law,
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.
For by superior energies; more strict
Affiance in each other; faith more firm
In their unhallowed principles; the bad
Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,
The vacillating, inconsistent good.
Therefore, not unconsoled, I wait — in hope
To see the moment, when the righteous cause
Shall gain defenders zealous and devout
As they who have opposed her; in which Virtue
Will, to her efforts, tolerate no bounds
That are not lofty as her rights; aspiring
By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.
That spirit only can redeem mankind;
And when that sacred spirit shall appear,
Then shall 'four' triumph be complete as theirs.
Yet, should this confidence prove vain, the wise
Have still the keeping of their proper peace;
Are guardians of their own tranquillity.
They act, or they recede, observe, and feel;
'Knowing the heart of man is set to be[10]
The centre of this world, about the which
Those revolutions of disturbances

10. "Knowing the heart of man is set to be," etc.: — The passage quoted from Daniel is taken from a poem addressed to the Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and the two last lines, printed in Italics, are by him translated from Seneca. The whole Poem is very beautiful. I will transcribe four stanzas from it, as they contain an admirable picture of the state of a wise Man's mind in a time of public commotion.

Nor is he moved with all the thunder-cracks
Of tyrant's threats, or with the surly brow
Of Power, that proudly sits on others' crimes;
Charged with more crying sins than those he checks.
The storms of sad confusion that may grow
Up in the present for the coming times,
Appal not him; that hath no side at all,
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.

Although his heart (so near allied to earth)
Cannot but pity the perplexed state
Of troublous and distressed mortality,
That thus make way unto the ugly birth
Of their own sorrows, and do still beget
Affliction upon Imbecility:
Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,
He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.

And whilst distraught ambition compasses,
And is encompassed, while as craft deceives,
And is deceived: whilst man doth ransack man,
And builds on blood, and rises by distress;
And th' Inheritance of desolation leaves
To great-expecting hopes: He looks thereon,
As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,
And bears no venture in Impiety.

Thus, Lady, fares that man that hath prepared
A rest for his desires; and sees all things
Beneath him; and hath learned this book of man,
Full of the notes of frailty; and compared
The best of glory with her sufferings:
By whom, I see, you labour all you can
To plant your heart! and set your thoughts as near
His glorious mansion as your powers can bear.

Still roll; where all the aspects of misery
Predominate; whose strong effects are such
As he must bear, being powerless to redress;
"And that unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is Man!"

Happy is he who lives to understand,
Not human nature only, but explores
All natures, — to the end that he may find
The law that governs each; and where begins
The union, the partition where, that makes
Kind and degree, among all visible Beings;
The constitutions, powers, and faculties,
Which they inherit, — cannot step beyond,—
And cannot fall beneath; that do assign
To every class its station and its office,
Through all the mighty commonwealth of things
Up from the creeping plant to sovereign Man.
Such converse, if directed by a meek,
Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love:
For knowledge is delight; and such delight
Breeds love: yet, suited as it rather is
To thought and to the climbing intellect,
It teaches less to love, than to adore;
If that be not indeed the highest love!"

"Yet," said I, tempted here to interpose,
"The dignity of life is not impaired
By aught that innocently satisfies
The humbler cravings of the heart; and he
Is a still happier man, who, for those heights
Of speculation not unfit, descends;
And such benign affections cultivates
Among the inferior kinds; not merely those
That he may call his own, and which depend,
As individual objects of regard,
Upon his care, from whom he also looks
For signs and tokens of a mutual bond;
But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,
Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.
Nor is it a mean praise of rural life
And solitude, that they do favour most,
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain,
These pure sensations; that can penetrate
The obstreperous city; on the barren seas
Are not unfelt; and much might recommend,
How much they might inspirit and endear,
The loneliness of this sublime retreat!"

"Yes," said the Sage, resuming the discourse
Again directed to his downcast Friend,
"If, with the froward will and grovelling soul
Of man, offended, liberty is here,
And invitation every hour renewed,
To mark 'their' placid state, who never heard
Of a command which they have power to break,
Or rule which they are tempted to transgress:
These, with a soothed or elevated heart,
May we behold; their knowledge register;
Observe their ways; and, free from envy, find
Complacence there: — but wherefore this to you?
I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,
The redbreast, ruffled up by winter's cold
Into a 'feathery bunch,' feeds at your hand:
A box, perchance, is from your casement hung
For the small wren to build in; — not in vain,
The barriers disregarding that surround
This deep abiding place, before your sight
Mounts on the breeze the butterfly; and soars,
Small creature as she is, from earth's bright flowers,
Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns

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In the waste wilderness: the Soul ascends
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,
This shaded valley leaves; and leaves the dark
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing
A proud communication with the sun
Low sunk beneath the horizon! — List! — I heard,
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth
As if the visible mountain made the cry.
Again!" — The effect upon the soul was such
As he expressed: from out the mountain's heart
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling
The blank air — for the region all around
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent
Save for that single cry, the unanswered bleat
Of a poor lamb — left somewhere to itself,
The plaintive spirit of the solitude!
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,
Through consciousness that silence in such place
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.

"Ah! if the heart, too confidently raised,
Perchance too lightly occupied, or lulled
Too easily, despise or overlook
The vassalage that binds her to the earth,
Her sad dependence upon time, and all
The trepidations of mortality,
What place so destitute and void — but there
The little flower her vanity shall check;
The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride?

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,
Does that benignity pervade, that warms
The mole contented with her darksome walk
In the cold ground; and to the emmet gives
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes
The tiny creatures strong by social league;
Supports the generations, multiplies
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills—
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves;
Thousands of cities, in the desert place
Built up of life, and food, and means of life!
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,
Creatures that in communities exist,
Less, as might seem, for general guardianship
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,
Than by participation of delight
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.
What other spirit can it be that prompts
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave
Their sports together in the solar beam,
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy?
More obviously the self-same influence rules
The feathered kinds; the fieldfare's pensive flock,
The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,
Hovering above these inland solitudes,
By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call
Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales
Their voyage was begun: nor is its power
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay
In silent congress; or together roused
Take flight; while with their clang the air resounds:
And, over all, in that ethereal vault,
Is the mute company of changeful clouds;
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm;

The mild assemblage of the starry heavens;
And the great sun, earth's universal lord!

How bountiful is Nature! he shall find
Who seeks not; and to him, who hath not asked,
Large measure shall be dealt. Three sabbath-days
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights;
And what a marvellous and heavenly show
Was suddenly revealed! — the swains moved on,
And heeded not: you lingered, you perceived
And felt, deeply as living man could feel.
There is a luxury in self-dispraise;
And inward self-disparagement affords
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,
You judge unthankfully: distempered nerves
Infect the thoughts: the languor of the frame
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch—
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell;
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye
Look down upon your taper, through a watch
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling
In this deep Hollow, like a sullen star
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.
Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways
That run not parallel to nature's course.
Rise with the lark! your matins shall obtain
Grace, be their composition what it may,
If but with hers performed; climb once again,
Climb every day, those ramparts; meet the breeze
Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee
That from your garden thither soars, to feed
On new-blown heath; let yon commanding rock
Be your frequented watch-tower; roll the stone
In thunder down the mountains; with all your might
Chase the wild goat; and if the bold red deer
Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit;
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,
And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted toward the hills
A kindling eye: — accordant feelings rushed
Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth:
"Oh! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
To have a body (this our vital frame
With shrinking sensibility endued,
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)
And to the elements surrender it
As if it were a spirit! — How divine,
The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man
To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps; regions consecrate
To oldest time! and, reckless of the storm
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
Be as a presence or a motion — one
Among the many there; and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument; and while the streams
(As at a first creation and in haste
To exercise their untried faculties)
Descending from the region of the clouds,
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them — what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies;

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And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
'Rage on ye elements! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!'"

"Yes," said the Wanderer, taking from my lips
The strain of transport, "whosoe'er in youth
Has, through ambition of his soul, given way
To such desires, and grasped at such delight,
Shall feel congenial stirrings late and long,
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,
Its cares and sorrows; he, though taught to own
The tranquillizing power of time, shall wake,
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness—
Loving the sports which once he gloried in.

Compatriot, Friend, remote are Garry's hills,
The streams far distant of your native glen;
Yet is their form and image here expressed
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps
Wherever fancy leads; by day, by night,
Are various engines working, not the same
As those with which your soul in youth was moved,
But by the great Artificer endowed
With no inferior power. You dwell alone;
You walk, you live, you speculate alone;
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,
For you a stately gallery maintain
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,
Have acted, suffered, travelled far, observed
With no incurious eye; and books are yours,
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies
Preserved from age to age; more precious far
Than that accumulated store of gold
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will:
And music waits upon your skilful touch,
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights
Hears, and forgets his purpose; — furnished thus,
How can you droop, if willing to be upraised?

A piteous lot it were to flee from Man—
Yet not rejoice in Nature. He, whose hours
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed
And unenlivened; who exists whole years
Apart from benefits received or done
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd;
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,
Of the world's interests — such a one hath need
Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,
That, for the day's consumption, books may yield
Food not unwholesome; earth and air correct
His morbid humour, with delight supplied
Or solace, varying as the seasons change.
— Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease
And easy contemplation; gay parterres,
And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades
And shady groves in studied contrast — each,
For recreation, leading into each:
These may he range, if willing to partake
Their soft indulgences, and in due time
May issue thence, recruited for the tasks
And course of service Truth requires from those
Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,
And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,
And recognises ever and anon
The breeze of nature stirring in his soul,

Why need such man go desperately astray,
And nurse 'the dreadful appetite of death?'
If tired with systems, each in its degree
Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,
Let him build systems of his own, and smile
At the fond work, demolished with a touch;
If unreligious, let him be at once,
Among ten thousand innocents, enrolled
A pupil in the many-chambered school,
Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.

Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge;
And daily lose what I desire to keep:
Yet rather would I instantly decline
To the traditionary sympathies
Of a most rustic ignorance, and take
A fearful apprehension from the owl
Or death-watch: and as readily rejoice,
If two auspicious magpies crossed my way;—
To this would rather bend than see and hear
The repetitions wearisome of sense,
Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place;
Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark
On outward things, with formal inference ends;
Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils
At once — or, not recoiling, is perplexed—
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research;
Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat
Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,
On its own axis restlessly revolving,
Seeks, yet can nowhere find, the light of truth.

Upon the breast of new-created earth
Man walked; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,
Alone or mated, solitude was not.
He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice
Of God; and Angels to his sight appeared
Crowning the glorious hills of paradise;
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist
Enkindled by the sun. He sate — and talked
With winged Messengers; who daily brought
To his small island in the ethereal deep
Tidings of joy and love. — From those pure heights
(Whether of actual vision, sensible
To sight and feeling, or that in this sort
Have condescendingly been shadowed forth
Communications spiritually maintained,
And intuitions moral and divine)
Fell Human-kind — to banishment condemned
That flowing years repealed not: and distress
And grief spread wide; but Man escaped the doom
Of destitution; — solitude was not.
— Jehovah — shapeless Power above all Powers,
Single and one, the omnipresent God,
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,
Or cloud of darkness, localised in heaven;
On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark;
Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne
Between the Cherubim — on the chosen Race
Showered miracles, and ceased not to dispense
Judgments, that filled the land from age to age
With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear;
And with amazement smote; — thereby to assert
His scorned, or unacknowledged, sovereignty.
And when the One, ineffable of name,
Of nature indivisible, withdrew
From mortal adoration or regard,
Not then was Deity engulphed; nor Man,
The rational creature, left, to feel the weight
Of his own reason, without sense or thought
Of higher reason and a purer will,

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To benefit and bless, through mightier power: —
Whether the Persian — zealous to reject
Altar and image, and the inclusive walls
And roofs of temples built by human hands—
To loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,
With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow,
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,
And to the winds and mother elements,
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him
A sensitive existence, and a God,
With lifted hands invoked, and songs of praise:
Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense
Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed
For influence undefined a personal shape;
And, from the plain, with toil immense, upreared
Tower eight times planted on the top of tower,
That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch
Descending, there might rest; upon that height
Pure and serene, diffused — to overlook
Winding Euphrates, and the city vast
Of his devoted worshippers, far-stretched,
With grove and field and garden interspersed;
Their town, and foodful region for support
Against the pressure of beleaguering war.

Chaldean Shepherds, ranging trackless fields,
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,
Looked on the polar star, as on a guide
And guardian of their course, that never closed
His stedfast eye. The planetary Five
With a submissive reverence they beheld;
Watched, from the centre of their sleeping flocks,
Those radiant Mercuries, that seemed to move
Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,
Decrees and resolutions of the Gods;
And, by their aspects, signifying works
Of dim futurity, to Man revealed.
— The imaginative faculty was lord
Of observations natural; and, thus
Led on, those shepherds made report of stars
In set rotation passing to and fro,
Between the orbs of our apparent sphere
And its invisible counterpart, adorned
With answering constellations, under earth,
Removed from all approach of living sight
But present to the dead; who, so they deemed,
Like those celestial messengers beheld
All accidents, and judges were of all.

The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,
Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores,—
Under a cope of sky more variable,
Could find commodious place for every God,
Promptly received, as prodigally brought,
From the surrounding countries, at the choice
Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,
As nicest observation furnished hints
For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed
On fluent operations a fixed shape;
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.
And yet — triumphant o'er this pompous show
Of art, this palpable array of sense,
On every side encountered; in despite
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets
By wandering Rhapsodists; and in contempt
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged
Amid the wrangling schools — a SPIRIT hung,
Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs;
And emanations were perceived; and acts

Of immortality, in Nature's course,
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed
And armed warrior; and in every grove
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,
When piety more awful had relaxed.
— 'Take, running river, take these locks of mine'—
Thus would the Votary say — 'this severed hair,
'My vow fulfilling, do I here present,
'Thankful for my beloved child's return.
'Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,
'Thy murmurs heard; and drunk the crystal lymph
'With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,
'And, all day long, moisten these flowery fields!'
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;
That hath been, is, and where it was and is
There shall endure, — existence unexposed
To the blind walk of mortal accident;
From diminution safe and weakening age;
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays;
And countless generations of mankind
Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod.

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love;
And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend.
But what is error?" — "Answer he who can!"
The Sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaimed:
"Love, Hope, and Admiration, — are they not
Mad Fancy's favourite vassals? Does not life
Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin,
Guides to destruction? Is it well to trust
Imagination's light when reason's fails,
The unguarded taper where the guarded faints?
— Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare
What error is; and, of our errors, which
Doth most debase the mind; the genuine seats
Of power, where are they? Who shall regulate,
With truth, the scale of intellectual rank?"

"Methinks," persuasively the Sage replied,
"That for this arduous office you possess
Some rare advantages. Your early days
A grateful recollection must supply
Of much exalted good by Heaven vouchsafed
To dignify the humblest state. — Your voice
Hath, in my hearing, often testified
That poor men's children, they, and they alone,
By their condition taught, can understand
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks
For daily bread. A consciousness is yours
How feelingly religion may be learned
In smoky cabins, from a mother's tongue—
Heard where the dwelling vibrates to the din
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength
At every moment — and, with strength, increase
Of fury; or, while snow is at the door,
Assaulting and defending, and the wind,
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work—
Fearful; but resignation tempers fear,
And piety is sweet to infant minds.
— The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves,
On the green turf, a dial — to divide
The silent hours; and who to that report
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,
Throughout a long and lonely summer's day
His round of pastoral duties, is not left
With less intelligence for 'moral' things
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,

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Within himself, a measure and a rule,
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,
That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.
Experience daily fixing his regards
On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,
And where they lie, how answered and appeased.
This knowledge ample recompense affords
For manifold privations; he refers
His notions to this standard; on this rock
Rests his desires; and hence, in after life,
Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.
Imagination — not permitted here
To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,
On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,
And trivial ostentation — is left free
And puissant to range the solemn walks
Of time and nature, girded by a zone
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.
Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side
Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,
Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred
(Take from him what you will upon the score
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes
For noble purposes of mind: his heart
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days;
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.
And those illusions, which excite the scorn
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,
Are they not mainly outward ministers
Of inward conscience? with whose service charged
They came and go, appeared and disappear,
Diverting evil purposes, remorse
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,
Or pride of heart abating: and, whene'er
For less important ends those phantoms move,
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve—
On thinly-peopled mountains and wild heaths,
Filling a space, else vacant — to exalt
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?

Once more to distant ages of the world
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts
The face which rural solitude might wear
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.
— In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose:
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.
The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,
Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave,
Swept in the storm of chase; as moon and stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.
The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,

Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side;
And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard,—
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome Deities; or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God!"

The strain was aptly chosen; and I could mark
Its kindly influence, o'er the yielding brow
Of our Companion, gradually diffused;
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream
Detains; but tempted now to interpose,
He with a smile exclaimed:—
"'Tis well you speak
At a safe distance from our native land,
And from the mansions where our youth was taught.
The true descendants of those godly men
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles
That harboured them, — the souls retaining yet
The churlish features of that after-race
Who fled to woods, caverns, and jutting rocks,
In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,
Or what their scruples construed to be such—
How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain
Uprooted; would re-consecrate our wells
To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne;
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,
To watch again with tutelary love
O'er stately Edinborough throned on crags?
A blessed restoration, to behold
The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,
Once more parading through her crowded streets,
Now simply guarded by the sober powers
Of science, and philosophy, and sense!"

This answer followed. — "You have turned my thoughts
Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose
Against idolatry with warlike mind,
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk
In woods, and dwell under impending rocks
Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food;
Why? — for this very reason that they felt,
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived,
But still a high dependence, a divine
Bounty and government, that filled their hearts
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,
That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,
Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.
Beyond their own poor natures and above
They looked; were humbly thankful for the good
Which the warm sun solicited, and earth
Bestowed; were gladsome, — and their moral sense
They fortified with reverence for the Gods;
And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave.

"Now, shall our great Discoverers," he exclaimed,
Raising his voice triumphantly, "obtain
From sense and reason, less than these obtained,
Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age

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Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without and world within,
Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious spirits—
Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh
The planets in the hollow of their hand;
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains
Have solved the elements, or analysed
The thinking principle — shall they in fact
Prove a degraded Race? and what avails
Renown, if their presumption make them such?
Oh! there is laughter at their work in heaven!
Inquire of ancient Wisdom; go, demand
Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant
That we should pry far off yet be unraised;
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied
With the perverse attempt, while littleness
May yet become more little; waging thus
An impious warfare with the very life
Of our own souls!
And if indeed there be
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom
Our dark foundations rest, could he design
That this magnificent effect of power,
The earth we tread, the sky that we behold
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals;
That these — and that superior mystery
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,
And the dread soul within it — should exist
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,
Probed, vexed, and criticised? Accuse me not
Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,
If, having walked with Nature threescore years,
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY
Revolts, offended at the ways of men
Swayed by such motives, to such ends employed;
Philosophers, who, though the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe,
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence;
That one, poor, finite object, in the abyss
Of infinite Being, twinkling restlessly!

Nor higher place can be assigned to him
And his compeers — the laughing Sage of France.—
Crowned was he, if my memory do not err,
With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,
In sign of conquest by his wit achieved
And benefits his wisdom had conferred;
His stooping body tottered with wreaths of flowers
Opprest, far less becoming ornaments
Than Spring oft twines about a mouldering tree;
Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain, old Man,
And a most frivolous people. Him I mean
Who penned, to ridicule confiding faith,
This sorry Legend; which by chance we found
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,
Among more innocent rubbish." — Speaking thus,
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,
We had espied the book, he drew it forth;
And courteously, as if the act removed,
At once, all traces from the good Man's heart

Of unbenign aversion or contempt,
Restored it to its owner. “Gentle Friend,”
Herewith he grasped the Solitary’s hand,
“You have known lights and guides better than these.
Ah! let not aught amiss within dispose
A noble mind to practise on herself,
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs
Of passion: whatsoe’er be felt or feared,
From higher judgment-seats make no appeal
To lower: can you question that the soul
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice
To be cast off, upon an oath proposed
By each new upstart notion? In the ports
Of levity no refuge can be found,
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.
He, who by wilful disesteem of life
And proud insensibility to hope,
Affronts the eye of Solitude, shall learn
That her mild nature can be terrible;
That neither she nor Silence lack the power
To avenge their own insulted majesty.

O blest seclusion! when the mind admits
The law of duty; and can therefore move
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,
Linked in entire complacence with her choice;
When youth’s presumptuousness is mellowed down,
And manhood’s vain anxiety dismissed;
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung
In sober plenty; when the spirit stoops
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream
Of unreproved enjoyment; and is pleased
To muse, and be saluted by the air
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.
O, calm contented days, and peaceful nights!
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive
To reconcile his manhood to a couch
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past
For fixed annoyance; and full oft beset
With floating dreams, black and disconsolate,
The vapoury phantoms of futurity?

Within the soul a faculty abides,
That with interpositions, which would hide
And darken, so can deal that they become
Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,
In the deep stillness of a summer even
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,
In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
Into a substance glorious as her own,
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power
Capacious and serene. Like power abides
In man’s celestial spirit; virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,
From the encumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment — nay, from guilt;
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,
From palpable oppressions of despair.”

The Solitary by these words was touched
With manifest emotion, and exclaimed;
“But how begin? and whence? — ‘The Mind is free—
Resolve,’ the haughty Moralist would say,

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‘This single act is all that we demand.’
Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn
His natural wings! — To friendship let him turn
For succour, but perhaps he sits alone
On stormy waters, tossed in a little boat
That holds but him, and can contain no more!
Religion tells of amity sublime
Which no condition can preclude; of One
Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,
All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs:
But is that bounty absolute? — His gifts,
Are they not, still, in some degree, rewards
For acts of service? Can his love extend
To hearts that own not him? Will showers of grace,
When in the sky no promise may be seen,
Fall to refresh a parched and withered land?
Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load
At the Redeemer’s feet?”
In rueful tone,
With some impatience in his mien, he spake:
Back to my mind rushed all that had been urged
To calm the Sufferer when his story closed;
I looked for counsel as unbending now;
But a discriminating sympathy
Stooped to this apt reply:—
“As men from men
Do, in the constitution of their souls,
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;
And as we fall by various ways, and sink
One deeper than another, self-condemned,
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;
So manifold and various are the ways
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps
Of all infirmity, and tending all
To the same point, attainable by all—
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.
For you, assuredly, a hopeful road
Lies open: we have heard from you a voice
At every moment softened in its course
By tenderness of heart; have seen your eye,
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,
Kindle before us. — Your discourse this day,
That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades
Of death and night, has caught at every turn
The colours of the sun. Access for you
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
Which the imaginative Will upholds
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior Faculty that moulds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing!
I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;

Devout above the meaning of your will.
— Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.
Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,
To rest upon their circumambient walls;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems, — choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here, — if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers, — Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;
The little rills, and waters numberless,
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
One voice — the solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight —
An iron knell! with echoes from afar
Faint — and still fainter — as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seemed
To expire; yet from the abyss is caught again,
And yet again recovered!
But descending
From these imaginative heights, that yield
Far-stretching views into eternity,
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend
Even here, where her amenities are sown
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,
Where on the labours of the happy throng
She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, — and sea with ships
Sprinkled; — be our Companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade
In peace and meditative cheerfulness;
Where living things, and things inanimate,
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,
And speak to social reason's inner sense,
With inarticulate language.
For, the Man—
Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms
Of nature, who with understanding heart
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred — needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.
Accordingly he by degrees perceives

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His feelings of aversion softened down;
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.
His sanity of reason not impaired,
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks:
Until abhorrence and contempt are things
He only knows by name; and, if he hear,
From other mouths, the language which they speak,
He is compassionate; and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

And further; by contemplating these Forms
In the relations which they bear to man,
He shall discern, how, through the various means
Which silently they yield, are multiplied
The spiritual presences of absent things.
Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come
When they shall meet no object but may teach
Some acceptable lesson to their minds
Of human suffering, or of human joy.
So shall they learn, while all things speak of man,
Their duties from all forms; and general laws,
And local accidents, shall tend alike
To rouse, to urge; and, with the will, confer
The ability to spread the blessings wide
Of true philanthropy. The light of love
Not failing, perseverance from their steps
Departing not, for them shall be confirmed
The glorious habit by which sense is made
Subservient still to moral purposes,
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe
The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore
The burthen of existence. Science then
Shall be a precious visitant; and then,
And only then, be worthy of her name:
For then her heart shall kindle; her dull eye,
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang
Chained to its object in brute slavery;
But taught with patient interest to watch
The processes of things, and serve the cause
Of order and distinctness, not for this
Shall it forget that its most noble use,
Its most illustrious province, must be found
In furnishing clear guidance, a support
Not treacherous, to the mind's 'excursive' power.
— So build we up the Being that we are;
Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things
We shall be wise perforce; and, while inspired
By choice, and conscious that the Will is free,
Shall move unswerving, even as if impelled
By strict necessity, along the path
Of order and of good. Whate'er we see,
Or feel, shall tend to quicken and refine;
Shall fix, in calmer seats of moral strength,
Earthly desires; and raise, to loftier heights
Of divine love, our intellectual soul."

Here closed the Sage that eloquent harangue,
Poured forth with fervour in continuous stream,
Such as, remote, 'mid savage wilderness,
An Indian Chief discharges from his breast
Into the hearing of assembled tribes,
In open circle seated round, and hushed
As the unbreathing air, when not a leaf
Stirs in the mighty woods. — So did he speak:
The words he uttered shall not pass away
Dispersed, like music that the wind takes up
By snatches, and lets fall, to be forgotten;
No — they sank into me, the bounteous gift
Of one whom time and nature had made wise,

Gracing his doctrine with authority
Which hostile spirits silently allow;
Of one accustomed to desires that feed
On fruitage gathered from the tree of life;
To hopes on knowledge and experience built;
Of one in whom persuasion and belief
Had ripened into faith, and faith become
A passionate intuition; whence the Soul,
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,
From all injurious servitude was free.

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached,
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,
He had become invisible, — a pomp
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread
Over the mountain sides, in contrast bold
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest;
A dispensation of his evening power.
— Adown the path that from the glen had led
The funeral train, the Shepherd and his Mate
Were seen descending: — forth to greet them ran
Our little Page: the rustic pair approach;
And in the Matron's countenance may be read
Plain indication that the words, which told
How that neglected Pensioner was sent
Before his time into a quiet grave,
Had done to her humanity no wrong:
But we are kindly welcomed — promptly served
With ostentatious zeal. — Along the floor
Of the small Cottage in the lonely Dell
A grateful couch was spread for our repose;
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we lay,
Stretched upon fragrant heath, and lulled by sound
Of far-off torrents charming the still night,
And, to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

July: Jones Very's essay "The Practical Application in This Life, by Men as Social and Intellectual Beings, of the Certainty of a Future State" was awarded the 40^{.00}$ first prize in the Bowdoin competition for Juniors. Edwin Gittleman's take on this is: "Had the Bowdoin Prize judges realized that behind the impressive rhetoric and sentiment of this essay lay autobiographical truths mixed with private fantasies, a form of Byronism adjusted to the outlooks of Coleridge and Henry Ware, and concealed promises of marvelous events to come interwoven with secret desires, they might well have hesitated."[11]

Fall: This was the beginning of Jones Very's three-year period of crisis in the throes of "unbridled" sexual passion. His yearning "to do ill" was such as to persuade him that he ought to have a rule of conduct, that he not speak to women or even look at them. Beyond that, it was persuading him, intellectually, that he needed not to have a will of his own. This was his

> **change of heart**, *which tells us that all we have belongs to God and that we ought to have no* **will** *of our own.*

11. We may wonder, that Edwin Gittleman supposes there to be a form of impressive rhetoric and sentiment which does not overlie autobiographical truths mixed with private fantasies, or conceal promises of marvelous events to come interwoven with secret desires. Provide examples, sir, provide us with examples if you please. We know of a distinction which may be made, between a type of author such as Hawthorne who seeks to pander to the private fantasies and secret desires of his or her loyal readership, and a type of author such as Thoreau who explicitly seeks not so to pander, but we do not know of a distinction between a type of author who possesses private fantasies and secret desires and does not succeed in excluding these from his or her authorship, and a type of author who lacks this personality or succeeds in excluding it from his or her writing.

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September 15, Tuesday: David Henry Thoreau was part of a committee of students sent to see Jones Very on behalf of the "Institute of 1770", to request that he prepare and read a poem.

At Locust Grove plantation near Bayou Sara, Louisiana, Sarah Knox Taylor Davis died. Jefferson Davis was seriously ill.

The HMS *Beagle* and Charles Darwin reached the Galápagos Islands.

1836

February: Early this year, perhaps in about this period, Jones Very was concluding that there was only one way in which evil could enter this universe of God's, and that was through human deliberation. For to allow oneself to be tempted is the same as to allow oneself to sin. What would be requisite, therefore, would be to establish a state of artlessness and immediacy which precluded all "taking thought," all deliberation. Since he needed to "converse with Heaven," he determined that upon his graduation he would attempt this feat of spontaneity at Harvard Divinity School.[12]

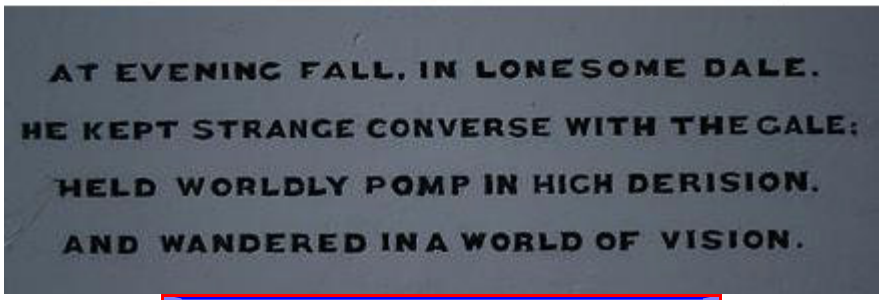
> *We cannot predict our actions as if we were machines. If we are growing in virtue we shall not say what we should do in any particular case but say if the case comes I will do something then which I do not know now. The spirit will tell us in that hour.*

HARVARD COLLEGE

April: Jones Very completed a long essay on epic poetry which he dedicated to David Henry Thoreau's friend Samuel Tenney Hildreth, his Harvard College class's designated poet.

12. Which, one might suppose, would be an expertise similar to that of the ventriloquist who could speak while his dummy was drinking a glass of water. Or something like that, but never mind.

May 3, Tuesday: David Henry Thoreau turned in his Harvard College essay on the assigned topic "SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SIR W. SCOTT by Allan Cunningham, FAMILIAR ANECDOTES OF SIR W. SCOTT BY JAMES HOGG, AND WITH A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF THE SHEPHERD by S. Dewitt [Simeon De Witt] Bloodgood."



SOME ACCOUNT OF ...
FAMILIAR ANECDOTES

At the Exhibition Program that took place on this day, Jones Very presented a new version of his Bowdoin Prize Essay of July 1835, "The Practical Application in This Life, by Men as Social and Intellectual Beings, of the Certainty of a Future State," which he had for this occasion retitled simply "The Heroic Character."

Our Literature is uncommonly rich in Biography. No sooner has a

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passing meteor, whose brilliance and length of train arrests the attention of the gaping multitudes of this nether world, sunk below the horizon, than the literary astronomers of the day set about tracing its orbit, and soon crowd a ponderous tome with the phenomena it presented. This is all very well as far as it goes, but, for my part, I am not satisfied with being acquainted with a man's actions merely. I want to be introduced to the man himself. "Biography," says Fuseli, "however useful to man, or dear to art, is the unequivocal homage of inferiority offered to the majesty of genius." This is not the character of the works before us; we here behold Scott in the capacity of a friend, and patron, free from all restraint.

Divested of all the mystery in which genius is usually enveloped, he appears for the moment to have put on mortality, he is no longer the "Author of Waverly" the eighth wonder of the world. While we imagine him snugly ensconced in his antique armchair, poring over the pages of a huge black-letter folio containing the marvellous deeds of some Sir Tristram or Sir Guy who figured in border warfare, or performing a pilgrimage a la Terre Sante, we find him, perchance, "leistering kippers in Tweed", or seated on the river's bank, while Rob Fletcher is gone after another fiery peat, singing Hogg's ballad of "Gilman's-cleuch". The account of the Life and Works of Scott is written in a frank and impartial style, though the author appears to be a little vain of his intimacy with Sir Walter. The same may be said of Hogg. The former winds up with these words, "No other genius ever exercised over the world so wide a rule: no one, perhaps ever united so many great — almost godlike qualities, and employed them so generously for the benefit of the living. It is not to us alone that he has spoken: his voice will delight thousands of generations unborn, and charm his country while wood grows and water runs."

The Ettrick Shepherd was the second son of Robert Hogg and Margaret Laidlaw, and was born on the 25th of Jan'y, 1772, the anniversary of Burns' birth, who was born 1759. When 6 years of age he attended for a short time a neighboring school, and learned to read the Proverbs of Solomon and the Shorter Catechism, but at the age of 7 went to service as a cowherd, receiving for half a year's service, "a ewe lamb and a pair of shoes."

It was in his 18th year that he first saw the "Life and Adventures of Sir W. Wallace", and Ramsay's "Gentle Shepherd". It was in 1796 that he first felt the inspiration of the Muse; he now for the first time had access to a valuable library, and his genius shone forth so conspicuously, that he was known as "Jamie the Poeter." He could compose, but he could not write "and he wept to think, however fancy and inspiration might impart their influence, he could not 'catch their shadows as they passed'." The song commencing,

"My name it is Donald McDonald,"

written at the time England was threatened with invasion by Napoleon, was the first he published.

The following is a list of his works.

The Queen's Wake.
Pilgrims of the Sun.
The Hunting of Badlewe.
Mador of the Moor.
Poetic Mirror.

Dramatic Tales.
Brownie of Bodsbeck.
Winter Evening Tales
Sacred Melodies.
Border Garland.
Jacobite Relics of Scotland
The Spy.
Queen Hynde.
The Three Perils of Man.
The Three do. of Women.
Confessions of a Sinner.
The Shepherd's Calendar.
A Selection of Songs.
The Queer Book.
The Royal Jubilee.
The Mountain Bard.
The Forest Minstrel.
The Altrive Tales.
Now living, 1834.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> *3rd day 3 of 5 M / This Afternoon we found a ready conveyance to Greenwich direct in a Packet Cousins Henry & Thomas Gould, Thos Nichols & my wife & self went on board & in about two hours & three Quarters we arrived safely & pleasantly in Greenwich Our friend Thos Howland met us in the Street & took my wife our to his house & Henry & I walked on & got there before tea time - the two Thomas's stoping at Dr Eldredges.*

June 22, Wednesday: Jones Very joined Salem's Unitarians of the "North Society," at their New Stone Church.

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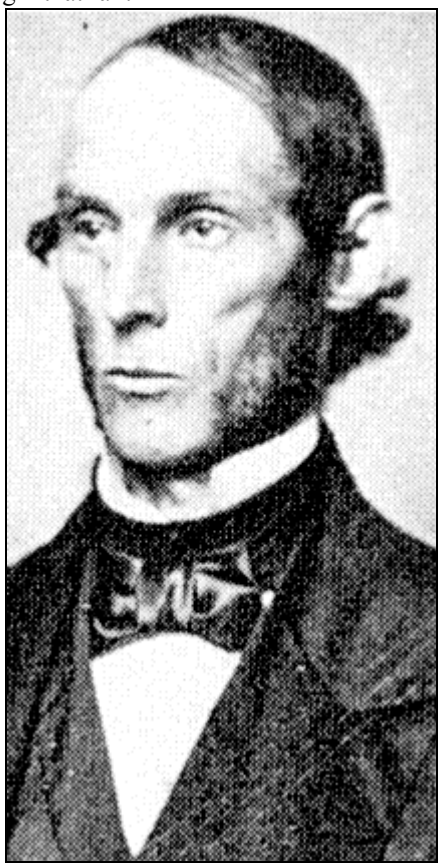
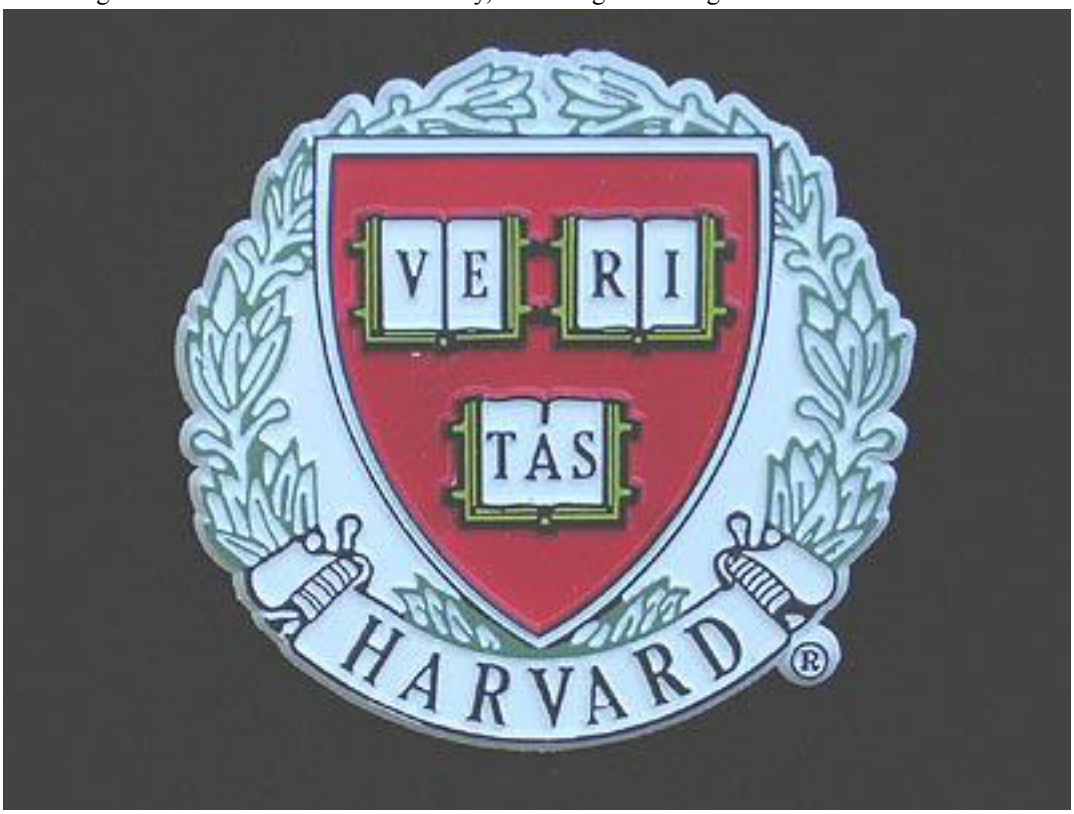
July: Jones Very won a second, unprecedented Bowdoin Prize of $50.00, for his essay "What Reasons Are There For Not Expecting Another Great Epic Poem?" Also, he was appointed Tutor in Greek. This employment, presumably, was part of an arrangement being made to allow him to follow the Divinity School course of studies to begin that fall.



August 31, Wednesday: Jones Very was graduated from Harvard College, second in honors, and delivered a commencement address entitled "Individuality." It was so unseasonably cold that not a single public sot was visible at this commencement, and it was so windy and dry that the streets near the college were being sprinkled with water to hold down the dust.

This would have been the graduating class for Richard Henry Dana, Jr. had he not been forced to leave college temporarily due to his eyesight. The newspaper reports of this Commencement would reach this seaman aboard the *Alert* along the Santa Barbara, California coast, and be consumed avidly, on February 28th of the following year.

September 8: Some 1,100 to 1,300 alums attended Harvard College's Bicentennial, and heard a professional choir offer the very original of "Fair Harvard." Although the very oldest living alumnus, 96-year-old Judge Paine Wingate (Class of 1759, of New Hampshire) was, unfortunately, unable to be present, 86-year-old Samuel Emery (Class of 1774, of Philadelphia) was able to march in the parade. Word arrived that President Josiah Quincy, Sr. had, while researching for a "History of Harvard University" in the College Archives, located in filed-and-forgotten records of an Overseers meeting on January 6, 1644 the first rough sketch for the shield with the Latin motto "VE RI TAS" ("Verity" or "Truth") and three open books, which was to become the College's arms. This is how it looks today, as a refrigerator magnet:



During this Bicentennial, a white banner atop a large tent in the Yard for the 1st time publicly displayed this design, which in 1843 would become the basis of the seal officially adopted by the Harvard Corporation, and then in 1847 would be dropped in favor of another seal, and then in 1885 would be readopted.

Some of the alums had an interestingly historic discussion:

(following screen)

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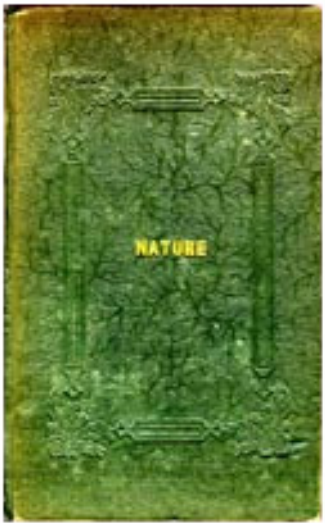
In September 1836, on the day of the second centennial anniversary of Harvard College, Mr. Emerson, George Ripley, and myself [Frederic Henry Hedge], with one other [who was this fourth person: would it have been an unnamed woman, an unnamed wife, specifically Sophia Ripley??], chanced to confer together on the state of current opinion in theology and philosophy, which we agreed in thinking was very unsatisfactory. Could anything be done in the way of protest and introduction of deeper and broader views? What we strongly felt was dissatisfaction with the reigning sensuous philosophy, dating from John Locke, on which our Christian theology was based. The writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, recently edited by Marsh [Henry Nelson Coleridge had only at this point initiated publication of THE LITERARY REMAINS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE], and some of Thomas Carlyle's earlier essays, especially the "Characteristics" and "SIGNS OF THE TIMES," had created a ferment in the minds of some of the young clergy of that day. There was a promise in the air of a new era of intellectual life. We four concluded to call a few like-minded seekers together in the following week. Some dozen of us met in Boston, in the house, I believe, of Mr. Ripley. Among them I recall the name of Orestes Augustus Brownson (not yet turned Romanist), Cyrus Augustus Bartol, Theodore Parker, and Charles Stearns Wheeler and Robert Bartlett, tutors in Harvard College. There was some discussion, but no conclusion reached, on the question whether it were best to start a new journal as the organ of our views, or to work through those already existing. The next meeting, in the same month, was held by invitation of Emerson, at his house in Concord. A large number assembled; besides some of those who met at Boston, I remember Mr. Alcott, [Bronson Alcott] John Sullivan Dwight, Ephraim Peabody, Dr. Convers Francis, Mrs. Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley, Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Margaret Fuller, Caleb Stetson, James Freeman Clarke. These were the earliest of a series of meetings held from time to time, as occasion prompted, for seven or eight years. Jones Very was one of those who occasionally attended; H.D. Thoreau another. There was no club, properly speaking; no organization, no presiding officer, no vote ever taken. How the name "Transcendental," given to these gatherings and the set of persons who took part in them, originated, I cannot say. It certainly was never assumed by the persons so called. I suppose I was the only one who had any first-hand acquaintance with German transcendental philosophy, at the start. THE DIAL was the product of the movement, and in some sort its organ.

At the wrap-up of the day, guest speaker Josiah Quincy, Jr. (Class of 1821) made a motion "that this assembly of the Alumni be adjourned to meet at this place on the 8th of September, 1936" — and the motion was unanimously adopted.

September 9: Abraham Lincoln received his Illinois law license.

The first advertisements appeared for a small volume of which Waldo Emerson had self-published 1,000 copies for a little over $100.00, or ten cents the copy.



The 1st edition of NATURE contained not the pseudoevolutionionistic epigraph on the worm aspiring to be man with which we are now so familiar, but in its place a quote from Plotinus:

> Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know.

Jones Very, having completed his undergraduate education at Harvard College, preparing for his entry into the Harvard Divinity School (where he was planning to make quite a splash on account of his principled repudiation of all deliberation and "taking thought" in favor of what he was terming "conversing with Heaven," in a state of artlessness and immediacy and spontaneity), purchased this little volume on nature and naturalness and heavily marked it up. Courtesy of Parkman D. Howe of Needham, we know how he marked it up. We can note that almost half his markings, including all but two of his marginal comments, were confined to the chapter on "Idealism." We can also know that he responded quite idiosyncratically to Emerson's trope on infancy, "Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which come into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them

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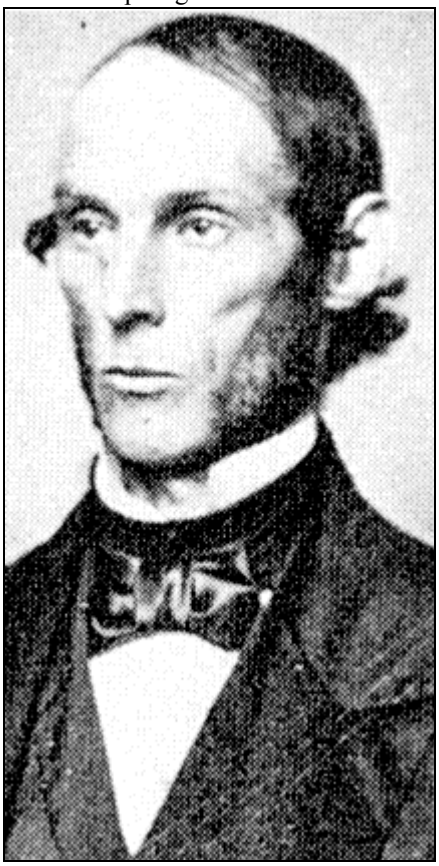
to return to paradise," in a manner which prefigured his later mental collapse.



The most comprehensive explanation, however is to be found in his personal copy of a small blue book with covers decorated by tree-like vines. Mr. Tutor Very purchased it in September 1836, only a few days after it was published. The timing of its acquisition at once suggests that he was already familiar with the latest modes of nonconformity, and perhaps was even anticipating the book's publication. At the end of August, in his Commencement Address, had he not expressed his confidence in the power of "new principles of action" to resist the "mechanical spirit" of the times, which he felt was suppressing the more heroic and precious forms of individuality? Now the opportunity arose for him to study the detailed grounds of another man's affirmations and dissents, a man somewhat older than he, and more knowing in the ways of spiritual heroism, about which the Divinity School evidently could teach him nothing. He may have first learned of Ralph Waldo Emerson during the winter of 1835-1836, when the latter delivered a series of ten lectures on English literature, from Geoffrey Chaucer to William Shakespeare, to Byron and Coleridge, at Boston's Masonic Temple. Or, as was perhaps more likely, when Very visited Boston that winter to listen to sermons (as he must have done, following his **change of heart** and recent choice of a ministerial career), he may have heard Emerson in one of his church appearances, since he preached usually twice a week during the run of his lecture course. Or, between January and May 1836, after walking the seventeen miles of turnpike linking Cambridge with his home, he may have attended one of the approximately fifteen lectures on biography and English literature Emerson delivered at the Salem Lyceum in two series. (In view of the attitudes Very was cultivating at the time, the Martin Luther, John Milton, and George Fox lectures might well have tempted him.) But whatever the way he discovered Emerson –and there were sufficient opportunities for him to have at least heard about him as early as 1835– it is certain he read NATURE eagerly in 1836, with pencil in hand, scoring margins, underlining sentences, and making written comments.

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Most striking about Very's markings and marginalia is that they indicate he was not at all surprised by Emerson's aerial prose poem; instead, he apparently found what he expected — and this neither confounded nor offended him, as it did most readers. Several times he questioned what he read, but never did he challenge Emerson: his mood seemed respectful throughout. It was as if his reading confirmed suspicions that the author was a thoughtful man whose reflections repaid close scrutiny. (Though a minor aspect of Very's use of NATURE it is indicative of his attitude toward it that he treated it incidentally as a source book for the compatible ideas of others, of Coleridge for example, and of William Shakespeare, Michaelangelo, George Herbert, and even of the unnamed "orphic poet.") He read NATURE then as a literal rather than figurative testament about the nature of God, and about the relationship between God and man. He read it as if it were a conduct-book filled with supernal imperatives. While certainly not a usual approach to the book, it still was a valid one, given the disposition of the reader in September 1836. He was looking for certain information, and believed it might be found here rather than in the Divinity School. Very was particularly curious about the effects of nature upon Emerson, about his emotional and artistic responses to the natural world. Moreover, Very seemed interested in external nature as the basis for communion with God, and this accorded well with the viewpoint Emerson developed. (The professors would have shouted Very down had he suggested such an idea in the classroom.) He was concerned too with the relationship between personal morals and the morality of art, and specifically of literary art. But he seemed not so interested as Emerson in attempting to explore the philosophical middle ground between idealism and materialism. Several of the statements recalled to him verses from the Book of Revelation, and several others reminded him of the corrosive powers of sin. Emerson's book therefore generally served to stimulate his own distinctive thoughts in an original way, one which at times was inconsistent with Emerson's intentions; that is, from the marginalia in his copy, Very's NATURE seems not quite the book that Emerson wrote. But this does not mean that his comments and markings conformed to any viewpoint even remotely acceptable to the provincial orthodoxy maintained by Andrews Norton and his colleagues.

Since many scholars have assumed that this manifesto NATURE must have influenced Henry David Thoreau in one way or another, and since such an assumption has always seemed to me to be presumptuous, I will insert here the short synopsis Catherine Albanese used to introduce the work in her THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISTS:

When Emerson published his slim volume NATURE in 1836, he had produced a manifesto for the emerging transcendental movement. Seen in juxtaposition to his farewell sermon at the Second Church, NATURE offers Emerson's spiritual alternative to the inherited forms of the church. Throughout the work he stands in the Platonic lineage and, especially, that lineage as read through a revived metaphysical tradition in the West. Hence, in NATURE the world of the "not-me" that Emerson celebrates is seen ultimately as a reflection of the one Mind or Spirit present in the human soul and in the realm of the Ideas. Refracted through the Neoplatonic teaching of the One (the Soul) and the Many (Nature), Emerson articulates a Swedenborgian doctrine of correspondence, expresses enthusiasm for magic and miracle, and speaks prophetically of human powers that seem, indeed, god-like. The while he employs the Kantian-Coleridgean distinction between the Reason and the Understanding (as he understands it) to contrast true and deceptive visions of the world. He sees in a hieroglyphic of symbols the means for the Reason to discern the secret message of Spirit encoded in matter. The metaphysical tradition that Emerson embraces in NATURE would enjoy a considerable following in the nineteenth century. Even as Emerson owed a debt to Emmanuel Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, others —like the followers of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) in Christian Science and followers of forms of mind cure in New Thought— would owe a debt to Emerson. In the twentieth century the "positive thinking" of Norman Vincent Peale (b. 1898) and others also had its roots in Emerson's teaching. Beyond that, in NATURE Emerson gives voice to a characteristic American millennialism, a sense that a new age with new powers and energies has dawned or is about to dawn. Despite his idealism, he exalts a landscape that will form the earthly paradise for a later wilderness preservation movement. He speaks with a largeness of vision and a confidence in human capacity that, in a host of different ways, finds expression in the culture of the era. Situated in a new space, Emerson and other Americans concluded that they were also living in a new time and that, as Gods, they should stretch their spirits to the demands of the age.

(This, it seems to me, is a *reductio ad absurdum*, for no-one but a fool would attempt to send Henry Thoreau sailing away in the same tub with a threesome such as Emmanuel Swedenborg, Mary Baker Eddy, and Norman Vincent Peale.)

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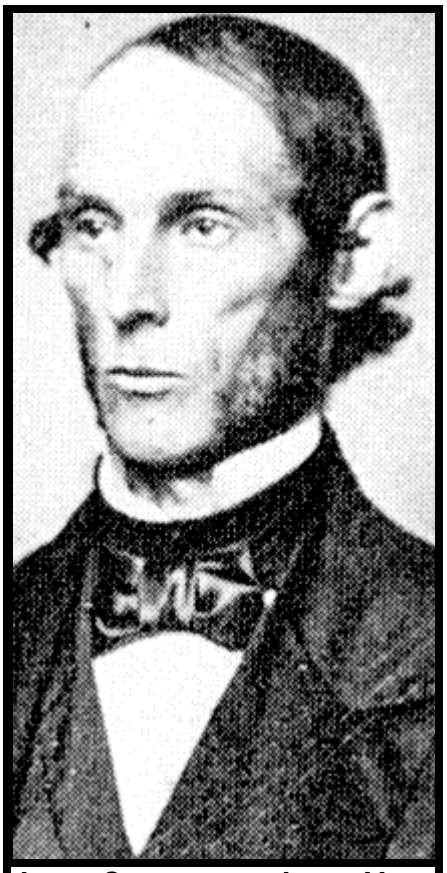
1837

Jones Very referred to his dead father and his very lively mother as "blighted flowers" and mused upon the display in their lives of "some covenant broken with the Lord." As the heritage of this union, he would need to atone in order to get out of the clutches of "some secret undefined power" which was tempting him toward "2 Vices." As he hinted in his marginal jottings in his copy of Waldo Emerson's NATURE, the 12th chapter of the Book of Revelations to Saint John on Patmos was going to become very relevant in his own life. Where Emerson spoke of infancy being "the perpetual Messiah, which come into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise" (NATURE, page 88), Very would cast himself in the role of the Queen's male child of Revelations 12, who is "caught up unto God, and to His throne" while his mother, Queen Lydia Very the apostate of Salem MA, is forced to flee into the "wilderness."



JESUS CHRIST, AKA JONES VERY

(After Satan's revolt is broken, of course, this male child stands revealed as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, AKA Jones Very.)

May 17, Wednesday: Jones Very subscribed to the "Form of Admission to the Church in Harvard University" in order to be allowed to audit Harvard Divinity School classes.

JONES VERY

JONES VERY

Early in August: Jones Very's "perfect safety" experience. He had hiked on a "very pleasant tho' warm" day the four hours from Salem to Cambridge, and joined several friends there. Early in the morning they had set out on the train, for a couple of weeks in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. On the train ride from Boston to Lowell, however, Very was overcome with terror at the speed of the cars. Then, when this had passed, he was again overwhelmed, this time with a feeling of "perfect safety," that his life as well as everything was in the "care" of God who had created all this. Even the climb of "The Grand Monadnock" would be an anticlimax, after such an experience in the cars.

August 18, Friday: Jones Very and the vacation party of which he was a part returned to Cambridge from the White Mountains.

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Lecture Season: The 9th course of lectures offered by the Salem Lyceum consisted of:

The Salem Lyceum — 9th Season

Horace Mann, Sr.
Education

George S. Hillard
Books

John S. Williams of Salem
Ireland

John W. Browne of Salem
War

Leonard Withington
The Light which the Theory of our Government Sheds on the Practice of its Citizens

W.B.O. Peabody
Hebrew Commonwealth

H.R. Cleveland
The Superstitions of the Classic Ages

Jones Very of Salem
Epic Poetry

Thomas Spencer of Salem
The Vegetation of Salem and Vicinity

William M. Rogers
Ross's Expedition to the Polar Seas

Samuel M. Worcester of Salem
Irish Eloquence

James C. Alvord
The Mutual Relations and Influences of the Various Occupations of Life

Oliver Wendell Holmes
English Versification

Abel L. Peirson of Salem
Animal Magnetism

M. Mariotti
Marie Louise, the Widow of Napoleon

William Lincoln
The French Neutrals of Nova Scotia

James Walker
Transcendentalism

An Exhibition by Pupils from the N.E. Institution for the Blind

O.W.B. Peabody
English Female Writers of the Last Century

John P. Cleveland
Ancient History of Michigan

George Bancroft
The Capacity of the Human Mind for Culture and Improvement

Henry Ware, Jr.
The Poetry of Mathematics

John Lewis Russell of Salem
Geology

During the lecture season in Boston, in all, 26 different courses were being offered, if one omits the courses which had fewer than eight lectures. Out of a total population of 80,000, paid attendance added up to 13,000. Wendell Phillips, the star, calculated that to date he had given his lecture "The Lost Arts" two thousand times and had earned a total of $150,000 from it.[13]

December 27: Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody heard Jones Very speak at the Salem Lyceum, on the epic poetry of the antique Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton — and on the epic poetry of one who was almost their contemporary, Coleridge.

13. That'd be some $12,000,000 today, the earnings of a Michael Jackson label! Wendell Phillips was an aristocat, and as such didn't have a whole lot of respect for people who had to work on the cheap. His attitude toward John the Chinaman, the launderer, for instance, was succinct to the point of inevitability: "The Chinaman works cheap because he is a barbarian and seeks gratification of only the lowest, the most inevitable wants."

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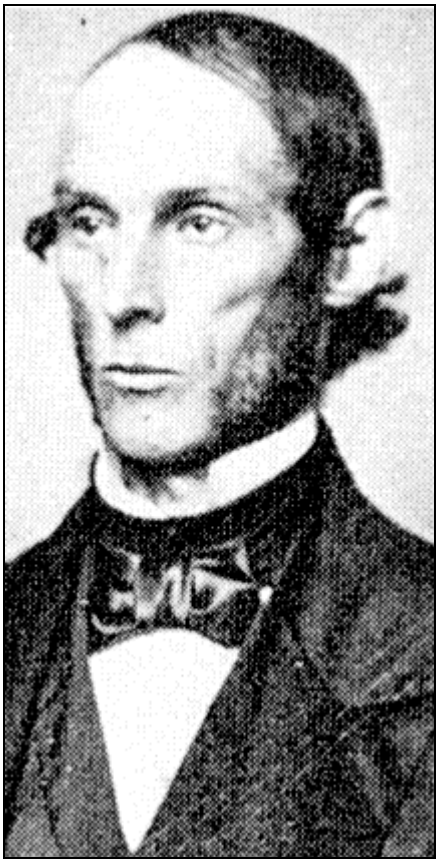
At the end, she invited him to come home with her and her father. Shortly after Very had left their home that night, she took up her pen and wrote to Waldo Emerson, saying that he should send for Very "at once" to make his acquaintance and to hear him lecture.



Henry Thoreau wrote in his journal in such manner as to indicate that Emerson was sharing with him a book of self-congratulatory racist "herstory" that he had recently checked out from the library of the Athenaeum, Sharon Turner's HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS:

REVOLUTIONS

Dec. 27. Revolutions are never sudden. Not one man, nor many men, in a few years or generations, suffice to regulate events and dispose mankind for the revolutionary movement. The hero is but the crowning stone of the pyramid, — the keystone of the arch. Who was Romulus or Remus, Hengist or Horsa, that we should attribute to them Rome or England? They are famous or infamous because the progress of events has chosen to make them its stepping-stones. But we would know where the avalanche commenced, or the hollow in the rock whence springs the Amazon. The most important is apt to be some silent and unobtrusive fact in history. In 449 three Saxon cyules arrived on the British coast, — "Three scipen gode comen mid than flode, three hundred enihten."[14] The pirate of the British coast was no more the founder of a state than the scourge of the German shore.

HEROES

The real heroes of minstrelsy have been ideal, even when the names of actual heroes have been perpetuated. The real Arthur, who "not only excelled the experienced past, but also the possible future," of whom it was affirmed for many centuries that he was not dead, but "had withdrawn from the world into some magical region; from which at a future crisis he was to reappear, and lead the Cymri in triumph through the island," whose character and actions were the theme of the bards of Bretagne and the foundation of their interminable romances, was only an ideal impersonation.

14. Cf. the essay "Reform and the Reformers": "In the year 449 three Saxon cyules arrived on the British coast. 'Three scipen gode comen mid than flode.'"

Men claim for the ideal an actual existence also, but do not often expand the actual into the ideal. “If you do not believe me, go into Bretagne, and mention in the streets or villages, that Arthur is really dead like other men; you will not escape with impunity; you will be either hooted with the curses of your hearers, or stoned to death.”

HOMESICKNESS

The most remarkable instance of homesickness is that of the colony of Franks transplanted by the Romans from the German Ocean to the Euxine, who at length resolving to a man to abandon the country, seized the vessels which carried them out, and reached at last their native shores, after innumerable difficulties and dangers upon the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

THE INTERESTING FACTS IN HISTORY

How cheering is it, after toiling through the darker pages of history, — the heartless and fluctuating crust of human rest and unrest, — to alight on the solid earth where the sun shines, or rest in the checkered shade. The fact that Edwin of Northumbria “caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where he had seen a clear spring,” and that “brazen dishes were chained to them, to refresh the weary sojourner, whose fatigues Edwin had himself experienced,” is worth all Arthur’s twelve battles. The sun again shines along the highway, the landscape presents us sunny glades and occasional cultivated patches as well as dark primeval forests, and it is *merry* England after all.

A WEEK: Ancient history has an air of antiquity. It should be more modern. It is written as if the spectator should be thinking of the backside of the picture on the wall, or as if the author expected that the dead would be his readers, and wished to detail to them their own experience. Men seem anxious to accomplish an orderly retreat through the centuries, earnestly rebuilding the works behind, as they are battered down by the encroachments of time; but while they loiter, they and their works both fall a prey to the arch enemy. History has neither the venerableness of antiquity, nor the freshness of the modern. It does as if it would go to the beginning of things, which natural history might with reason assume to do; but consider the Universal History, and then tell us, — when did burdock and plantain sprout first? It has been so written for the most part, that the times it describes are with remarkable propriety called **dark ages**. They are dark, as one has observed, because we are so in the dark about them. The sun rarely shines in history, what with the dust and confusion; and when we meet with any cheering fact which implies the presence of this luminary, we excerpt and modernize it. As when we read in the history of the Saxons that Edwin of Northumbria “caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where he had seen a clear spring,” and “brazen dishes were chained to them to refresh the weary sojourner, whose fatigues Edwin had himself experienced.” This is worth all Arthur’s twelve battles.

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1838

January 3: Enoch Cobb Wines wrote from St. Louis to the President of Brown University, the Reverend Doctor Barnas Sears (1802-1880, Class of 1825).

In the evening, before a lecture at the Salem Lyceum, Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody introduced Jones Very to Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Elijah Hinsdale Burritt died of the yellow fever, not yet 44 years of age.

April 4: Jones Very delivered a lecture, his "Epic Poetry" lecture from Salem Lyceum repeated at the Concord Lyceum, after, as was the custom, taking dinner with the Emersons. (In the first week of May, this piece would appear in the Christian Examiner.) He had brought his marked-up copy of NATURE with him to Concord, and Waldo Emerson inscribed it in a penciled scribble with "Har[mony] Of Man With Nature Must Be Reconciled With God," a restriction on the allowable scope of mystical self-interrogation in regard to which he was expecting that he and Very, as a result of their deliberations together on that day, had come to be able to agree.


NATURE

Also present at the meal were Henry Thoreau, Professor Cornelius Conway Felton, Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, and the Reverend Barzillai Frost.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> *4th day 4 of 4th M / According to new Stile it is now just 200 years since the Settlement of this Island & just that time since the Deed from the Natives was signed to the first purchasers - A Sermon is now delivering in the 2nd Baptist Meeting House by Author A Ross the Minister of the 1st British Society in commemoration of the event & while I do not approve of the Manner, I can but feel an interest in having some of the events of the last Centiury embodied. it has been an Hundred Years Big with great events in Church & in State. —*
> *Many good folkd have lived & died - Many who have been dear to me in life are now in Death, & their remembrance is sweet & may we who remain prepare to meet them — I have lived more than half of the last Century & probaly not much more of the coming half will be occupied by me.—*

April 5, Thursday: In the morning, Waldo Emerson wrote to Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to thank her for forwarding "such wise men as Mr. Very." Edwin Gittleman's take on this is "To hear a Harvard divinity student sounding so unlike a student of Harvard Divinity was reassuring."

JONES VERY

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

HARVARD COLLEGE

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> *5th day 5th of 4th M 1838 / Attended meeting, which tho' small was a pleasant comfortable season*
> *Father had a little offering to make*

April 7, Saturday: A few days after his lecture at the Concord Lyceum, Jones Very showed up again, unexpectedly, along with several other Harvard students, in the company of the Professor Cornelius Conway Felton who had

taught Sophocles, Euripides, and Homer during Thoreau's sophomore and junior years at Harvard College. Waldo Emerson promptly sent out messengers and succeeded in attracting Henry David Thoreau, Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar,[15] and the Reverend Barzillai Frost to help him entertain these visitors.

15. Are we quite certain this was Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar rather than his nephew Rockwood Hoar, son of George Frisbie Hoar?

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JONES VERY

JONES VERY

Lecture[16]

DATE	PLACE	TOPIC
August 30, Wednesday, 1837, at about 10:30AM	Cambridge MA; Harvard College; First Parish Meeting House	"The Commercial Spirit of Modern Times, Considered in Its Influence on the Moral Character of a Nation"
April 11, Wednesday, 1838, at 7PM	Concord MA; Masonic Hall	"Society"
January 27, Wednesday, 1841, at 7PM	Concord MA; Masonic Hall	"Is It Ever Proper to Offer Forcible Resistance?"

16.From Bradley P. Dean and Ronald Wesley Hoag's THOREAU'S LECTURES BEFORE WALDEN: AN ANNOTATED CALENDAR.

Narrative of Event:
In a brief chronology of his life penned in his journal on 27 December 1855, Henry Thoreau commented: "Wrote a lecture (my first) on Society, March 14th, 1838, and read it before the Lyceum in the Masons' Hall, April 11th, 1838" (THE JOURNAL OF HENRY D. THOREAU, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis Henry Allen, 14 volumes [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1906], 8:66). The inclusion of this event in his thumbnail autobiographical outline suggests both that he thought lecturing important and that he considered this his first real lecture, earlier oral presentations at one or another of the schools he attended notwithstanding. The Concord Lyceum record of the occasion is scant: "April 11 1838 Rev. Mr. Frost informed the Society that Rev. R. Waldo Emerson had kindly and generously volunteered to deliver his course of Lectures [on Human Culture] before the Lyceum. Whereupon, a motion of Hon. Daniel Shattuck, it was Voted — That the Lyceum thankfully accept Rev. Mr. Emerson's offer. After which David Henry Thoreau of Concord delivered a Lecture on Society. Adjourned. H. B. Dennis, Secretary."[17] Thoreau's was the nineteenth in a course of twenty-six lectures at the Lyceum that season, coming one week after the 4 April lecture on "Epic Poetry" by Jones Very (MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM, page 148). Of the twenty-six lectures, Waldo Emerson furnished eight (MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM, page 148). Thoreau was to deliver twenty more lectures before the Concord Lyceum over the next twenty-two years, the final one on 8 February 1860, when his subject was "Wild Apples" (MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM, page 175). Emerson, by comparison, lectured at the Lyceum more than a hundred times over a fifty-year period (1830-80).

The Concord Lyceum was established in January of 1829 and continued well into the twentieth century. A description of the Masonic Hall, in which Thoreau gave his first Concord lecture, states that it "may be so arranged as to seat 165 persons comfortably and conveniently, with elbow room & leg room in sufficiency. By diminishing the elbow room a little, about 200 persons can be seated, with room for others to stand, should this ever be necessary" (MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM, page 142). The attendance on 11 April 1838 is not known.

Advertisements, Reviews, and Responses:
None known.

Description of Topic:
The only portions of the lecture text we have are those Thoreau recorded in his journal under the heading "Scraps from a Lecture on 'Society' written March 14th 1838. delivered before our Lyceum April 11th" (JOURNAL 1, 1837-1844, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell et al. [1981], pages 35-39). Assuming a lecture that took about an hour to read, the extracted passages, which can be read in about seven minutes, represent just twelve percent of the lecture text.

First week in May: Jones Very's "Epic Poetry" appeared in the Christian Examiner.

17.Cameron, Kenneth Walter. THE MASSACHUSETTS LYCEUM DURING THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE. Hartford CT: Transcendental Books, 1969, page 148. This volume contains the surviving records of the Concord, Lincoln, and Salem Lyceums, as well as those of the Lowell Institute of Boston.

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Middle of May: The Transcendental Club met at the home of the Reverend Caleb Stetson in Medford, Massachusetts.

Present were the Reverends Frederic Henry Hedge, George Ripley, and Theodore Parker, John Sullivan Dwight, Bronson Alcott, Cyrus Bartol, and Jones Very. The topic for the evening was "The Question of Mysticism."

September 13, Thursday: Early in September, Jones Very had felt within himself the gradual coming of a new will, somewhat like his old wicked self-will but different in that "it was not a feeling of my own but a sensible will that was not my own," a will "to do good." There was "a consciousness which seemed to say —'That which creates you creates also that which you see or him to whom you speak.'" By Thursday, September the 13th, Very was convinced that he had acquired an "identification with Christ." Moved entirely by this spirit within, he began to declare to all about him at Harvard College that the coming of Christ was at hand. That evening he went to the study of the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., who was working up his alarmed response to Waldo Emerson's address at the Harvard Divinity School, a response directed against Emerson's "doctrine of the Divine Impersonality," which he was scheduled to deliver at the Divinity Hall Chapel on September 23d. Ignoring theology students who happened to be in the professor's study, Very proceeded to parse Matthew chapter 24 to the professor and to insist that what he was offering was eternal, revealed truth. Ware could not agree with Very's parsing of the chapter, so Very pulled out his big gun:

"***You are doing your own will, and not the will of your Father.***"[18]

18. Which although it was true enough to be painful –for in fact the Reverend Professor Henry Ware, Jr. was one of these "heroic champion of the consensual reality" types– or false enough –for in fact the Reverend Professor Ware Junior was trudging along as un-clumsily as he could in the theological footprints of his father, the Reverend Professor Ware Senior– definitely was not a helpful thing to point out.

September 14, Friday: In the morning the Harvard College tutor in Greek, Jones Very, began to inform his classes of his divine inspiration: "Flee to the mountains, for the end of all things is at hand."[19] According to a letter of a student, which had been posted to the student's family **before** Very's announcement of his inspiration:

> [Very] *bases all these instructions on the submission of our will to that of God: to adapt everything to that: to act, to speak, to move only as it is conformable to his will: then, when we have arrived at the degree of excellence, we shall see God; we shall be able to form ideas of him suitable to his nature and attributes; one glance into the works of Creation will afford us more instruction than a life of intense study of Greek and Latin, of arts and sciences: We are not to consider our bodies as our own, Mr. Very tells us, but as given us by God to be subservient to our souls; that is to say, to the influence of the spirit of God in us; and this is manifested in the conscience, which is His voice speaking to us, when we are doing our own will: he knocks, and too often is refused admittance: "he comes unto his own, and his own receives him not": Now this is to be revolutionized. Whatever we are called upon to do, we must consider if it is God or our own evil desires which call on us to act thus: Conscience will tell us in a moment: and we must act accordingly: then God will take up his abode in us, and we shall feel his presence, which we cannot immediately do in our present state: Study is not to be a mechanical performance, but a duty imposed on us by the will of God, to render us better and happier: thus we must always consider it, without regards to marks of merit or demerit.*

Very's deportment on that infamous day was such as to make this student regret that the letter had already been posted. For, very clearly, something was going seriously awry in this inspiration business, and Tutor was self-combusting.

Later that day Very delivered an unscheduled address to the debating club at the Harvard Divinity School, pointing out to them that while they were merely doing their own wills, he himself was "no longer a man." It was the Holy Spirit which spoke to him and through him, and he was merely passing on what was being imparted to him, which was "eternal truth" insofar as he had become convinced that he was at least temporarily able to transmit it without altering it in any way.[20] That night one of the students who had been present at several of Very's outbursts wrote in his diary that it was "very much as Geo Fox is represented to have done, and to have very similar views." On the evening of the 14th, also, President Josiah Quincy, Sr. appeared at the dormitory room of Charles Stearns Wheeler to ask that he immediately assume responsibility for Very's classes

19. Presumably this was a reference to the White Mountains in which Very had recently vacationed. No, maybe it was "flee to the mountain" that Very had hollered, and maybe it was a reference to the vicinity of solitary Mount Monadnock, which was closer than New Hampshire and at which the Narragansetts had taken refuge during the race riot known as "King Philip's War." Well, whatever.
20. Recent research into this Joan of Arc phenomenon suggests that it has something to do with unconscious "subvocalization," in which the muscles of the voicebox exercise themselves without the blast of air which produces audible speech and in which the patient, instead of disregarding this phenomenon, for purpose of achieving a higher social status or for purpose of becoming the center of attention attempts to interpret what he or she is perceiving and ascribes it as a communication from holy authority.

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in Greek, and to describe Very as being in a state of "nervous collapse."

> Very's discourse … sounds surprisingly like a recast of Emerson's Address. While Very colored the "instructions" with his own non-Emersonian diction and qualifications, and interpreted and applied Emerson's remarks in a more literal and specific way than Emerson intended, the relationship is clear. This was Very's less formal equivalent of the declaration of independence for man teaching, delivered to freshman students instead of Divinity School graduates.

Henry Thoreau advertised in the Concord Freeman, announcing the second term of the Concord Academy.

Concord Academy.

THE SUBSCRIBER opened his school for the reception of a limited number of pupils, of both sexes, on Monday, September the tenth. Instruction will be given in the usual English branches, and the studies preparatory to a collegiate course.

Terms—Six dollars per quarter.

HENRY D. THOREAU, *Instructor.*

Referees. Hon. SAM'L HOAR. Hon. NATHAN BROOKS. Hon. JOHN KEYES. Rev. R. W. EMERSON.

Concord, September, 14, 1838. [45]

September 15, Saturday: Jones Very's brother Washington, a Freshman, was asked to escort him home to Salem. Very wanted to go through Concord and speak with Waldo Emerson, but was disregarded. His younger brother allowed him, however, to post a letter to Emerson with a promised manuscript on William Shakespeare:

> *My Brother*
>
> *I am glad at last to be able to transmit what has been told me of Shakespeare 'tis the faint echo of that which speaks to you now. That was the utterance of the soul still in its travail but the hour is past of which I have often spoken to you and you hear not mine own words but the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice with me my brother and give thanks with me to the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who have now taken me to themselves and will not let me go any more from them. I feel that the day now is when "the tabernackle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people." The gathering time has come and the harvest is now reaping from the wide plains of earth. Here, even here the will of the Father begins to be done as in heaven. My friend I tell you these things as they are told me and hope soon for a day or two of leisure perhaps in two or three weeks when I may speak with you face to face as I now write....*

Edwin Gittleman glosses Very's "Shakespeare" of the December 1837-September 1838 period as a "Poetics of Revelation" and as an "omnium-gatherum of his basic attitudes ... both a spiritual autobiography and a blueprint for action." He characterizes both Very's "Shakespeare" and his "Hamlet" as "more revealing as

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autobiography than as literary criticism." I will attempt the feat of glossing Gittleman's gloss:

> In ["Shakespeare"] Very contrasted the man of [mere] genius (exemplified by Shakespeare) with the man of virtue (clearly Very himself, but figured as Christ).... Very [had] once told Emerson that if he could first "move Shakespeare" he could then "move the world."... Shakespeare's mind functioned spontaneously, without deliberate control. Its actions were not willed but reflexive and automatic ... in harmony with Nature ... childlike.... The child, like Nature, just **is** and automatically loves whatever else **is**. The man of genius, with his undifferentiated love of activity and existence, is thus a **child-man**, retaining his prelapsarian heritage through unwitting obedience to the Divine Will.... [However, b]ecause the obedience of the virtuous man is conscious, his greatness is superior to that of genius[,] ... moral rather than [merely] innocent.... Since man's mind is so constituted by nature that it is not his own, he sins whenever he acts as if it were. He must therefore learn from genius and revelation that his "highest glory" consists of "conscious submission" to the Divine Will.... If ... the poet ... depicts "what **ought to be**, his teaching is false and ineffectual; it is then merely the handiwork of his own mind. But if "what **is"** is seen and understood "with a spirit more nearly allied to Him who sees all things as they are," then poetry will exhibit God's presence.... The only proper subject ... is "what **is"** – the "ever new, ever changing aspect of nature and of man." ... [V]irtue need not be "brightened" nor vice "darkened" by the poet's independent judgment.

Evidently, at about this point, although the promise was not publicized, Very was pledging to his mother and siblings that whatever the outcome of this Jesus-Christ venture of his, he would "come out of it" before a year had passed.

September 16, Sunday: Early in the morning Jones Very made the rounds, attempting to baptize the ministers of Salem as they were attempting to make their final preparations for church worship and sermonizing performances. "The coming of Christ is at hand." What confrontations these must have been. When he attempted to baptize the Reverend Lucius Bolles, the local Baptist, he was bodily put out of the home. The Reverend Charles Wentworth Upham of Salem's upscale First Church, by way of contrast, did not lay his own hands on Very, but did advise him that his hero Waldo Emerson was nothing but an Atheist, and did warn him that, by force if necessary, he was very likely on his way to the insane asylum. I don't know the sequence of the baptisms, but Very did not overlook to attempt to baptize his own Unitarian minister, the Reverend John Brazer of the North Church that Very had joined during the summer of 1836. Among the houses that Very then visited was 53 Charter Street, the home of his friend Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. Standing uncomfortably close to her, he placed his hand on her head and declaimed: "I come to baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." "I am the Second Coming." "This day is this fulfilled." Etc. Peabody's understanding was that "These impulses from above I think are never sound minded. The insanity of Quakers (which is very frequent under my observation) always grows out of it or rather begins in it." Edwin Gittleman's comment is that the young lady was "relieved that it was nothing worse than the consummation of a spiritual marriage." By noon Peabody had

gone rushing off in a fruitless attempt to placate the furious Reverend Upham, and was with Lydia Very, the mother, at the Very home at 54 Federal Street, with Very upstairs resting in his chamber. That evening Very again appeared at her door, and presented her with a folio sheet on which he had inscribed four double columns of sonnets written under the control of the Holy Ghost. Very had exaggerated ideas of his own status, but our polite society has no difficulty tolerating this in any number of individuals. What the established religious society cannot tolerate, however, point number one, is competition. Ministers, for instance, react with peculiar hostility to other ministers who are attempting to spirit away contributing members of their own flock. Very was attempting to make converts and obtain followers, and that sort of conduct was in another category from simple grandiloquence. What an established religious society cannot tolerate, also, point number two, is being held up to ridicule in front of other established religious societies. What the Salem Unitarians in particular could not tolerate was that the local religion people were perceiving, in Very's difficulties, a manifestation of the presumptuousness of their Unitarianism. They were embarrassed, they were intensely embarrassed. Edwin Gittleman's comment on this is "Further scandal could be avoided only by providing him with an audience immune to his corrupting influence. Such an audience was conveniently available at the McLean Hospital in nearby Charlestown." That night the Very home was raided and Very was escorted away, clutching his dog-eared Bible, over the screams of his mother that –at least physically– he was "endangering no one, not even himself."

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September 17, Monday-October 17, Wednesday: Jones Very "was carried to the Insane Hospital." He would spend a month under the observation of a Doctor Bell in the McLean mental asylum in Charlestown MA.[21] He took long walks about the grounds and into the nearby countryside. He thought a lot about Hamlet the mad prince of Denmark, and began writing his essay on the character of Hamlet. After the first week under custody, he made an agreement that he would abandon his "duty" to "promulgate" the truths that were being revealed to him. However, at the end of the month Doctor Bell had to conclude that his patient's condition was unchanged. He had come in subject to no signs of clinical depression of nonfunctionality, and he was still perfectly cheerful. He had never been manic or subject to mood swings, and he was still stable. He came in physically healthy and was still in very appropriate physical health. Above all, there hadn't been any hint of violence in his behavior or in his talk prior to his commitment, and nothing showed up during his stay. He was merely an inconvenience to society. Therefore he was discharged, and was discharged on the basis of a very sensible and correct awareness that, whatever the problem was, the asylum would not be able to help him resolve it.

The MCLEAN ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE is under the direction of the trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital, it being a branch of that institution; and although located in Somerville, it may not be amiss to describe it here. It is about one mile from Boston, on a delightful prominence, and consists of an elegant house for the superintendent, with a wing at each end, handsomely constructed of brick, for the accommodation of the inmates, and has a large hall fifty feet long by twenty-five feet wide and fourteen high. The institution is supplied with billiard tables, &c., for the amusement of the inmates, who here receive not only the care, comforts, and attention, but the luxuries and retirement, which they had enjoyed at home.

The male boarders and the female boarders have apartments in buildings entirely separated, and attended solely by persons of their own sex. No newspapers, pamphlets, or books are admitted without the assent of the attendant physician.

Two practitioners in physic and two in surgery are annually appointed by the board of trustees, to act as a board of consultation. Two of the board of trustees form the visiting committee for the month, and each month are succeeded by two others. They meet at the asylum every Tuesday, to act upon applications for admission and discharges. "They shall fix the rate of board so low as to make it as much a charitable institution as its funds will permit, always regarding the circumstances of the respective boarders, and the accommodation they may receive." The lowest rate of board is three dollars per week.

September 24, Monday: Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody wrote to Waldo Emerson in regard to the situation of Jones Very:

21. McLean Hospital in Belmont MA would also periodically accommodate Robert Lowell (1917-1977), Sylvia Plath (1932-1963),and Anne Sexton (1928-1974). Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) would be applied to Sylvia Plath's brain following a suicide attempt during her senior year at Smith College (refer to her THE BELL JAR). Anne Sexton's floating through the corridors of McLean's would be explained as her teaching of a poetry workshop there. (For a time in America, being mentally ill would be taken to be almost a credential validating one's poetry, just as, for a male poet, acting effeminate had once been taken to be evidence of the poetic calling.)

> ... I have feared insanity before. — I thought (at the time) that the visit to Groton showed it. — These impulses from above I think are never sound minded — the insanity of Quakers — (which is very frequent under my observation) always grows out of it — or rather begins in it.

October 17, Wednesday: Jones Very was released from the McLean Asylum for the Insane in Somerville and returned home to Salem (this was the institution Charles Dickens would tour in 1842 and describe in American Notes).

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At SOUTH BOSTON, as it is called, in a situation excellently adapted for the purpose, several charitable institutions are clustered together. One of these, is the State Hospital for the insane; admirably conducted on those enlightened principles of conciliation and kindness, which twenty years ago would have been worse than heretical, and which have been acted upon with so much success in our own pauper Asylum at Hanwell.

> *Evince a desire to show some confidence, and repose some trust, even in mad people,*

said the resident physician, as we walked along the galleries, his patients flocking round us unrestrained. Of those who deny or doubt the wisdom of this maxim after witnessing its effects, if there be such people still alive, I can only say that I hope I may never be summoned as a Juryman on a Commission of Lunacy whereof they are the subjects; for I should certainly find them out of their senses, on such evidence alone.

Each ward in this institution is shaped like a long gallery or hall, with the dormitories of the patients opening from it on either hand. Here they work, read, play at skittles, and other games; and when the weather does not admit of their taking exercise out of doors, pass the day together. In one of these rooms, seated, calmly, and quite as a matter of course, among a throng of madwomen, black and white, were the physician's wife and another lady, with a couple of children.

These ladies were graceful and handsome; and it was not difficult to perceive at a glance that even their presence there had a highly beneficial influence on the patients who were grouped about them.

Leaning her head against the chimneypiece, with a great assumption of dignity and refinement of manner, sat an elderly female, in as many scraps of finery as Madge Wildfire herself. Her head in particular was so strewn with scraps of gauze and cotton and bits of paper, and had so many queer odds and ends stuck all about it, that it looked like a bird's-nest. She was radiant with imaginary jewels; wore a rich pair of undoubted gold spectacles; and gracefully dropped upon her lap, as we approached, a very old greasy newspaper, in which I dare say she had been reading an account of her own presentation at some Foreign Court.

I have been thus particular in describing her, because she will serve to exemplify the physician's manner of acquiring and retaining the confidence of his patients.

"This," he said aloud, taking me by the hand, and advancing to the fantastic figure with great politeness — not raising her suspicions by the slightest look or whisper, or any kind of aside, to me:

> *This lady is the hostess of this mansion, Sir. It belongs to her. Nobody else has anything whatever to do with it. It is a large establishment, as you see, and requires a great number of attendants. She lives, you observe, in the very first style. She is kind enough to receive my visits, and to permit my wife and family to reside here; for which it is hardly necessary to say, we are much indebted to her. She is exceedingly courteous, you perceive,*

on this hint she bowed condescendingly,

> *and will permit me to have the pleasure of introducing you: a gentleman from England, ma'am: newly arrived from England, after a very tempestuous passage: Mr. Dickens, — the lady of the house!*

We exchanged the most dignified salutations with profound gravity and respect, and so went on. The rest of the madwomen seemed to understand the joke perfectly (not only in this case, but in all the others, except their own), and be highly amused by it. The nature of their several kinds of insanity was made known to me in the same way and we left each of them in high good humour. Not only is a thorough confidence established, by those means, between the physician and patient in respect of the nature and extent of their hallucinations, but it is easy to understand that opportunities are afforded for seizing any moment of reason, to startle them by placing their own delusion before them in its most incongruous and ridiculous light. Every patient in this asylum sits down to dinner every day with a knife and fork; and in the midst of them sits the gentleman, whose manner of dealing with his charges, I have just described. At every meal, moral influence alone restrains the more violent among them from cutting the throats of the rest; but the effect of that influence is reduced to an absolute certainty, and is found, even as a means of restraint, to say nothing of it as a means of cure, a hundred times more efficacious than all the strait—waistcoats, fetters, and handcuffs, that ignorance, prejudice, and cruelty have manufactured since the creation of the world.

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In the labour department, every patient is as freely trusted with the tools of his trade as if he were a sane man. In the garden, and on the farm, they work with spades, rakes, and hoes. For amusement, they walk, run, fish, paint, read, and ride out to take the air in carriages provided for the purpose. They have among themselves a sewing society to make clothes for the poor, which holds meetings, passes resolutions, never comes to fisticuffs or bowie—knives as sane assemblies have been known to do elsewhere; and conducts all its proceedings with the greatest decorum. The irritability, which would otherwise be expended on their own flesh, clothes, and furniture, is dissipated in these pursuits. They are cheerful, tranquil, and healthy.

Once a week they have a ball, in which the Doctor and his family, with all the nurses and attendants, take an active part. Dances and marches are performed alternately, to the enlivening strains of a piano; and now and then some gentleman or lady (whose proficiency has been previously ascertained) obliges the company with a song: nor does it ever degenerate, at a tender crisis, into a screech or howl; wherein, I must confess, I should have thought the danger lay. At an early hour they all meet together for these festive purposes; at eight oclock refreshments are served; and at nine they separate.

Immense politeness and good breeding are observed throughout. They all take their tone from the Doctor; and he moves a very Chesterfield among the company. Like other assemblies, these entertainments afford a fruitful topic of conversation among the ladies for some days; and the gentlemen are 80 anxious to shine on these occasions, that they have been sometimes found "practising their steps" in private, to cut a more distinguished figure in the dance.

It is obvious that one great feature of this system, is the inculcation and encouragement, even among such unhappy persons, of a decent self—respect. Something of the same spirit pervades all the Institutions at South Boston.

October 18, Thursday/19, Friday: The Reverend John Brazer, Jones Very's minister, visited him and asked for a miracle. And asked that, if Very should be unable to produce said miracle as proof of his claimed divine status, he acknowledge his insanity. Urging Very to having nothing further to do with Waldo Emerson, he suggested that "measures" were being taken to ensure that Emerson would not in the future be in a position to corrupt the youth of Athens — no, make that the youth of America.

The North Church's Ministers

1772-1814	Thomas Barnard, Jr.
1815-1819	John Emery Abbott
1820-1846	John Brazer
1847-1855	Octavius Brooks Frothingham
1855-1857	Charles Lowe
1859-1895	Edmund Burke Willson
1893-1907	George Dimmick Latimer
1907-1923	Theodore Davenport Bacon

October 20, Saturday: Jones Very visited Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and apologized for having been so "intoxicated with the Holy Spirit." He was completing his "Hamlet" essay and preparing to deliver it to Waldo Emerson in Concord. When Very told her about the visit he had just been paid by their Unitarian pastor of Salem's North Church, the Reverend John Brazer, Elizabeth was enraged with the man's insolence. A miracle, indeed! But she also told him that he should take this medication. —Because if he was sick the medicine could purge him, but no medicine could purge Truth.[22]

Emerson to his journal:

What said my brave Asia concerning the paragraph writers, today? that "this whole practice of self justification & recrimination betwixt literary men seemed every whit as low as the quarrels of the Paddies."

October 24, Wednesday: Jones Very went to Concord with his completed "Hamlet," to spend what would amount to five days with the Emersons. Waldo Emerson found him very narrow and focused, like a microscope, but marveled at the magnitude at which Very was able to examine those things which passed under this narrow focus. Edwin Gittleman's comment is that "Very struck a balance between oddity and good sense which Emerson could not resist."



October 24. It matters not whether these strains originate there in the grass or float thitherward like

22. Hey, good thinking!

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atoms of light from the minstrel days of Greece.
"The snowflakes fall thick and fast on a winter's day. The winds are lulled, and the snow falls incessant, covering the tops of the mountains, and the hills, and the plains where the lotus tree grows, and the cultivated fields. And they are falling by the inlets and shores of the foaming sea, but are silently dissolved by the waves."

October 29, Monday: Waldo Emerson drove Jones Very as far as Waltham. Very was on a pilgrimage to Cambridge, to attempt to persuade the officials of the Harvard Divinity School to take him back. (Would this be this the miracle the Reverend John Brazer had asked Very to produce as a sign? No, the age of miracles is past.) Watching him off, Emerson thought "He is gone into the multitude as solitary as Jesus." At Harvard College, Very sought out various officials, who politely heard him out. With no objection from anyone, he would stay in Cambridge for over a week, but of course there was never any consideration of allowing him to return to his status there. During the course of the week they were even able to obtain from him, to save all appearances, the submission of a written resignation — for it turned out that the tiny sardines of job and salary and position and status and career and prestige didn't make all that much difference to Very, who had decided that he was the designated fisher of men.

First week of November: Jones Very sent some sonnets to Waldo Emerson. It turned out that not only were these the first of his poems that Emerson had seen, they were the first that he had heard of. Emerson was impressed — he'd met a poet and didn't know it.

Father! I bless thy name that I do live,
And in each motion am made rich with thee,
That when a glance is all that I can give,
It is a kingdom's wealth if I but see;
This stately body cannot move, save I
Will to its nobleness my little bring;
My voice its measured cadence will not try,
Save I with every note consent to sing;
I cannot raise my hands to hurt or bless,
But I with every action must conspire;
To show me there how little I possess,
And yet that little more than I desire;
May each new act my new allegiance prove,
Till in thy perfect love I ever live and move.

I looked to find a man who walked with God,
Like to the Jewish patriarch of old;
Though gladdened millions on his footstool trod,
Yet none with him did such sweet converse hold;
I heard the wind in low complaint go by
That none its melodies like him could hear;
Day unto day spoke wisdom from on high,
Yet none like David turned a willing ear;
God walked alone unhonored through the earth;
Far him no heart-built temple open stood,
The soul forgetful of her nobler birth
Had hewn him loftly [lofty??] shrines of stone and wood,
And left unfinished and in ruins still
The only temple he delights to fill.

November: Miss Elizabeth Palmer Peabody persuaded George Bancroft to offer Nathaniel Hawthorne a job.

During this period Jones Very was in the habit of sending offprints of his poems from the Salem Observer to friends and acquaintances. For at time Bronson Alcott was receiving such clippings each week, and was pasting or copying them into his journal. Henry Thoreau received at least three such clippings of at least six sonnets and during this month copied a couple of them into his "Miscellaneous Extracts" notebook. Unannounced, Very appeared at the home of Hawthorne and performed his ceremony of laying on of hands — Hawthorne meekly bowed his head for this and afterward commented that Very had managed to attain the "entire subjectiveness" which he had attempted to depict in 1833 in his "The Story Teller" in the figure of the minister (refer to the story "The Seven Vagabonds" which Hawthorne would insert into the December 1851 edition of TWICE-TOLD TALES). Hawthorne also suggested that as long as Very could author good sonnets, he might remain as he was. Edwin Gittleman comments that "It is almost as if Very were an invention of Hawthorne's own Gothic imagination, a character whom he felt he understood completely, and for whom he was in a sense morally responsible." However, for years Hawthorne would avoid Jones, although the fellow kept turning up at his doorstep: "Night before last came Mr. Jones Very; and you know he is somewhat unconscionable as to the length of his calls."

During this and the following month, Jones Very would be coming gradually to the recognition that his function was being entirely fulfilled in the teaching of the message he was receiving, with no obligation to seek the assent of his victims. He was becoming, if unpleasant, at least tolerable. Also, he was coming to an appreciation of the fact that his orders to chop down the tree of self could not be implemented, because the recipients of this advice could not imagine what acceptable small step, which they understood how to take, could come first, and because they were wary of beginning a journey in which they might lose themselves and be unable to retrace their steps. He began to attempt to identify specifically what it was, for each person, that that person was clutching in the place of God, and demand of that person that he or she let go of their attachment to that specific thing. Because, of course, that was what sin was: attachment to something other than or in place of God, however innocent the thing might be in itself. When people began to receive the reward of the Holy Spirit for their sacrifice of their most precious clutching, then of their own free will they would accept Very as their Savior. Of course, this psychodrama of confrontation has always worked well at the level of story. (The story is, Buddha was able to pull off such a confrontation, on occasion. The story is, Jesus was able to pull off such a confrontation, on occasion. There aren't many stories in which Jesus or Buddha went "Follow me!" and somebody went "Oh, get a life, will you?" Nevertheless, the reaction to Very was such at to make one wonder whether these confrontations ever actually worked, except at the indirect level, the level at which they are a story being recounted of some alleged prior confrontation rather than an actual face-to-face contemporary confrontation. It may well be that we have a category mistake here, a category mistake which keeps recurring due to our presumption that we can't pay attention to such a story unless the event "actually happened.") Anyhoo, here is the cast and the sins of which they were guilty:

- The Reverend William Ellery Channing was clutching "Rectitude" instead of God.
- Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was clutching "Truth" instead of God.
- Waldo Emerson was clutching "Thought" instead of God.
- Bronson Alcott was clutching "Spiritual Curiosity" instead of God.
- Sophia Amelia Peabody was clutching "Imagination" and "Resignation to Pain" instead of God.

Of course, an immediate *riposte* would be to accuse Jones Very himself of clutching "Obedience" instead of God, and ask him to pry his damn fingers off it. As inversion-advice goes that wouldn't have been half bad, but of course Very was no more capable of letting go of "Obedience" than Waldo would have been of letting go of "Thought." One is reminded of the Sufi poet who went (I paraphrase) "When one renounces all things, the final item one must renounce is Renunciation."

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JONES VERY

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First week of November: Jones Very sent some sonnets to Waldo Emerson. It turned out that not only were these the first of his poems that Emerson had seen, they were the first that he had heard of. Emerson was impressed — he'd met a poet and didn't know it.

Father! I bless thy name that I do live,
And in each motion am made rich with thee,
That when a glance is all that I can give,
It is a kingdom's wealth if I but see;
This stately body cannot move, save I
Will to its nobleness my little bring;
My voice its measured cadence will not try,
Save I with every note consent to sing;
I cannot raise my hands to hurt or bless,
But I with every action must conspire;
To show me there how little I possess,
And yet that little more than I desire;
May each new act my new allegiance prove,
Till in thy perfect love I ever live and move.

I looked to find a man who walked with God,
Like to the Jewish patriarch of old;
Though gladdened millions on his footstool trod,
Yet none with him did such sweet converse hold;
I heard the wind in low complaint go by
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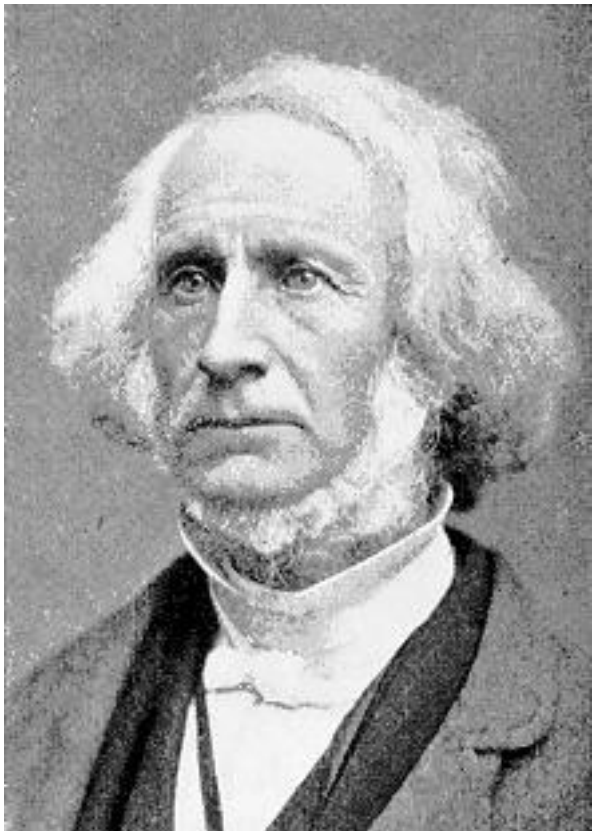
Yet none like David turned a willing ear;
God walked alone unhonored through the earth;
Far him no heart-built temple open stood,
The soul forgetful of her nobler birth
Had hewn him loftly [lofty??] shrines of stone and wood,
And left unfinished and in ruins still
The only temple he delights to fill.

December 5, Wednesday: Waldo Emerson lectured in Boston.

This was lecture Number 1 of a series of ten on "Human Life," and was entitled "The Doctrine of the Soul."[23] He had sent Jones Very a freebee ticket and had invited him to come along afterwards from the Masonic Temple to the Reverend Cyrus Bartol's home for a session of the Transcendental Club.



Coming into Boston from Salem, Very arrived early and went first to the home of the Reverend William Ellery Channing, finding Wendell Phillips and the Reverend James Freeman Clarke there and proceeding to expound for three hours with the elderly Reverend Channing listened patiently and carefully and sympathetically. Channing's conclusion was that those who had presumed Very to have lost his Reason were mistaken, as what he had lost was merely his Senses.The relationship between Unitarian ministers and anti-slavery advocates

THE LIST OF LECTURES

cannot be understood unless one takes class differences into account:

> They were gentlemen; they occupied a high position in the community; they belonged to a privileged order.... With the solitary exception of Wendell Phillips, who was regarded as an aristocratic demagogue, the Abolitionists were poor, humble, despised people, of no influence; men one could not ask to dine.[24]

23. Summaries of the lectures are in Cabot, Volume II, pages 733-737. The net receipts for the series would be $461.[92]
24. Octavius Brooks Frothingham's BOSTON UNITARIANISM, 1820-1850. NY, 1890, pages 196-7.

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In fact, the class segregation was so manifest that there is only one occasion on which the Reverend William Ellery Channing and William Lloyd Garrison were in the same room at the same time, and that was when they encountered one another quite by accident at the meeting of a legislative committee. One of the biographers of Channing, John W. Chadwick, has referred to his persistent refusal to have anything to do with such people as "the most inexplicable feature of his antislavery career, and the most unfortunate."

December 10, Monday: Senator Daniel Webster wrote from Boston to John P. Hine in New Hampton, New Hampshire, wishing him well with his invention and informing him that although he would be glad to be of assistance he would not be able to advance funds.[25]

Bronson Alcott analyzed the case of Jones Very:

> Is he insane? If so, there yet linger glimpses of wisdom in his memory. He is insane with God; diswitted in the contemplation of the holiness of Divinity. He distrusts intellect; he would have living in the concrete, without the interposition of the meddling, analytic head. Curiosity he deems impious. He would have no one stop to account to himself for what he has done, deeming this hiatus of doing, a suicidal act of the profane mind. Intellect, as intellect, he deems the author of all error. Living, not thinking, he regards as the worship meet for the soul. This is mysticism in its highest form.

1839

January 16, Wednesday: Waldo Emerson's 6th lecture in the "Human Life" series at the Masonic Temple in Boston was "The Protest." Bronson Alcott and Jones Very were in the audience (although not together). Emerson made "*a splendid Protest against every lie in life.*"

January 29, Tuesday: The lightkeeper on Matinicus Rock, despite the demolition of his wooden home and its lighttowers in the storm of the 27th, had managed to hang a beacon from a jury-rigged mast in order to warn ships away from the shoal.

On this day (or possibly, shortly before) Jones Very attended one of Bronson Alcott's "Conversations" in Lynn, Massachusetts. The topic was "Instinct" and Alcott felt that Very had made a real contribution, although the intensity of it made him wonder how long such a phenomenon could be sustained — whether to anticipate that Very would "decease soon."

Charles Darwin got married with Emma Wedgwood.

25. Stimpert, James. A GUIDE TO THE CORRESPONDENCE IN THE CHARLES WESLEY SLACK MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION: 1848-1885. Kent State University, Library, Special Collections

February 27, Wednesday or slightly before: Jones Very rode into Boston with Bronson Alcott and spent the day at his home. Alcott became concerned for Very's physical well-being: "He is more spectral than ever." The mental and emotional strain of such a sustained intensity was beginning to show up as physical wear and tear on the body of this 26-year-old.

March 8, Friday: Bronson Alcott reported to Margaret Fuller that he feared Jones Very would die or become "hopelessly mad." At this point, six months of the year which he had allotted to himself had passed, and Very was isolating himself in his room at home at 154 Federal Street in Salem, for a sustained period of solitary concentration, writing sonnets about the manifestation of deity on this earth, upon which to be alive is to be dead and to be dead, alive.

March 19, Tuesday: Waldo Emerson wrote Jones Very to invite him for a house visit on April 5th or 6th. When Very did not participate in this planning, Evidently Emerson did not grasp that Very had sequestered himself for a prolonged period –perhaps for the full remaining six months of the year allotted for his performance as Jesus Christ– and began to fear that the invited houseguest would show up on the doorstep at an inconvenient time and embarrass or offend other visitors. "I always value a visit the more when the time is fixed beforehand. In the peculiar state of Jones Very, this is trebly true."

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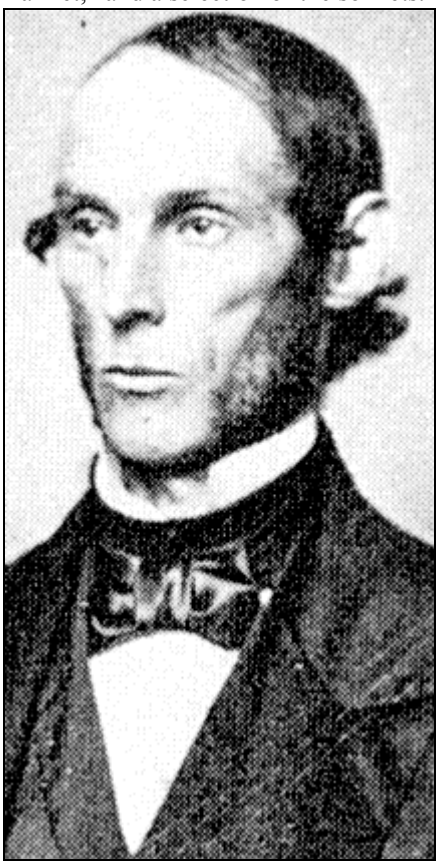
JONES VERY

JONES VERY

Early in June: Waldo Emerson and Jones Very had for some time been discussing the publication of a book, ESSAYS AND POEMS BY JONES VERY, to be made up of an autobiographical prologue, the three essay or lectures "Epic Poetry," "Shakespeare," and "Hamlet," and a selection of the sonnets.



At this point, from the isolation of his chamber in Salem, Very packed up all these manuscripts and sent them off to the Emerson home in Concord. Although Emerson would be welcome to visit him in Salem, he wrote, he would be unable to visit Concord. He requested that his book be dedicated: "To Edward Tyrrell Channing, Boyleston Professor in Harvard University, This Volume is Inscribed, As a Token of Gratitude, By the Author."

JONES VERY

JONES VERY

June 14, Friday: Recollecting that Waldo Emerson had once attempted to improve upon the voice of the Holy Spirit by the alteration of a line in the sonnet "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," Jones Very was finally able to overcome his cabin fever. He left his chamber. First he visited Bronson Alcott, attired in his customarily meticulous black suit and frock coat, with large black hat and black walking-stick. While with the Alcotts, the Reverend Orestes Augustus Brownson happened to drop by, and "They say opposite each other at the table; but were sundered by spaces immeasurable." Then Very went on to the Emersons in Concord, and would stay three days, arguing with Emerson about which materials to include in the book, in what sequence to place the sonnets, etc. Unfortunately, during this visit, Emerson attempted a humorous treatment of his difficult guest and this treatment came across as the most relentless mockery, with Mrs. Lidian Emerson sympathetically attempting to provide the only emotional resources available to Very in that household. When Very insisted on no changes to the sonnets because "such was the will of God," Emerson countered with "Cannot the Spirit parse and spell?" and declared that "We cannot permit the Holy Ghost to be careless (and in one instance) to talk bad grammar." Edwin Gittleman summarizes:

> He was quick to answer every one of Very's "speeches," and later (for the entertainment of mutual friends) he recounted in detail how cleverly he had "dealt" with him.[p.337]

What Waldo wanted, of course, above all else, was a volume which would look good and sell well. Prudent and a good read. What the author wanted, of course, above all else, was to remain utterly faithful to the instructions which he believed he was receiving from above. Emerson won, exhausting Very not only through intransigence but with off-putting sarcasm, and the eventual volume would succeed in de-emphasizing all the prophecy, all the apocalypticism, and all the evangelical enthusiasm which, to its author, were its very core.

June 17, Monday: Jones Very suddenly "departed from" the Emerson home, remarking that he was not permitted by the Holy Spirit to remain. What had happened, Edwin Gittleman discretely suggests, was that Mrs. Lidian Emerson's "feminine ways and sensitivities, devout thoughts and encouragements" had innocently raised in Very some wicked snake which he had supposed he had dispensed with when, at Harvard University in 1835, to the great amusement of his bantering classmates, he had "sacrificed Beauty." (Of course, as we know, this would not be the last time that Lidian's warm sensitivity would rouse an inexperienced young man's affection.)

WALDO EMERSON

July 9, Tuesday: Waldo Emerson to Margaret Fuller:

JONES VERY

> *I am editing Very's little book. Three Essays; and verses. Out of two hundred poems, I have selected sixty six that really possess rare merit. The book is to cost 75 cents, and I beg you to announce its coming value to all buyers. If it sells, our prophet will get $150 which, little though it be, he wants.*

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September: ESSAYS AND POEMS. BY JONES VERY went on sale at $0.[75] the copy. It was dedicated, as the author had required, "To Edward Tyrrell Channing, Boyleston Professor in Harvard University, This Volume is Inscribed, As a Token of Gratitude, By the Author." Jones Very celebrated the one-year anniversary and self-selected limit for his illumination by retracing his steps through Cambridge and Concord. While passing through Boston he picked up his bundle of authorial copies from the publishers, Charles C. Little and James Brown.[26] Passing through Cambridge, Very again asked for reinstatement at Harvard and was again, of course, rebuffed by the authorities. Proceeding through the familiar dormitories and study rooms after the rebuffs, he informed a number of persons cryptically that "the Romans" were still "masters of the world." He had distanced himself from his vatic role, but not by much.

The volume would be belatedly reviewed in THE DIAL in 1841:

> This little volume would have received an earlier notice, if we had been at all careful to proclaim our favorite books. The genius of this book is religious, and reaches an extraordinary depth of sentiment. The author, plainly a man of a pure and kindly temper, casts himself into the state of the high and transcendental obedience to the inward Spirit. He has apparently made up his mind to follow all its leadings, though he should be taxed with absurdity or even with insanity. In this enthusiasm he writes most of these verses, which rather flow through him than from him. There is no *composition*, no elaboration, no artifice in the structure of the rhyme, no variety in the imagery; in short, no pretension to literary merit, for this would be departure from his singleness, and followed by loss of insight. He is not at liberty even to correct these unpremeditated poems for the press; but if another will publish them, he offers no objection. In this way they have come into the world, and as yet have hardly begun to be known. With the exception of the few first poems, which appear to be of an earlier date, all these verses bear the unquestionable stamp of grandeur. They are the breathings of a certain entranced devotion, which one would say, should be received with affectionate and sympathizing curiosity by all men, as if no recent writer had so much to show them of what is most their own. They are as sincere a litany as the Hebrew songs of David or Isaiah, and only less than they, because indebted to the Hebrew muse for their tone and genius. This makes the singularity of the book, namely, that so pure an utterance of the most domestic and primitive of all sentiments should in this age of revolt and experiment use once more the popular religious language, and so show itself secondary and morbid. These sonnets have little range of topics, no extent of observation, no

26. No-one would seem concerned at all to promote the sale of this little volume, and the copies that had been printed would not all be sold for a generation. Edwin Gittleman says that

> Rather than publicize the book he was instrumental in having printed, rather than praise essays he once called among the finest of their kind, rather than recommend poems he once considered worthy of being read "to all who have ears to hear," Waldo Emerson (especially when among close friends) preferred to repeat Very's most recent "speeches," and to relate how he had "dealt" with them.

However, Mrs. Lidian Emerson did present a copy to Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, and Bronson Alcott sent a copy to one of his British correspondents, and Henry David Thoreau sent a copy to Miss Ellen Devereux Sewall's father, the Reverend Edmund Quincy Sewall, Sr.

playfulness; there is even a certain torpidity in the concluding lines of some of them, which reminds one of church hymns; but, whilst they flow with great sweetness, they have the sublime unity of the Decalogue or the Code of Menu, and if as monotonous, yet are they almost as pure as the sounds of Surrounding Nature. We gladly insert from a newspaper the following sonnet, which appeared since the volume was printed.

THE BARBERRY BUSH.

The bush that has most briers and bitter fruit,
Wait till the frost has turned its green leaves red,
Its sweetened berries will thy palate suit,
And thou may'st find e'en there a homely bread.
Upon the hills of Salem scattered wide,
Their yellow blossoms gain the eye in Spring;
And straggling e'en upon the turnpike's side,
Their ripened branches to your hand they bring,
I've plucked them oft in boyhood's early hour,
That then I gave such name, and thought it true;
But now I know that other fruit as sour
Grows on what now thou callest *Me* and *You*;
Yet, wilt thou wait the autumn that I see,
Will sweeter taste than these red berries be.

November 16, Saturday: Edmund Quincy declared, in the Non-Resistant, that the distinction between resistance and Non-Resistance was that "the one believes that the evil which is in the world, is to be overcome by the infliction of suffering or death upon the evil-doer; the other, by the voluntary endurance of suffering or death themselves in their stead."

[Question: Would this not be the redeeming feature that Thoreau would see in Captain John Brown, not that he was willing to kill so that others could be free but that he became willing to himself die, to set an example so that others could be free?]

Jones Very's "The Barberry Bush" was published in the Salem Observer:

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December: During this month the brothers John Thoreau, Jr. and Henry Thoreau, and Miss Prudence Ward from the Thoreau boardinghouse in Concord, visited Miss Ellen Devereux Sewall in Scituate, Massachusetts. Henry sent to Miss Ellen's father the Reverend Edmund Quincy Sewall, Sr. as a Christmas present Jones Very's new volume of poems, and John sent to Miss Ellen herself some opals, and to Ellen's little brother Edmund Quincy Sewall, Jr. some books. Afterward, during this month, Henry also sent to Miss Ellen some of his own poems, along with the counsel that she refuse the use of tea and coffee.

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1840

It was in about this year that the poet Jones Very was tutoring the poet-to-be Frederick Goddard Tuckerman at Harvard College.

January: Margaret Fuller placed a review of Jones Very's book in Orestes Augustus Brownson's Boston Quarterly Review, as part of her "Chat in Boston Bookstores." She approached his writing, of course, as if it were mere literary artistry rather than divine illumination.

March: The beginning of a Convention of Friends of Universal Reform at the Chardon Street Chapel in Boston. Waldo Emerson would report on this lengthy convention, as on the following screen. Abigail Folsom was an annoying person who was likely to show up at Boston conventions, to rant pointlessly. Please notice that there appear to have been two women of color participating in this convention, a Mrs. Little and a Mrs. Lucy Sessions, and Mrs. Sessions appears to have been the mother of the Lucy Sessions who, in 1850, would receive from Oberlin College the 1st diploma knowingly granted to a woman of color in America.

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[go to the following screen]

In the month of November, 1840, a Convention of Friends of Universal Reform assembled in the Chardon Street Chapel, in Boston, in obedience to a call in the newspapers signed by a few individuals, inviting all persons to a public discussion of the institutions of the Sabbath, the Church and the Ministry. The Convention organized itself by the choice of Edmund Quincy, as Moderator, spent three days in the consideration of the Sabbath, and adjourned to a day in March, of the following year, for the discussion of the second topic. In March, accordingly, a three-days' session was holden, in the same place, on the subject of the Church, and a third meeting fixed for the following November, which was accordingly holden, and the Convention, debated, for three days again, the remaining subject of the Priesthood. This Convention never printed any report of its deliberations, nor pretended to arrive at any **Result**, by the expression of its sense in formal resolutions, — the professed object of those persons who felt the greatest interest in its meetings being simply the elucidation of truth through free discussion. The daily newspapers reported, at the time, brief sketches of the course of proceedings, and the remarks of the principal speakers. These meetings attracted a good deal of public attention, and were spoken of in different circles in every note of hope, of sympathy, of joy, of alarm, of abhorrence, and of merriment. The composition of the assembly was rich and various. The singularity and latitude of the summons drew together, from all parts of New England, and also from the Middle States, men of every shade of opinion, from the straitest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and many persons whose church was a church of one member only. A great variety of dialect and of costume was noticed; a great deal of confusion, eccentricity, and freak appeared, as well as of zeal and enthusiasm. If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-Outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day-Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers, — all came successively to the top, and seized their moment, if not their **hour**, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest. The faces were a study. The most daring innovators, and the champions-until-death of the old cause, sat side by side. The still living merit of the oldest New England families, glowing yet, after several generations, encountered the founders of families, fresh merit, emerging, and expanding the brows to a new breadth, and lighting a clownish face with sacred fire. The assembly was characterized by the predominance of a certain plain, sylvan strength and earnestness, whilst many of the most intellectual and cultivated persons attended its councils. Dr. William Henry Channing, Edward Thompson Taylor, Bronson Alcott, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, Mr. Samuel Joseph May, Theodore Parker, Henry C. Wright, Dr. Joseph Osgood, William Adams, Edward Palmer, Jones Very, Maria W. Chapman, and many other persons of a mystical, or sectarian, or philanthropic renown, were present, and some of them participant. And there was no want of female speakers; Mrs. Little and Mrs. Lucy Sessions took a pleasing and memorable part in the debate, and that flea of Conventions, Mrs. Abigail Folsom, was but too ready with her interminable scroll. If there was not parliamentary order, there was life, and the assurance of that constitutional love for religion and religious liberty, which, in all periods, characterizes the inhabitants of this part of America.

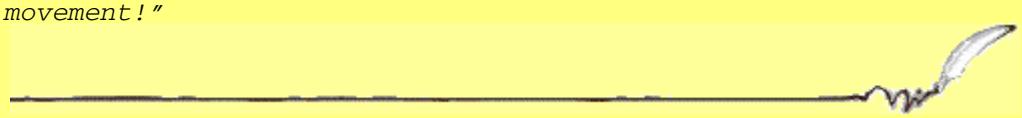
CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

JONES VERY

JONES VERY

April 9, Thursday: Jones Very appeared in Concord on this bright spring day, and he and Waldo Emerson found they were able to resume their relationship as if nothing had occurred. They walked in the afternoon to Edmund Hosmer's (Gleason G9) and then to Walden Pond, and later Emerson recorded in his journal that Very had been a "treasure of a companion."

> *We walked this P.M. to Edmund Hosmer's & Walden Pond — The south wind blew & filled with bland & warm light the dry sunny woods. The last year's leaves flew like birds through the air. As I sat on the bank of the Drop or God's Pond & saw the amplitude of the little water, what space what verge the little scudding fleets of ripples found to scatter & spread from side to side & take so much time to cross the pond, & saw how the water seemed made for the wind, & the wind for the water, dear playfellows for each other — I said to my companion, I declare this world is so beautiful that I can hardly believe it exists. At Walden Pond, the waves were larger and the whole lake in pretty uproar. Jones Very said, "See how each wave rises from the midst with an original force, at the same time that it partakes the general movement!"*



Very informed Emerson of the event at the home of the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr. during his September 1839 visit to Cambridge. Emerson enjoyed his story of Christian's return to the realm of the Romans. Later, he mused in his journal about the manner in which he had behaved toward Very. Edwin Gittleman's reading of this is that Emerson "placed his former antipathy in perspective, and attributed most of the blame to his own narrow, cold, distrustful nature." By June this self-critique had been moved into the essay "Friendship":

> We parry and fend the approach of our fellow-man by compliments, by gossip, by amusements, by affairs. We cover up our thought from him under a hundred folds. I knew a man who under a certain religious frenzy cast off this drapery, and omitting all compliment and commonplace, spoke to the conscience of every person he encountered, and that with great insight and beauty. At first he was resisted, and all men agreed he was mad. But persisting –as indeed he could not help doing– for some time in this course, he attained to the advantage of bringing every man of his acquaintance into true relations with him. No man would think of speaking falsely with him, or of putting him off with any chat of markets or reading-rooms. But every man was constrained by so much sincerity to the like plain-dealing, and what love of nature, what poetry, what symbol of truth he had, he did certainly show him. But to most of us society shows not its face and eye, but its side and its back. To stand in true relations with men in a false age is worth a fit of insanity, is it not?

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Gittleman parses this paragraph as indicating that

> The impersonal "we" employed by the essayist concealed something more than belated regret at having failed to respect a friend's integrity. It was an admission of his own hypocrisy and restlessness of spirit, and a condemnation of his earlier reluctance to abandon an uncharitably moralistic attitude toward Very. His radical manifestation of a religious individualism at least should have been tolerated, even if it were directed toward Lidian Emerson.

April 9: I read in Cudworth how "Origen determines that the stars do not make but signify; and that the heavens are a kind of divine volume, in whose characters they that are skilled may read or spell out human events." Nothing can be truer, and yet astrology is possible. Men seem to be just on the point of discerning a truth when the imposition is greatest.

RALPH CUDWORTH

May 13, Wednesday: The Transcendental Club met at the Emerson home.

Among the attenders were Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, the Reverend Cyrus Augustus Bartol, Robert Bartlett, Margaret Fuller, the Reverends Frederic Henry Hedge and Caleb Stetson, and Jones Very.

They discussed the topic "The Inspiration of the Prophet and Bard, the Nature of Poetry, and the Causes of the Sterility of Poetic Inspiration in Our Age and Country." (Strangely, with such a topic, Very did not seem to have anything insightful to offer. He was still issuing his declarative pronouncements but his sources for his inspiration did not seem to be helping him come up with interesting things to say.)

November: At the Chardon Street Chapel in Boston, a continuation of the 1st meeting of the Convention of Friends of Universal Reform, that had begun during March. Attending "to discuss the origin and authority of the ministry" were, among others, the Reverend George Ripley from Brook Farm and David Mack from the Association of Industry and Education, plus at least four other future members of that Northampton association. Waldo Emerson's report of this is on the following screen.

[go to the following screen]

In the month of November, 1840, a Convention of Friends of Universal Reform assembled in the Chardon Street Chapel, in Boston, in obedience to a call in the newspapers signed by a few individuals, inviting all persons to a public discussion of the institutions of the Sabbath, the Church and the Ministry. The Convention organized itself by the choice of Edmund Quincy, as Moderator, spent three days in the consideration of the Sabbath, and adjourned to a day in March, of the following year, for the discussion of the second topic. In March, accordingly, a three-days' session was holden, in the same place, on the subject of the Church, and a third meeting fixed for the following November, which was accordingly holden, and the Convention, debated, for three days again, the remaining subject of the Priesthood. This Convention never printed any report of its deliberations, nor pretended to arrive at any **Result**, by the expression of its sense in formal resolutions, — the professed object of those persons who felt the greatest interest in its meetings being simply the elucidation of truth through free discussion. The daily newspapers reported, at the time, brief sketches of the course of proceedings, and the remarks of the principal speakers. These meetings attracted a good deal of public attention, and were spoken of in different circles in every note of hope, of sympathy, of joy, of alarm, of abhorrence, and of merriment. The composition of the assembly was rich and various. The singularity and latitude of the summons drew together, from all parts of New England, and also from the Middle States, men of every shade of opinion, from the straitest orthodoxy to the wildest heresy, and many persons whose church was a church of one member only. A great variety of dialect and of costume was noticed; a great deal of confusion, eccentricity, and freak appeared, as well as of zeal and enthusiasm. If the assembly was disorderly, it was picturesque. Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-Outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day-Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Philosophers, — all came successively to the top, and seized their moment, if not their **hour**, wherein to chide, or pray, or preach, or protest. The faces were a study. The most daring innovators, and the champions-until-death of the old cause, sat side by side. The still living merit of the oldest New England families, glowing yet, after several generations, encountered the founders of families, fresh merit, emerging, and expanding the brows to a new breadth, and lighting a clownish face with sacred fire. The assembly was characterized by the predominance of a certain plain, sylvan strength and earnestness, whilst many of the most intellectual and cultivated persons attended its councils. Dr. William Henry Channing, Edward Thompson Taylor, Bronson Alcott, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, Mr. Samuel Joseph May, Theodore Parker, Henry C. Wright, Dr. Joseph Osgood, William Adams, Edward Palmer, Jones Very, Maria W. Chapman, and many other persons of a mystical, or sectarian, or philanthropic renown, were present, and some of them participant. And there was no want of female speakers; Mrs. Little and Mrs. Lucy Sessions took a pleasing and memorable part in the debate, and that flea of Conventions, Mrs. Abigail Folsom, was but too ready with her interminable scroll. If there was not parliamentary order, there was life, and the assurance of that constitutional love for religion and religious liberty, which, in all periods, characterizes the inhabitants of this part of America.

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December: Henry David Thoreau sent Miss Ellen Devereux Sewall's father, the Reverend Edmund Quincy Sewall, Sr., the newly published volume of Jones Very's poems. (Ellen, tactful little sweetheart that she was, would respond politely that the poems had been enjoyed by the entire family.)

In his journal, Thoreau made a reference to Dante's *La divina commedia*.

LA DIVINA COMMEDIA, I

LA DIVINA COMMEDIA, II

LA DIVINA COMMEDIA, III

Waldo Emerson commented about Amos Bronson Alcott to his journal:

A. is a tedious archangel.

(We trust that he would share this observation with B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z, but never with A.)

1841

January: Mrs. Ellen Sturgis Hooper's poem "To the Ideal" appeared anonymously on page 400 of THE DIAL.

Waldo Emerson published his own poem "The Snow-Storm."

THE DIAL, JANUARY 1841

Emerson belatedly reviewed Jones Very's 1839 ESSAYS AND POEMS. BY JONES VERY:

> This little volume would have received an earlier notice, if we had been at all careful to proclaim our favorite books. The genius of this book is religious, and reaches an extraordinary depth of sentiment. The author, plainly a man of a pure and kindly temper, casts himself into the state of the high and transcendental obedience to the inward Spirit. He has apparently made up his mind to follow all its leadings, though he should be taxed with absurdity or even with insanity. In this enthusiasm he writes most of these verses, which rather flow through him than from him. There is no *composition*, no elaboration, no artifice in the structure of the rhyme, no variety in the imagery; in short, no pretension to literary merit, for this would be departure from his singleness, and followed by loss of

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Upon the hills of Salem scattered wide,
Their yellow blossoms gain the eye in Spring;
And straggling e'en upon the turnpike's side,
Their ripened branches to your hand they bring,
I've plucked them oft in boyhood's early hour,
That then I gave such name, and thought it true;
But now I know that other fruit as sour
Grows on what now thou callest *Me* and *You*;
Yet, wilt thou wait the autumn that I see,
Will sweeter taste than these red berries be.

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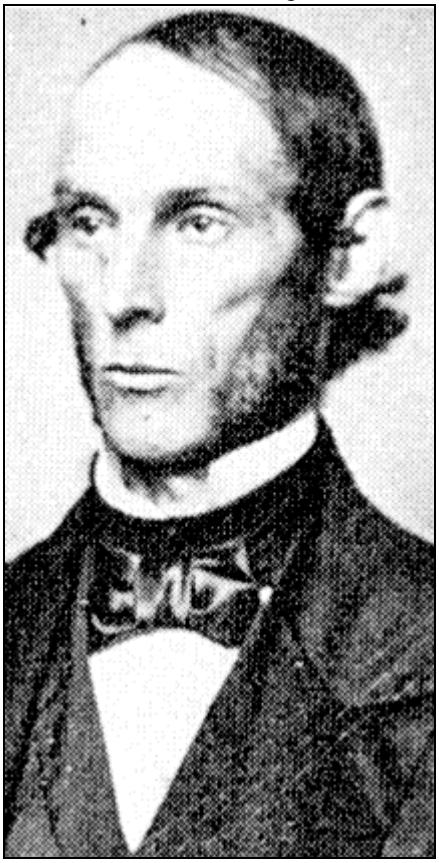
1843

Jones Very was licensed to preach, even without divinity degree, by the Cambridge Association. Over the next four decades he would preach perhaps a hundred times while supporting himself in various ways such as doing genealogical research for the Essex Institute. Four of his poems would become Transcendentalist hymns.



1851

September: The federal government sent a naval frigate to Turkey to bring the interned Lajos Kossuth to the US by way of England.

Here is an undated poem by Jones Very that offers us some inkling of this leader's popularity in the United States of America:

Kossuth.

Illustrious man! who doth to heaven appeal
Against the tyrant's might and tyrant's wrong,
And as thine own thy country's wounds doth feel,—
Forget not in whose strength vain man is strong:
Not in the mighty winds that mountains shake,
Not in the earthquake, nor the avenging fire,
But in the still small voice Jehovah spake,

Rebuking thus His warlike prophete's ire.
'T is ours for truth to suffer and to speak,
But not to fight, or warlike trumpet blow;
The strength of armies in her cause is weak,
And Freedom finds in these her deadliest foe;
For never can the truth or right prevail
Till rust consume the sword and warrior's mail.

1854

May: The family of the William Jackman who had become the author of a captivity-and-escape narrative sold their land claim near Madison, Wisconsin and traveled overland to Prairie Du Chein, where they boarded the *War Eagle* and traveled on the Mississippi River to Prescott, Wisconsin.

A formal "conversation" was staged in Waldo Emerson's study, between 2 and 3 in the afternoon, with Bronson Alcott and Emerson as two of the conversants, the audience consisting of young Harvard men, primarily from the Harvard Divinity School. Among these was Edwin Morton of Plymouth. Emerson opened the event by stating with confidence that literature could be, in America, a young man's occupation and bread-winner. There followed a consideration of various Harvard College professors and tutors, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, George Ticknor, Edward Everett, Jones Very, James Walker, etc.

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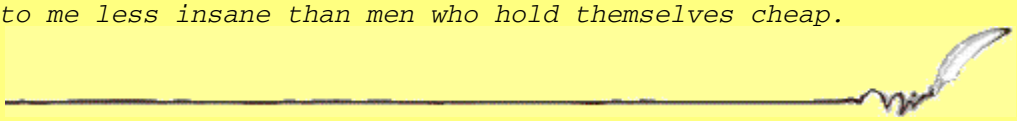
1855

Spring/Summer: Waldo Emerson to his journal:

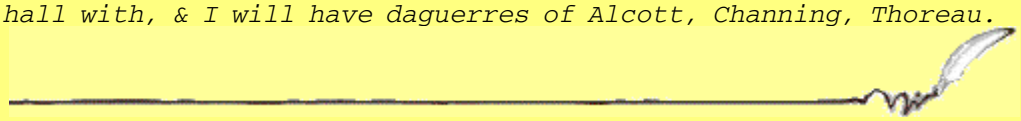
JONES VERY

Jones Very, who thought it an honor to wash his own face, seems to me less insane than men who hold themselves cheap.



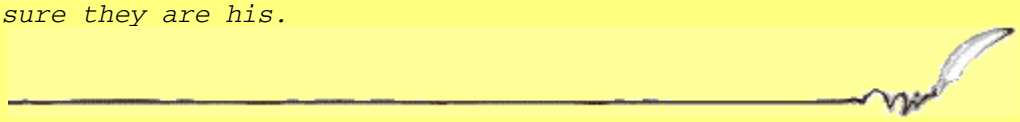
For the benefit of his journal, Emerson superciliously analyzed his three friends Bronson Alcott, Ellery Channing, and Henry Thoreau as small men who vainly supposed they were "the three leading men in America" but who instead "never saw a grander arch than their own eyebrow" (did this mean to Emerson "have never been to Washington DC" or did it mean "have never been inside a mansion"?) and who "never saw the sky of a principle which made them modest & contemners of themselves":

Washington, Adams, Quincy, Franklin, I would willingly adorn my hall with, & I will have daguerres of Alcott, Channing, Thoreau.



Emerson revealed himself as a Malthusian, not out of reasons of science but for all the familiar, ignoble Social-Darwinist reasons which these calculations of science in this case can be held to reinforce:

The Mormons & AntiMarriage men have not thought or observed far enough. They do not like the privation. No, but Malthus establishes his fact of geometrical increase of mouths, & then we have a reason in figures for this perdurable shame in man & woman for unauthorised cohabitation. No more children than you will give your equal & entire protection & aid unto. And this other; a man will work for his children no longer than he is sure they are his.



And there is also this, mentioning Mary Moody Emerson:

M.M.E., if you praised a lady warmly, would stop you short, "Is it a colored woman of whom you were speaking?" When Mrs B. [Lucy Jackson Brown??] *ran into any enthusiasms on Italian patriots, &c, —"Mrs Brown how's your cat?" WHen she had once bowed to Goodnow & his wife at the Lyceum, not quite knowing who they were (G. had offended her when she boarded with them), she afterwards went up to Goodnow, & said, "I did not know who you were, or should never have bowed to you."*

1858

January 16, Saturday: Henry Thoreau wrote to Jones Very to let him know that, due to other commitments, he would be unable to visit him in Salem.

> I received your note inviting me to Salem after my lecture Wednesday evening. My first impulse was to go with you ... my reason for not running over to Salem for an hour, or a fraction of the day, was simply that I did not wish to impair my right to come by & by when I may have leisure to take the whole pleasure and benefit of such a visit — for I hate to *feel* in a hurry.... I trust that you will ... find me a better walker than I chanced to be when you were here before.
> I have often thought of taking a walk with you in your vicinity. I have a little to tell you, but a great deal more to hear from you....

Thoreau wrote to the Reverend John Lewis Russell JOHN RUSSELL.

Concord Jan 16th
1858
My Dear Sir,
I received your note inviting me to Salem after my lecture Wednesday evening. My first impulse was to go to you; but I reflected that Mr Pillsbury had just invited me to Lynn, thro' Mr Buffum, promising to be there to meet me, indeed, we had already planned some excursions to Nahant, &c—and he would be absent on Friday;—so I felt under obligations to him & the Lynn people to stay with them. They were very kind to me, and I had a very good time with them—Jonathan Buffum & Son, Pillsbury & Mr. Mudge—
My reason for not running over to Salem for an hour, or a fraction of the day, was simply, that I did not wish to impair my right to come by & by when I may have leisure to take in the whole pleasure & benefit of such a visit—for I hate to feel in a hurry.

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I shall improve or take an opportunity to spend a day—or part of a day with you ere long, and I trust that you will be attracted to Concord again, and will find me a better walker than I chanced to be when you were here before.
I have often thought of taking a walk with you in your vicinity. I have a little to tell you, but a great deal more to hear from you. I had a grand time deep in the woods of Maine in July, &c &c. I suppose that I saw the genista tinctoria in the N.W. part of Lynn—on my way to the boulders & the mill-stone ledge.
Please remember me to Mr. Bradford.
Yrs truly
Henry D. Thoreau

1866

At some point subsequent to this year Jones Very would write a poem "On Visiting the Graves of Hawthorne and Thoreau":[27]

Beneath these shades, beside yon winding stream,
Lies Hawthorne's manly form, the mortal part!
The soul, that loved to meditate and dream,
Might linger here unwilling to depart,
But that a higher life has called away
To fairer scenes, to nobler work and thought.
Why should the spirit then on earth delay,
That has a glimpse of such bright regions caught!
And near another, Nature's child, doth rest,—
Thoreau, who loved each woodland path to tread;
So gently sleeping on his mother's breast!
Living, though numbered with the numerous dead.
We mourn! But hope will whisper in the heart,
We meet again and meet no more to part.

1874

Edward Waldo Emerson finished his training as a physician and returned to America, marrying Annie Shepard Keyes of Concord. Late in the year Edith Emerson Forbes helped her father bring out, under his name, an anthology of the poetry which the Emerson family most favored for parlor reading. There were no poems by Waldo himself, or by Channing or by Poe or by Whitman, although Thoreau was represented. Included were such poets as John Quincy Adams, Calidasa, Waldo's brother Edward, Jean Ingelow, Lucy Larcom, Sarah H. Palfrey, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Simonides, and Jones Very.

27. Since he mentions that Thoreau is buried near Hawthorne, this would have been after the Thoreau family had been relocated to Authors' Ridge in the 1866-1868 timeframe.

1880

Jones Very died. His epitaph has been placed on record by Edwin Gittleman (page 372) as "Although he lived until 1880, Very's effective life was over by the end of 1840."[28]

(A very extensive collection of his letters and papers would be preserved by his surviving sister but upon her death in 1901 those materials would be discarded.)

1901

After the death of Jones Very's sister, her very extensive collection of his letters and personal papers was discarded.

1942

William Irving Bartlett's JONES VERY: EMERSON'S BRAVE SAINT (Durham NC: Duke UP).

> The expression of the spiritual significance of nature is Very's unique contribution to American literature.

28. One wonders why biographers do not say the same of Waldo Emerson the sage of Concord, or of Professor Louis Agassiz the great scientist, two other gentlemen who by everyone's admission had ceased producing new or interesting ideas by about the midpoints of their lives. Is it so different, being thoroughly discredited and from that point accomplishing nothing, and being thoroughly credited and from that point accomplishing nothing?

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1938

Yvor Winters, in MAULE'S CURSE; SEVEN STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN OBSCURANTISM: HAWTHORNE, COOPER, MELVILLE, POE, EMERSON, JONES VERY, EMILY DICKINSON, HENRY JAMES (Norfolk CT: New Directions).

In a similar genre, the widowed Edith Garrigues Hawthorne generated THE MEMOIRS OF JULIAN HAWTHORNE for Macmillan. In this book Son-Of-Hawthorne is made to iterate yet again for our benefit from beyond the grave, various of his intrepid confabulations:

> Once, when I was nearly seven years old [We know from Thoreau's survey book that said survey actually took place while Julian was 16 years of age], Thoreau came to the Wayside to make a survey of our land, bringing his surveying apparatus on his shoulder. I watched the short, dark, unbeautiful man with interest and followed him about, all over the place, never losing sight of a movement and never asking a question or uttering a word. The thing must have lasted a couple of hours; when we got back, Thoreau remarked to my father: "Good boy! Sharp eyes, and no tongue!" On that basis I was admitted to his friendship; a friendship or comradeship which began in 1852 and was to last until his death in 1862 [Actually we know of no other occasion on which Julian came within eyesight of Thoreau].
>
> In our walks about the country, Thoreau saw everything, and would indicate the invisible to me with a silent nod of the head. The brook that skirted the foot of our meadow was another treasure-house which he discovered to me, though he was too shy to companion me there; when he had given me a glimpse of Nature in her privacy, he left me alone with her ... on a hot August day, I would often sit, hidden from the world, thinking boy thoughts.
>
> I learned how to snare chub, and even pickerel, with a loop made of a long-stemmed grass; dragon-flies poised like humming-birds, and insects skated zigzag on the surface, casting odd shadows on the bottom.... Yes, Thoreau showed me things, and though it didn't aid me in the Harvard curriculum [Julian became a student of civil engineering, but the college asked him to leave and there would be no diploma], it helped me through life.
>
> Truly, Nature absorbed his attention, but I don't think he cared much for what is called the beauties of nature; it was her way of working, her mystery, her economy in extravagance; he delighted to trace her footsteps toward their source.... He liked to feel that the pursuit was endless, with mystery at both ends of it....

Louisa May Alcott had been nursing at a military hospital in Washington DC when Henry David Thoreau died. Julian's posthumous memoir tells an interesting story about the provenance of her poem "Thoreau's Flute." Allegedly, when Louisa got back to Concord, one night she snuck up to the Wayside home of the Hawthornes and left a copy on the steps "held in place by a pebble." Hawthorne then forwarded the poem to James T. Fields in Boston so it could be published anonymously in The Atlantic Monthly.

We sighing said, "Our Pan is dead—
His pipe hangs mute beside the river,
Around it friendly moonbeams quiver,
But music's airy voice is fled.
Spring comes to us in guise forlorn,
The blue-bird chants a requiem,
The willow-blossom waits for him,
The genius of the wood is gone"

Then from the flute, untouched by hands,
There came a low, harmonious breath:
For such as he there is no death.
His life the eternal life commands.
Above men's aims his nature rose.
The wisdom of a just content
Make one small spot a continent,
And turned to poetry life's prose

Haunting the hills, the stream, the wild,
Swallow and aster, lake and pine
To him seemed human or divine,
Fit mates for this large-hearted child.
Such homage nature ne'er forgets;
And yearly on the coverlid
'Neath which her darling lieth hid
Will write his name in violets.

To him no vain regrets belong
Whose soul, that finer instrument,
Gave to the world no poor lament,
But wood-notes ever sweet and strong.
Oh lonely friend, He still will be
A potent presence, though unseen,
Steadfast, sagacious and serene.
Seek not for him: he is with Thee.

And gosh, for some reason Julian had kept this a secret all his life only to allow it to be revealed after everyone involved was dead!

1942

William Irving Bartlett's JONES VERY: EMERSON'S BRAVE SAINT (Durham NC: Duke UP).

> The expression of the spiritual significance of nature is Very's unique contribution to American literature.

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1947

Yvor Winters, in his IN DEFENSE OF REASON (Denver CO: Alan Swallow), wrote of Jones Very:

> His contemporaries, those who regarded him not only in the spirit, but in the flesh, paid his sincerity the highest tribute that men can pay to that of any man: they adjudged him insane.

1967

Edwin Gittleman's JONES VERY: THE EFFECTIVE YEARS, 1833-1840. NY: Columbia UP.

Originally, as understood by men like William Bentley (1759-1819), of Salem's East Church, Unitarianism was rooted in the eighteenth-century concept of natural religion. Bentley believed that the ceremonies and dogmas of Christianity were incidental to salvation, and that whatever was distinctively Christian in Unitarianism supplemented rather than supplanted natural religion. But by 1836 most of the original impetus of such liberal ideas, carried over from the Enlightenment and from Arian and Arminian heresies, had been spent. Under the direction of the professors an establishment developed. Unitarianism became inflexible, and Harvard was no longer latitudinarian. But even then, unlike the Congregationalism which had spawned it, Unitarianism did not endorse any of the modifications of the Westminster Catechism; nonetheless, it did encourage a body of unofficial dogmas, the creation of scholarly men who were trying to teach clerical aspirants a systematic corpus of belief. They denied the traditional versions of Trinity, rejected the old orthodox conceptions of atonement, and did not consider the crucifixion a special Christian mystery. The resurrection was construed primarily as the glorification of the human but godlike powers of perfected man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and not as the completion of a sacrificial act designed to reconcile God to imperfect men. However, the distinction between God and the godlike man Jesus was obscured; the communion ritual was retained; and the confirming sanction of biblical authority was necessary for discriminating between probity and sin, defining them in social and ethical rather than sectarian terms. The learned members of the Harvard faculty who implemented such ideas "looked without for knowledge, rather than within for inspiration," and consequently were easily disquieted by varieties of "mysticism, enthusiasm and rapture." While claiming to emphasize "rational theology," they were cool toward the higher criticism of the BIBLE undertaken by recent German theologians; they made "increasingly smug use of reason at the expense of liberality"; and they insisted upon the historicity of the miracles of Jesus. Because their convictions were based on what they said was the "cold light of reason and nature," their new orthodoxy was marked by emotional reserve — a "frigid" and "empty theism" thought its critics. The Divinity School faculty in turn charged Calvinists and revivalists with lacking all sense of human dignity, and the more liberal and radical Unitarians with being outside Christianity entirely.

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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: November 23, 2012

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.