

IV

1840

(ET. 22-23)

Jan. 10. THE FISHER'S SON ¹

I know the world where land and water meet,
By yonder hill abutting on the main;
One while I hear the waves incessant beat,
Then, turning round, survey the land again.

Within a humble cot that looks to sea,
Daily I breathe this curious warm life;
Beneath a friendly haven's sheltering lee
My noiseless day with myst'ry still is rife.

'T is here, they say, my simple life began;
And easy credit to the tale I lend,
For well I know 't is here I am a man.
But who will simply tell me of the end?

These eyes, fresh opened, spied the far-off Sea,
Which like a silent godfather did stand,
Nor uttered one explaining word to me,
But introducèd straight Godmother Land.

And yonder still stretches that silent main,
With many glancing ships besprinkled o'er;

¹ [Stanzas 8, 10, 11, 12, with revision, *Week*, p. 255; Riv. 317.
Stanzas 2-5, 9, 13, *Familiar Letters*, Introduction.]

1840]

THE FISHER'S SON

111

And earnest still I gaze and gaze again
Upon the selfsame waves and friendly shore,

Till like a watery humor on the eye
It still appears whichever way I turn,
Its silent waste and mute o'erarching sky
With close-shut eyes I clearly still discern.

And yet with lingering doubt I haste each morn
To see if ocean still my gaze will greet,
And with each day once more to life am born,
And tread once more the earth with infant feet.

My years are like a stroll upon the beach,
As near the ocean's edge as I can go;
My tardy steps its waves do oft o'erreach,
Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

Infinite work my hands find there to do,
Gathering the relics which the waves upcast;
Each storm doth scour the deep for something new,
And every time the strangest is the last.

My sole employment 't is, and scrupulous care,
To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare,
Which ocean kindly to my hand confides.

I have no fellow-laborer on the shore;
They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Sometimes I think the ocean they've sailed o'er
Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

The middle sea can show no crimson dulse,
 Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view,
 Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
 Whose feeble beat is elsewhere felt by few.

My neighbors come sometimes with lumb'ring carts,
 As it would seem my pleasant toil to share,
 But straightway take their loads to distant marts,
 For only weeds and ballast are their care.

'T is by some strange coincidence, if I
 Make common cause with ocean when he storms,
 Who can so well support a separate sky,
 And people it with multitude of forms.

Oft in the stillness of the night I hear
 Some restless bird presage the coming din,
 And distant murmurs faintly strike my ear
 From some bold bluff projecting far within.

My stillest depths straightway do inly heave
 More genially than rests the summer's calm;
 The howling winds through my soul's cordage grieve,
 Till every shelf and ledge gives the alarm.

Far from the shore the swelling billows rise,
 And gathering strength come rolling to the land,
 And, as each wave retires, and murmur dies,
 I straight pursue upon the streaming sand,

Till the returning surge with gathered strength
 Compels once more the backward way to take,

And, creeping up the beach a cable's length,
 In many a thirsty hollow leaves a lake.

Oft as some ruling star my tide has swelled
 The sea can scarcely brag more wrecks than I;
 Ere other influence my waves has quelled,
 The stanchest bark that floats is high and dry.

Jan. 19.

By a strong liking we prevail
 Against the stoutest fort;
 At length the fiercest heart will quail,
 And our alliance court.

FRIENDS

Jan. 26. They are like air bubbles on water, hasten-
 ing to flow together.

History tells of Orestes and Pylades, Damon and
 Pythias, but why should not we put to shame those old
 reserved worthies by a community of such?

Constantly, as it were through a remote skylight, I
 have glimpses of a serene friendship-land, and know
 the better why brooks murmur and violets grow.

This conjunction of souls, like waves which meet and
 break, subsides also backward over things, and gives
 all a fresh aspect.

I would live henceforth with some gentle soul such a
 life as may be conceived, double for variety, single for
 harmony, — two, only that we might admire at our one-

ness, — one, because indivisible. Such community to be a pledge of holy living. How could aught unworthy be admitted into our society? To listen with one ear to each summer sound, to behold with one eye each summer scene, our visual rays so to meet and mingle with the object as to be one bent and doubled; with two tongues to be wearied, and thought to spring ceaselessly from a double fountain.

POETRY

Jan. No definition of poetry is adequate unless it be poetry itself. The most accurate analysis by the rarest wisdom is yet insufficient, and the poet will instantly prove it false by setting aside its requisitions.¹ It is indeed all that we do not know.

The poet does not need to see how meadows are something else than earth, grass, and water, but how they are thus much. He does not need discover that potato blows are as beautiful as violets, as the farmer thinks, but only how good potato blows are.

The poem is drawn out from under the feet of the poet, his whole weight has rested on this ground.

It has a logic more severe than the logician's.

You might as well think to go in pursuit of the rainbow, and embrace it on the next hill, as to embrace the whole of poetry even in thought. The best book is

¹ [*Week*, p. 93; *Riv.* 116.]

only an advertisement of it, such as is sometimes sewed in with its cover.¹

Its eccentric and unexplored orbit embraces the system.

Jan. 27. What a tame life we are living! How little heroic it is! Let us devise never so perfect a system of living, and straightway the soul leaves it to shuffle along its own way alone. It is easy enough to establish a durable and harmonious routine; immediately all parts of nature consent to it.² The sun-dial still points to the noon mark, and the sun rises and sets for it. The neighbors are never fatally obstinate when such a scheme is to be instituted; but forthwith all lend a hand, and ring the bell, and bring fuel and lights, and put by work and don their best garments, with an earnest conformity which matches the operations of nature. There is always a present and extant life which all combine to uphold, though its insufficiency is manifest enough.³ Still the sing-song goes on.

Jan. 29. A friend in history looks like some premature soul. The nearest approach to a community of love in these days is like the distant breaking of waves on the seashore. An ocean there must be, for it washes our beach.

This alone do all men sail for, trade for, plow for, preach for, fight for.

¹ [*Week*, p. 93; *Riv.* 116.] ² [*Week*, p. 132; *Riv.* 164.]

³ [*Week*, p. 132; *Riv.* 165.]

ÆSCHYLUS

The Greeks, as the Southern generally, expressed themselves with more facility than we in distinct and lively images, and as to the grace and completeness with which they treated the subjects suited to their genius they must be allowed to retain their ancient supremacy. But a rugged and uncouth array of thought, though never so modern, may rout them at any moment. It remains for other than Greeks to write the literature of the next century.

Æschylus had a clear eye for the commonest things. His genius was only an enlarged common sense. He adverts with chaste severity to all natural facts. His sublimity is Greek sincerity and simpleness, naked wonder which mythology had not helped to explain.

Tydeus' shield had for device

“An artificial heaven blazing with stars;
A bright full moon in the midst of the shield,
Eldest of stars, eye of night, is prominent.”

The Greeks were stern but simple children in their literature. We have gained nothing by the few ages which we have the start of them. This universal wondering at those old men is as if a matured grown person should discover that the aspirations of his youth argued a diviner life than the contented wisdom of his manhood.

He is competent to express any of the common manly feelings. If his hero is to make a boast, it does not lack fullness, it is as boastful as could be desired; he has a flexible mouth, and can fill it readily with strong, round

words, so that you will say the man's speech wants nothing, he has left nothing unsaid, but he has actually wiped his lips of it.

Whatever the common eye sees at all and expresses as best it may, he sees uncommonly and describes with rare completeness. The multitude that thronged the theatre could no doubt go along with him to the end. The Greeks had no transcendent geniuses like Milton and Shakespeare, whose merit only posterity could fully appreciate.

The social condition of genius is the same in all ages. Æschylus was undoubtedly alone and without sympathy in his simple reverence for the mystery of the universe.

Feb. 10. CRITICISM ON AULUS PERSIUS FLACCUS ¹

Feb. 11. “Truth,” says Lord Bacon, “may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, which sheweth best in varied lights.” Like the pearl, truth shines with a steady but pale light which invites to introspection; it is intrinsically bright, not accidentally as the diamond. We seem to behold its rear always, as though it were not coming toward us but retiring from us. Its light is not reflected this way, but we see the sombre and wrong side of its rays. As the dust in his beams makes known that the sun shines.

¹ [The criticism was not transcribed here. The title was inserted doubtless as a memorandum and to record the date of its composition. See *Week*, p. 327; *Riv.* 405.]

Falsehoods that glare and dazzle are sloped toward us, reflecting full in our faces even the light of the sun. Wait till sunset, or go round them, and the falsity will be apparent.

It is never enough that our life is an easy one. We must live on the stretch; not be satisfied with a tame and undisturbed round of weeks and days, but retire to our rest like soldiers on the eve of a battle, looking forward with ardor to the strenuous sortie of the morrow.¹ "Sit not down in the popular seats and common level of virtues, but endeavor to make them heroic. Offer not only peace offerings but holocausts unto God." To the brave soldier the rust and leisure of peace are harder than the fatigues of war. As our bodies court physical encounters, and languish in the mild and even climate of the tropics, so our souls thrive best on unrest and discontent.²

He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate.

Feb. 12. Opposition is often so strong a likeness as to remind us of the difference.

Truth has properly no opponent, for nothing gets so far up on the other side as to be opposite. She looks broadcast over the field and sees no opponent.

The ring-leader of the mob will soonest be admitted into the councils of state.

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 279; *Misc.*, Riv. 37.]

² [*The Service*, p. 20.]

Knavery is more foolish than folly, for that, half knowing its own foolishness, it still persists. The knave has reduced folly to a system, is the prudent, common-sense fool. The witling has the simplicity and directness of genius, is the inspired fool. His incomprehensible ravings become the creed of the dishonest of a succeeding era.

Feb. 13. An act of integrity is to an act of duty what the French verb *être* is to *devoir*. Duty is *ce que devrait être*.

Duty belongs to the understanding, but genius is not dutiful, the highest talent is dutiful. Goodness results from the wisest use of talent.

The perfect man has both genius and talent. The one is his head, the other his foot; by one he is, by the other he lives.

The unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God, the end of the world.¹

The very thrills of genius are disorganizing. The body is never quite acclimated to *its* atmosphere, but how often succumbs and goes into a decline!

Feb. 14. Beauty lives by rhymes. Double a deformity is a beauty. Draw this blunt quill over the paper, and fold it once transversely to the line, pressing it suddenly before the ink dries, and a delicately shaded and regular figure is the result, which art cannot surpass.²

¹ [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 434.]

² [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 434. A sheet with specimens of this familiar school-boy amusement is slipped into one of the manuscript Journal volumes.]

A very meagre natural history suffices to make me a child. Only their names and genealogy make me love fishes. I would know even the number of their fin-rays, and how many scales compose the lateral line. I fancy I am amphibious and swim in all the brooks and pools in the neighborhood, with the perch and bream, or doze under the pads of our river amid the winding aisles and corridors formed by their stems, with the stately pickerel. I am the wiser in respect to all knowledges, and the better qualified for all fortunes, for knowing that there is a minnow in the brook. Methinks I have need even of his sympathy, and to be his fellow in a degree. I do like him sometimes when he balances himself for an hour over the yellow floor of his basin.¹

Feb. 15. The good seem to inhale a more generous atmosphere and be bathed in a more precious light than other men. Accordingly Virgil describes the *sedes beatas* thus:—

“Largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit
Purpureo : Solemque suum, sua sidera nôrunt.”²

Feb. 16. Divination is prospective memory.

There is a kindred principle at the bottom of all affinities. The magnet cultivates a steady friendship with the pole, all bodies with all others. The friendliness of nature is that goddess Ceres who presides over every sowing and harvest, and we bless the same in sun and

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 118 ; Riv. 146.] ² [*Week*, p. 406 ; Riv. 501.]

rain. The seed in the ground tarries for a season with its genial friends there; all the earths and grasses and minerals are its hosts, who entertain it hospitably, and plenteous crops and teeming wagons are the result.

Feb. 18. All romance is grounded on friendship. What is this rural, this pastoral, this poetical life but its invention? Does not the moon shine for Endymion? Smooth pastures and mild airs are for some Corydon and Phyllis. Paradise belongs to Adam and Eve. Plato's republic is governed by Platonic love.

Feb. 20. The coward's hope is suspicion, the hero's doubt a sort of hope. The gods neither hope nor doubt.

Feb. 22. The river is unusually high, owing to the melting of the snow. Men go in boats over their gardens and potato-fields, and all the children of the village are on tiptoe to see whose fence will be carried away next. Great numbers of muskrats, which have been driven out of their holes by the water, are killed by the sportsmen.

They are to us instead of the beaver. The wind from over the meadows is laden with a strong scent of musk, and by its racy freshness advertises us of an unexplored wildness. Those backwoods are not far off. I am affected by the sight of their cabins of mud and grass, raised four or five feet, along the river, as when I read of the Pyramids, or the barrows of Asia.¹

People step brisker in the street for this unusual

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 114 ; Riv. 141.]

movement of the waters. You seem to hear the roar of a waterfall and the din of factories where the river breaks over the road.

Who would have thought that a few feet might not have been spared from the trunks of most trees? Such as grow in the meadows, and are now surrounded by that depth of water, have a dwarfish appearance. No matter whether they are longer or shorter, they are now equally out of proportion.

Feb. 24.

THE FRESHET

A stir is on the Worcester hills,
And Nobscot too the valley fills;
Where scarce you'd fill an acorn cup
In summer when the sun was up,
No more you'll find a cup at all,
But in its place a waterfall.

O that the moon were in conjunction
To the dry land's extremest unction,
Till every dike and pier were flooded,
And all the land with islands studded,
For once to teach all human kind,
Both those that plow and those that grind,
There is no fixture in the land,
But all unstable is as sand.

The river swelleth more and more,
Like some sweet influence stealing o'er
The passive town; and for a while
Each tussock makes a tiny isle,

Where, on some friendly Ararat,
Resteth the weary water-rat.

No ripple shows Musketaquid,
Her very current e'en is hid,
As deepest souls do calmest rest
When thoughts are swelling in the breast;
And she, that in the summer's drought
Doth make a rippling and a rout,
Sleeps from Nawshawtuct to the Cliff,
Unruffled by a single skiff;
So like a deep and placid mind
Whose currents underneath it wind,
For by a thousand distant hills
The louder roar a thousand rills,
And many a spring which now is dumb,
And many a stream with smothered hum,
Doth faster well and swifter glide,
Though buried deep beneath the tide.

Our village shows a rural Venice,
Its broad lagunes where yonder fen is,
Far lovelier than the Bay of Naples
Yon placid cove amid the maples,
And in my neighbor's field of corn
I recognize the Golden Horn.

Here Nature taught from year to year,
When only red men came to hear,
Methinks 't was in this school of art
Venice and Naples learned their part,

But still their mistress, to my mind,
Her young disciples leaves behind.¹

Feb. 26. The most important events make no stir on their first taking place, nor indeed in their effects directly. They seem hedged about by secrecy. It is concussion, or the rushing together of air to fill a vacuum, which makes a noise. The great events to which all things consent, and for which they have prepared the way, produce no explosion, for they are gradual, and create no vacuum which requires to be suddenly filled; as a birth takes place in silence, and is whispered about the neighborhood, but an assassination, which is at war with the constitution of things, creates a tumult immediately.

Corn grows in the night.²

Feb. 27. Some geniuses seem to hover in the horizon, like heat lightning, which is not accompanied with fertilizing rain to us, but we are obliged to rest contented with the belief that it is purifying the air somewhere. Others make known their presence by their effects, like that vivid lightning which is accompanied by copious rain and thunder and, though it clears our atmosphere, sometimes destroys our lives. Others still impart a steady and harmless light at once to large tracts, as the aurora borealis; and this phenomenon is hardest to be accounted for, some thinking it to be a reflection of the polar splendor, others a subtle fluid which pervades all

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 120, 121; *Riv.* 148, 149.]

² [See pp. 174 and 263.]

things and tends always to the zenith. All are agreed that these are equally electrical phenomena, as some clever persons have shown by drawing a spark with their knuckles. Modern philosophy thinks it has drawn down lightning from the clouds.

Feb. 28. On the death of a friend, we should consider that the fates through confidence have devolved on us the task of a double living, that we have henceforth to fulfill the promise of our friend's life also, in our own, to the world.

Feb. 29. A friend advises by his whole behavior,¹ and never condescends to particulars; another chides away a fault, he loves it away. While he sees the other's error, he is silently conscious of it, and only the more loves truth himself, and assists his friend in loving it, till the fault is expelled and gently extinguished.

March 2. Love is the burden of all Nature's odes. The song of the birds is an epithalamium, a hymeneal. The marriage of the flowers spots the meadows and fringes the hedges with pearls and diamonds. In the deep water, in the high air, in woods and pastures, and the bowels of the earth, this is the employment and condition of all things.

March 4. I learned to-day that my ornithology had done me no service. The birds I heard, which fortunately did not come within the scope of my science,

¹ [*Week*, p. 300; *Riv.* 373.]

sung as freshly as if it had been the first morning of creation, and had for background to their song an untrodden wilderness, stretching through many a Carolina and Mexico of the soul.¹

March 6. There is no delay in answering great questions; for them all things have an answer ready. The Pythian priestess gave her answers instantly, and oft-times before the questions were fairly propounded. Great topics do not wait for past or future to be determined, but the state of the crops or Brighton market no bird concerns itself about.

March 8. The wind shifts from northeast and east to northwest and south, and every icicle which has tinkled on the meadow grass so long trickles down its stem and seeks its water level unerringly with a million comrades. In the ponds the ice cracks with a busy and inspiriting din and down the larger streams is whirled, grating hoarsely and crashing its way along, which was so lately a firm field for the woodman's team and the fox, sometimes with the tracks of the skaters still fresh upon it, and the holes cut for pickerel. Town committees inspect the bridges and causeways, as if by mere eye-force to intercede with the ice and save the treasury.

In the brooks the slight grating sound of small cakes of ice, floating with various speed, is full of content and promise, and where the water gurgles under a natural bridge, you may hear these hasty rafts hold conversa-

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 114; Riv. 140.]

tion in an undertone. Every rill is a channel for the juices of the meadow.¹ Last year's grasses and flower-stalks have been steeped in rain and snow, and now the brooks flow with meadow tea, — thoroughwort, mint, flagroot, and pennyroyal, all at one draught.

In the ponds the sun makes inroads around the edges first, as ice melts in a kettle on the fire, darting his rays through this crevice, and preparing the deep water to act simultaneously on the under side.

Two years and twenty now have flown;
Their meanness time away has flung;
These limbs to man's estate have grown.
But cannot claim a manly tongue.

Amidst such boundless wealth without
I only still am poor within;
The birds have sung their summer out,
But still my spring does not begin.

In vain I see the morning rise,
In vain observe the western blaze,
Who idly look to other skies,
Expecting life by other ways.

The sparrow sings at earliest dawn,
Building her nest without delay;
All things are ripe to hear her song,
And now arrives the perfect day.

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 119, 120; Riv. 147, 148.]

Shall I then wait the autumn wind,
 Compelled to seek a milder ray,
 And leave no empty nest behind,
 No wood still echoing to my lay? ¹

March 16. The cabins of the settlers are the points whence radiate these rays of green and yellow and russet over the landscape; out of these go the axes and spades with which the landscape is painted. How much is the Indian summer and the budding of spring related to the cottage? Have not the flight of the crow and the gyrations of the hawk a reference to that roof?

The ducks alight at this season on the windward side of the river, in the smooth water, and swim about by twos and threes, pluming themselves and diving to peck at the root of the lily and the cranberries which the frost has not loosened. It is impossible to approach them within gunshot when they are accompanied by the gull, which rises sooner and makes them restless. They fly to windward first, in order to get under weigh, and are more easily reached by the shot if approached on that side. When preparing to fly, they swim about with their heads erect, and then, gliding along a few feet with their bodies just touching the surface, rise heavily with much splashing and fly low at first, if not suddenly aroused, but otherwise rise directly to survey the danger. The cunning sportsman is not in haste to desert

¹ [Stanzas 3, 2, and 5, in this order, with slight alterations, are printed in *Week*, p. 366 (Rev. 453), under the title of "The Poet's Delay."]

his position, but waits to ascertain if, having got themselves into flying trim, they will not return over the ground in their course to a new resting-place.

March 20. In society all the inspiration of my lonely hours seems to flow back on me, and then first have expression.

Love never degrades its votaries, but lifts them up to higher walks of being. They *over-look* one another. All other charities are swallowed up in this; it is gift and reward both.

We will have no vulgar Cupid for a go-between, to make us the playthings of each other, but rather cultivate an irreconcilable hatred instead of this.

March 21. The world is a fit theatre to-day in which any part may be acted. There is this moment proposed to me every kind of life that men lead anywhere, or that imagination can paint. By another spring I may be a mail-carrier in Peru, or a South African planter, or a Siberian exile, or a Greenland whaler, or a settler on the Columbia River, or a Canton merchant, or a soldier in Florida, or a mackerel-fisher off Cape Sable, or a Robinson Crusoe in the Pacific, or a silent navigator of any sea. So wide is the choice of parts, what a pity if the part of Hamlet be left out!

I am freer than any planet; no complaint reaches round the world. I can move away from public opinion, from government, from religion, from education, from society. Shall I be reckoned a ratable poll in the county of Middlesex, or be rated at one spear under the palm

trees of Guinea? Shall I raise corn and potatoes in Massachusetts, or figs and olives in Asia Minor? sit out the day in my office in State Street, or ride it out on the steppes of Tartary? For my Brobdingnag I may sail to Patagonia; for my Lilliput, to Lapland. In Arabia and Persia, my day's adventures may surpass the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. I may be a logger on the head waters of the Penobscot, to be recorded in fable hereafter as an amphibious river-god, by as sounding a name as Triton or Proteus; carry furs from Nootka to China, and so be more renowned than Jason and his golden fleece; or go on a South Sea exploring expedition, to be hereafter recounted along with the periplus of Hanno. I may repeat the adventures of Marco Polo or Mandeville.

These are but few of my chances, and how many more things may I do with which there are none to be compared!

Thank Fortune, we are not rooted to the soil, and here is not all the world. The buckeye does not grow in New England; the mockingbird is rarely heard here. Why not keep pace with the day, and not allow of a sunset nor fall behind the summer and the migration of birds? Shall we not compete with the buffalo, who keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone? The wild goose is more a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Susquehanna, and plumes himself for the night in a Louisiana bayou. The pigeon

carries an acorn in his crop from the King of Holland's to Mason and Dixon's line. Yet we think if rail fences are pulled down and stone walls set up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. If you are chosen town clerk, forsooth, you can't go to Tierra del Fuego this summer.¹

But what of all this? A man may gather his limbs snugly within the shell of a mammoth squash, with his back to the northeastern boundary, and not be unusually straitened after all. Our limbs, indeed, have room enough, but it is our souls that rust in a corner. Let us migrate interiorly without intermission, and pitch our tent each day nearer the western horizon. The really fertile soils and luxuriant prairies lie on this side the Alleghanies. There has been no Hanno of the affections. Their domain is untravelled ground, to the Mogul's dominions.

March 22. While I bask in the sun on the shores of Walden Pond, by this heat and this rustle I am absolved from all obligation to the past. The council of nations may reconsider their votes; the grating of a pebble annuls them.²

March 27. How many are now standing on the European coast whom another spring will find located on the Red River, or Wisconsin! To-day we live an antediluvian life on our quiet homesteads, and to-morrow are transported to the turmoil and bustle of a crusading era.

¹ [*Walden*, p. 352; Riv. 493.]

² [*Week*, p. 383; Riv. 474.]

Think how finite after all the known world is. Money coined at Philadelphia is a legal tender over how much of it! You may carry ship biscuit, beef, and pork quite round to the place you set out from. England sends her felons to the other side for safe keeping and convenience.

March 30. Pray, what things interest me at present? A long, soaking rain, the drops trickling down the stubble, while I lay drenched on a last year's bed of wild oats, by the side of some bare hill, ruminating. These things are of moment. To watch this crystal globe just sent from heaven to associate with me. While these clouds and this sombre drizzling weather shut all in, we two draw nearer and know one another. The gathering in of the clouds with the last rush and dying breath of the wind, and then the regular dripping of twigs and leaves the country o'er, the impression of inward comfort and sociableness, the drenched stubble and trees that drop beads on you as you pass, their dim outline seen through the rain on all sides drooping in sympathy with yourself. These are my undisputed territory. This is Nature's English comfort. The birds draw closer and are more familiar under the thick foliage, composing new strains on their roosts against the sunshine.

April 4. We look to windward for fair weather.

April 8. How shall I help myself? By withdrawing into the garret, and associating with spiders and mice,

determining to meet myself face to face sooner or later. Completely silent and attentive I will be this hour, and the next, and forever. The most positive life that history notices has been a constant retiring out of life, a wiping one's hands of it, seeing how mean it is, and having nothing to do with it.

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.

April 17. Farewell, etiquette! My neighbor inhabits a hollow sycamore, and I a beech tree. What then becomes of morning calls with cards, and deference paid to door-knockers and front entries, and presiding at one's own table?

April 19. The infinite bustle of Nature of a summer's noon, or her infinite silence of a summer's night, gives utterance to no dogma. They do not say to us even with a seer's assurance, that this or that law is immutable and so ever and only can the universe exist. But they are the indifferent occasion for all things and the annulment of all laws.

April 20. The universe will not wait to be explained. Whoever seriously attempts a theory of it is already

behind his age. His yea has reserved no nay for the morrow.

The wisest solution is no better than dissolution. Already the seer *whispers* his *convictions* to bare walls; no audience in the land can attend to them.

An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. To my neighbors who have risen in mist and rain I tell of a clear sunrise and the singing of birds as some traditionary mythus. I look back to those fresh but now remote hours as to the old dawn of time, when a solid and blooming health reigned and every deed was simple and heroic.

April 22. Thales was the first of the Greeks who taught that souls are immortal, and it takes equal wisdom to discern this old fact to-day. What the first philosopher taught, the last will have to repeat. The *world* makes no progress.

I cannot turn on my heel in a carpeted room. What a gap in the morning is a breakfast! A supper supersedes the sunset.

Methinks I hear the *ranz des vaches* and shall soon be tempted to desert.

Will not one thick garment suffice for three thin ones? Then I shall be less compound, and can lay my hand on myself in the dark.

May 14. A kind act or gift lays us under obligation not so much to the giver as to Truth and Love. We

must then be truer and kinder ourselves. Just in proportion to our sense of the kindness, and pleasure at it, is the debt paid. What is it to be *grateful* but to be *gratified*, — to be *pleased*? The nobly poor will dissolve all obligations by nobly accepting a kindness.

If we are not sensible of kindness, then indeed we incur a debt. Not to be pleased by generous deeds at any time, though done to another, but to sit crabbedly silent in a corner, what is it but a voluntary imprisonment for debt? It is to see the world through a grating. Not to let the light of virtuous actions shine on us at all times, through every crevice, is to live in a dungeon.

War is the sympathy of concussion. We would fain rub one against another. Its rub may be friction merely, but it would rather be titillation. We discover in the quietest scenes how faithfully war has copied the moods of peace. Men do not peep into heaven but they see embattled hosts there. Milton's heaven was a camp. When the sun bursts through the morning fog I seem to hear the din of war louder than when his chariot thundered on the plains of Troy. Every man is a warrior when he aspires. He marches on his post. The soldier is the practical idealist; he has no sympathy with matter, he revels in the annihilation of it. So do we all at times. When a freshet destroys the works of man, or a fire consumes them, or a Lisbon earthquake shakes them down, our sympathy with persons is swallowed up in a wider sympathy with the universe. A crash is apt to grate agreeably on our ears.

Let not the faithful sorrow that he has no ear for the more fickle harmonies of creation, if he is awake to the slower measure of virtue and truth. If his pulse does not beat in unison with the musician's quips and turns, it accords with the pulse-beat of the ages.¹

June 11. We had appointed Saturday, August 31st, 1839, for the commencement of our White Mountain expedition. We awake to a warm, drizzling rain which threatens delay to our plans, but at length the leaves and grass are dried, and it comes out a mild afternoon, of such a sober serenity and freshness that Nature herself seems maturing some greater scheme of her own. All things wear the aspect of a fertile idleness. It is the eventide of the soul. After this long dripping and oozing from every pore Nature begins to respire again more healthily than ever. So with a vigorous shove we launch our boat from the bank, while the flags and bulrushes curtsy a God-speed, and drop silently down the stream.² As if we had launched our bark in the sluggish current of our thoughts, and were bound nowhither.

Gradually the village murmur subsides, as when one falls into a placid dream and on its Lethe tide is floated from the past into the future, or as silently as fresh thoughts awaken us to new morning or evening light.³

Our boat⁴ was built like a fisherman's dory, with

¹ [*The Service*, p. 15.]

² [*Week*, p. 12; Riv. 15.]

³ [*Week*, p. 17; Riv. 21.]

⁴ [T. finally sold this boat to Hawthorne, who changed the name from Musketaquid to Pond-Lily; and later it passed into Channing's hands. See Hawthorne's *American Note-Books*, Riv. pp. 318-321, and Channing, p. 13.]

thole-pins for four oars. Below it was green with a border of blue, as if out of courtesy [to] the green sea and the blue heavens. It was well calculated for service, but of consequence difficult to be dragged over shoal places or carried round falls.

A boat should have a sort of life and independence of its own. It is a sort of amphibious animal, a creature of two elements, a fish to swim and a bird to fly, related by one half of its structure to some swift and shapely fish and by the other to some strong-winged and graceful bird. The fins of the fish will tell where to set the oars, and the tail give some hint for the form and position of the rudder. And so may we learn where there should be the greatest breadth of beam and depth in the hold. The bird will show how to rig and trim the sails, and what form to give to the prow, that it may balance the boat and divide the air and water best.

The boat took to the water; from of old there had been a tacit league struck between these two, and now it gladly availed itself of the old law that the heavier shall float the lighter.

Two masts we had provided, one to serve for a tent-pole at night, and likewise other slender poles, that we might exchange the tedium of rowing for poling in shallow reaches. At night we lay on a buffalo-skin under a tent of drilled cotton eight feet high and as many in diameter, which effectually defended from dampness, so short a step is it from tiled roofs to drilled cotton, from carpeted floors to a buffalo-skin.¹

¹ [*Week*, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 15-17.]

There were a few berries left still on the hills, hanging with brave content by the slenderest threads.¹

As the night stole over, such a freshness stole across the meadow that every blade of cut-grass seemed to teem with life.²

We stole noiselessly down the stream, occasionally driving a pickerel from the covert of the pads, or a bream from her nest, and the small green bittern would now and then sail away on sluggish wings from some recess of the shore.³ With its patient study by rocks and sandy capes, has it wrested the whole of her secret from Nature yet? It has looked out from its dull eye for so long, standing on one leg, on moon and stars sparkling through silence and dark, and now what a rich experience is its! What says it of stagnant pools, and reeds, and damp night fogs? It would be worth while to look in the eye which has been open and seeing at such hours and in such solitudes. When I behold that dull yellowish green, I wonder if my own soul is not a bright, invisible green. I would fain lay my eye side by side with its and learn of it.⁴

*End of my Journal of 546 pages.*⁵

¹ [*Week*, p. 19; *Riv.* 24.]

² [*Week*, p. 37; *Riv.* 47.]

³ [*Week*, p. 17; *Riv.* 21.]

⁴ [*Week*, p. 250; *Riv.* 310, 311.]

⁵ [This was Thoreau's first journal, from which he made the transcripts which are now the only representatives of his early diarizing. See p. 188, where *Journal* of 396 pages ends.]

June 14.

Λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἄνευ ὕλης. — *Aristotle's definition of art.*¹

Ὁ χρῆ σε νοεῖν νόου ἄνθει. — *Chaldaic Oracles.*

Ἐγὼ εἶμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸν, καὶ ὄν, καὶ ἐσόμενον, καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδεὶς πω θνητὸς ἀπεκάλυψεν. — *Inscription upon the temple at Saïs.*

Plotinus aimed at ἐπαφήν, and παρουσίαν ἐπιστήμης κρείττονα, and τὸ ἑαυτὸν κέντρον τῷ ὄντι πάντων κέντρον συνάπτειν.

Μέλλει τὸ Θεῖον δ' ἐστὶ τοιοῦτον φύσει. — EURIPIDES in *Orestes.*

“The right Reason is in part divine, in part human; the second can be expressed, but no language can translate the first.” — EMPEDOCLES.

“In glory and in joy,
Behind his plough, upon the mountain-side!”²

I seemed to see the woods wave on a hundred mountains, as I read these lines, and the distant rustling of their leaves reached my ear.

June 15. I stood by the river to-day considering the forms of the elms reflected in the water. For every oak

¹ [*Week*, p. 386; *Riv.* 476.]

² [Wordsworth, incorrectly quoted. The line reads, —
“Following his plough, along the mountain-side.”]

and birch, too, growing on the hilltop, as well as for elms and willows, there is a graceful ethereal tree making down from the roots, as it were the original idea of the tree, and sometimes Nature in high tides brings her mirror to its foot and makes it visible.¹ Anxious Nature sometimes reflects from pools and puddles the objects which our grovelling senses may fail to see relieved against the sky with the pure ether for background.

It would be well if we saw ourselves as in perspective always, impressed with distinct outline on the sky, side by side with the shrubs on the river's brim. So let our life stand to heaven as some fair, sunlit tree against the western horizon, and by sunrise be planted on some eastern hill to glisten in the first rays of the dawn.

Why always insist that men incline to the moral side of their being? Our life is not all moral. Surely, its actual phenomena deserve to be studied impartially. The science of Human Nature has never been attempted, as the science of Nature has. The dry light has never shone on it. Neither physics nor metaphysics have touched it.

We have not yet met with a sonnet, genial and affectionate, to prophane swearing, breaking on the still night air, perhaps, like the hoarse croak of some bird. Noxious weeds and stagnant waters have their lovers, and the utterer of oaths must have honeyed lips, and be another Attic bee after a fashion, for only prevalent and essential harmony and beauty can employ the laws of sound and of light.

¹ [*Week*, pp. 44, 45; *Riv.* 56.]

June 16. The river down which we glided for that long afternoon was like a clear drop of dew with the heavens and the landscape reflected in it. And as evening drew on, faint purple clouds began to be reflected in its water, and the cow-bells tinkled louder and more incessantly on the banks, and like shy water-rats we stole along near the shore, looking out for a place to pitch our camp.¹

It seems insensibly to grow lighter as night shuts in; the furthest hamlet begins to be revealed, which before lurked in the shade of the noon.² It twinkles now through the trees like some fair evening star darting its ray across valley and wood.

Would it not be a luxury to stand up to one's chin in some retired swamp for a whole summer's day, scenting the sweet-fern and bilberry blows, and lulled by the minstrelsy of gnats and mosquitoes? A day passed in the society of those Greek sages, such as described in the "Banquet" of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry vines, and the fresh Attic salt of the moss beds. Say twelve hours of genial and familiar converse with the leopard frog. The sun to rise behind alder and dogwood, and climb buoyantly to his meridian of three hands' breadth, and finally sink to rest behind some bold western hummock. To hear the evening chant of the mosquito from a thousand green chapels, and the bittern begin to boom from his concealed fort like a sunset gun! Surely, one may as profitably be soaked in the juices of a marsh for

¹ [*Week*, pp. 37, 38; *Riv.* 47.]

² [*Week*, p. 38; *Riv.* 47, 48.]

one day, as pick his way dry-shod over sand. Cold and damp, — are they not as rich experience as warmth and dryness? ¹

So is not shade as good as sunshine, night as day? Why be eagles and thrushes always, and owls and whip-poor-wills never?

I am pleased to see the landscape through the bottom of a tumbler, it is clothed in such a mild, quiet light, and the barns and fences checker and partition it with new regularity. These rough and uneven fields stretch away with lawn-like smoothness to the horizon. The clouds are finely distinct and picturesque, the light-blue sky contrasting with their feathery whiteness. They are fit drapery to hang over Persia.² The smith's shop, resting in such a Grecian light, is worthy to stand beside the Parthenon. The potato and grain fields are such gardens as he imagines who has schemes of ornamental husbandry.

If I were to write of the dignity of the farmer's life, I would behold his farms and crops through a tumbler. All the occupations of men are ennobled so.

Our eyes, too, are convex lenses, but we do not learn with the eyes; they introduce us, and we learn after by converse with things.

June 17. Our lives will not attain to be spherical by lying on one or the other side forever; but only by resigning ourselves to the law of gravity in us, will our axis become coincident with the celestial axis, and

¹ [*Week*, pp. 319, 320; *Riv.* 395, 396.] ² [*Week*, p. 45; *Riv.* 56, 57.]

[only] by revolving incessantly through all circles, shall we acquire a perfect sphericity.¹

Men are inclined to lay the chief stress on likeness and not on difference. We seek to know how a thing is related to us, and not if it is strange. We call those bodies warm whose temperature is many degrees below our own, and never those cold which are warmer than we. There are many degrees of warmth below blood heat, but none of cold above it.²

Even the motto "Business before friends" admits of a high interpretation. No interval of time can avail to defer friendship. The concerns of time must be attended to in time. I need not make haste to explore the whole secret of a star; if it were vanished quite out of the firmament, so that no telescope could longer discover it, I should not despair of knowing it entirely one day.

We meet our friend with a certain awe, as if he had just lighted on the earth, and yet as if we had some title to be acquainted with him by our old familiarity with sun and moon.

June 18. I should be pleased to meet man in the woods. I wish he were to be encountered like wild caribous and moose.

I am startled when I consider how little I am *actually* concerned about the things I write in my journal.

¹ [*The Service*, p. 6.]

² [*Week*, p. 280; *Riv.* 347.]

Think of the Universal History, and then tell me, — when did burdock and plantain sprout first? ¹

A fair land, indeed, do books spread open to us, from the Genesis down; but alas! men do not take them up kindly into their own being, and breathe into them a fresh beauty, knowing that the grimmest of them belong to such warm sunshine and still moonlight as the present.

Of what consequence whether I stand on London bridge for the next century, or look into the depths of this bubbling spring which I have laid open with my hoe?

• *June 19.* The other day I rowed in my boat a free, even lovely young lady, and, as I plied the oars, she sat in the stern, and there was nothing but she between me and the sky.² So might all our lives be picturesque if they were free enough, but mean relations and prejudices intervene to shut out the sky, and we never see a man as simple and distinct as the man-weathercock on a steeple.

The faint bugle notes which I hear in the west seem to flash on the horizon like heat lightning.³ Cows low in the street more friendly than ever, and the note of the whip-poor-will, borne over the fields, is the voice with which the woods and moonlight woo me.

I shall not soon forget the sounds which lulled me when falling asleep on the banks of the Merrimack.

¹ [*Week*, p. 163; Riv. 203.]

² [*Week*, p. 45; Riv. 57.]

³ [*The Service*, p. 14.]

Far into night I hear some tyro beating a drum incessantly with a view to some country muster, and am thrilled by an infinite sweetness as of a music which the breeze drew from the sinews of war. I think of the line, —

“When the drum beat at dead of night.”

How I wish it would wake the whole world to march to its melody, but still it drums on alone in the silence and the dark. Cease not, thou drummer of the night, thou too shalt have thy reward. The stars and the firmament hear thee, and their aisles shall echo thy beat till its call is answered, and the forces are mustered. The universe is attentive as a little child to thy sound, and trembles as if each stroke bounded against an elastic vibrating firmament. I should be contented if the night never ended, for in the darkness heroism will not be deferred, and I see fields where no hero has couched his lance.¹

June 20. Perfect sincerity and transparency make a great part of beauty, as in dewdrops, lakes, and diamonds. A spring is a cynosure in the fields. All Muscovy glitters in the minute particles of mica on its bottom, and the ripples cast their shadows flickeringly on the white sand, as the clouds which flit across the landscape.

Something like the woodland sounds will be heard to echo through the leaves of a good book. Sometimes I hear the fresh emphatic note of the oven-bird, and am

¹ [*Week*, p. 181; Riv. 224, 225.]

tempted to turn many pages; sometimes the hurried chuckling sound of the squirrel when he dives into the wall.

If we only see clearly enough how mean our lives are, they will be splendid enough. Let us remember not to strive upwards too long, but sometimes drop plumb down the other way, and wallow in meanness. From the deepest pit we may see the stars, if not the sun. Let us have presence of mind enough to sink when we can't swim. At any rate, a carcass had better lie on the bottom than float an offense to all nostrils. It will not be falling, for we shall ride wide of the earth's gravity as a star, and always be drawn upward still, — *semper cadendo nunquam cadit*, — and so, by yielding to universal gravity, at length become fixed stars.

Praise begins when things are seen partially. We begin to praise when we begin to see that a thing needs our assistance.

When the heavens are obscured to us, and nothing noble or heroic appears, but we are oppressed by imperfection and shortcoming on all hands, we are apt to suck our thumbs and decry our fates. As if nothing were to be done in cloudy weather, or, if heaven were not accessible by the upper road, men would not find out a lower. Sometimes I feel so cheap that I am inspired, and could write a poem about it, — but straight-way I cannot, for I am no longer mean. Let me know that I am ailing, and I am well. We should not always

beat off the impression of trivialness, but make haste to welcome and cherish it. Water the weed till it blossoms; with cultivation it will bear fruit. There are two ways to victory, — to strive bravely, or to yield. How much pain the last will save we have not yet learned.

June 21. I shall not soon forget my first night in a tent, — how the distant barking of dogs for so many still hours revealed to me the riches of the night. Who would not be a dog and bay the moon? ¹

I never feel that I am inspired unless my body is also. It too spurns a tame and commonplace life. They are fatally mistaken who think, while they strive with their minds, that they may suffer their bodies to stagnate in luxury or sloth. The body is the first proselyte the Soul makes. Our life is but the Soul made known by its fruits, the body. The whole duty of man may be expressed in one line, — Make to yourself a perfect body.

June 22. What a man knows, that he does.

It is odd that people will wonder how Shakespeare could write as he did without knowing Latin, or Greek, or geography, as if these were of more consequence than to know how to whistle. They are not backward to recognize Genius, — how it dispenses with those furtherances which others require, leaps where they

¹ [*Week*, pp. 39, 40; *Riv.* 49, 50.]

crawl,—and yet they never cease to marvel that so it was,—that it was Genius, and helped itself.

Nothing can shock a truly brave man—but dullness. One can tolerate many things. What mean these sly, suspicious looks, as if you were an odd fish, a piece of crockery-ware to be tenderly handled? Surely people forget how many rebuffs every man has experienced in his day,—perhaps has fallen into a horsepond, eaten freshwater clams, or worn one shirt for a week without washing. Cannot a man be as calmly tolerant as a potato field in the sun, whose equanimity is not disturbed by Scotch thistles over the wall, but there it smiles and waxes till the harvest, let thistles mount never so high? You cannot receive a shock, unless you have an electric affinity for that which shocks you. Have no affinity for what is shocking.¹

Do not present a gleaming edge to ward off harm, for that will oftenest attract the lightning, but rather be the all-pervading ether which the lightning does not strike but purify. Then will the rudeness or profanity of your companion be like a flash across the face of your sky, lighting up and revealing its serene depths.² Earth cannot shock the heavens; but its dull vapor and foul smoke make a bright cloud spot in the ether, and anon the sun, like a cunning artificer, will cut and paint it, and set it for a jewel in the breast of the sky.³

¹ [*Week*, p. 304; *Riv.* 378.]

² [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, *Riv.* 35.]

³ [*The Service*, p. 2.]

When we are shocked at vice we express a lingering sympathy with it. Dry rot, rust, and mildew shock no man, for none is subject to them.

June 23. We Yankees are not so far from right, who answer one question by asking another. Yes and No are lies. A true answer will not aim to establish anything, but rather to set all well afloat. All answers are in the future, and day answereth to day. Do we think we can anticipate them?

In Latin, to respond is to pledge one's self before the gods to do faithfully and honorably, as a man should, in any case. This is good.

Music soothes the din of philosophy and lightens incessantly over the heads of sages.¹

How can the language of the poet be more expressive than nature? He is content that what he has already read in simple characters, or indifferently in all, be translated into the same again.

He is the true artist whose life is his material; every stroke of the chisel must enter his own flesh and bone and not grate dully on marble.²

The Springs. — What is any man's discourse to me if I am not sensible of something in it as steady and cheery as the creak of the crickets? In it the woods must be relieved against the sky. Men tire me when I am not

¹ [*The Service*, p. 13.]

² [*The Service*, p. 24.]

constantly greeted and cheered in their discourse, as it were by the flux of sparkling streams.

I cannot see the bottom of the sky, because I cannot see to the bottom of myself. It is the symbol of my own infinity. My eye penetrates as far into the ether as that depth is inward from which my contemporary thought springs.

Not by constraint or severity shall you have access to true wisdom, but by abandonment, and childlike mirthfulness. If you would know aught, be gay before it.

June 24. When I read Cudworth I find I can tolerate all, — atomists, pneumatologists, atheists, and theists, — Plato, Aristotle, Leucippus, Democritus, and Pythagoras. It is the attitude of these men, more than any communication, which charms me. It is so rare to find a man musing. But between them and their commentators there is an endless dispute. But if it come to that, that you compare notes, then you are all wrong. As it is, each takes me up into the serene heavens, and paints earth and sky. Any sincere thought is irresistible; it lifts us to the zenith, whither the smallest bubble rises as surely as the largest.

Dr. Cudworth does not consider that the belief in a deity is as great a heresy as exists. Epicurus held that the gods were "of human form, yet were so thin and subtle, as that, comparatively with our terrestrial bodies, they might be called incorporeal; they having not so much *carnem* as *quasi-carnem*, nor *sanguinem* as *quasi-sanguinem*, a certain kind of aerial or ethereal

flesh and blood." This, which Cudworth pronounces "romantical," is plainly as good doctrine as his own. As if any sincere thought were not the best sort of truth!

There is no doubt but the highest morality in the books is rhymed or measured, — is, in form as well as substance, poetry. Such is the scripture of all nations. If I were to compile a volume to contain the condensed wisdom of mankind, I should quote no rhythmless line.¹

Not all the wit of a college can avail to make one harmonious line. It never *happens*. It may get so as to jingle, but a jingle is akin to a jar, — jars regularly recurring.²

So delicious is plain speech to my ears, as if I were to be more delighted by the whistling of the shot than frightened by the flying of the splinters, I am content, I fear, to be quite battered down and made a ruin of. I outgeneral myself when I direct the enemy to my vulnerable points.

The loftiest utterance of Love is, perhaps, sublimely satirical. Sympathy with what is sound makes sport of what is unsound.

Cliffs. Evening. — Though the sun set a quarter of an hour ago, his rays are still visible, darting half-way to the zenith. That glowing morrow in the west flashes on me like a faint presentiment of morning when I am

¹ [*Week*, pp. 93, 94; Riv. 116, 117.] ² [See p. 104.]

falling asleep. A dull mist comes rolling from the west, as if it were the dust which day has raised. A column of smoke is rising from the woods yonder, to uphold heaven's roof till the light comes again. The landscape, by its patient resting there, teaches me that all good remains with him that waiteth, and that I shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here, than by hurrying over the hills of the west.

Morning and evening are as like as brother and sister. The sparrow and thrush sing and the frogs peep for both.

The woods breathe louder and louder behind me. With what hurry-scurry night takes place! The wagon rattling over yonder bridge is the messenger which day sends back to night; but the dispatches are sealed. In its rattle the village seems to say, This one sound, and I have done.

Red, then, is Day's color; at least it is the color of his heel. He is 'stepping westward.' We only notice him when he comes and when he goes.

With noble perseverance the dog bays the stars yonder. I too, like thee, walk alone in this strange, familiar night, my voice, like thine, beating against its friendly concave; and barking I hear only my own voice. 10 o'clock.

June 25. Let me see no other conflict but with prosperity. If my path run on before me level and smooth, it is all a mirage; in reality it is steep and arduous as a chamois pass. I will not let the years roll over me like a Juggernaut car.

We will warm us at each other's fire. Friendship is not such a cold refining process as a double sieve, but a glowing furnace in which all impurities are consumed.

Men have learned to touch before they scrutinize, — to shake hands, and not to stare.

June 26. The best poetry has never been written, for when it might have been, the poet forgot it, and when it was too late remembered it; or when it might have been, the poet remembered it, and when it was too late forgot it.

The highest condition of art is artlessness.

Truth is always paradoxical.

He will get to the goal first who stands stillest.

There is one let better than any help, and that is, —
Let-alone.

By sufferance you may escape suffering.

He who resists not at all will never surrender.

When a dog runs at you, whistle for him.

Say, Not so, and you will outcircle the philosophers.

Stand outside the wall, and no harm can reach you.
The danger is that you be walled in with it.

June 27. I am living this 27th of June, 1840, a dull, cloudy day and no sun shining. The clink of the smith's hammer sounds feebly over the roofs, and the wind is sighing gently, as if dreaming of cheerfulest days. The farmer is plowing in yonder field, craftsmen are busy in the shops, the trader stands behind the counter, and all works go steadily forward. But I will have nothing to do: I will tell fortune that I play no game with her,

and she may reach me in my Asia of serenity and indolence if she can.

For an impenetrable shield, stand inside yourself.¹

He was no artist, but an artisan, who first made shields of brass.²

Unless we meet religiously, we prophane one another. What was the consecrated ground round the temple, we have used as no better than a domestic court.

Our friend's is as holy a shrine as any God's, to be approached with sacred love and awe. Veneration is the measure of Love. Our friend answers ambiguously, and sometimes before the question is propounded, like the oracle of Delphi. He forbears to ask explanation, but doubts and surmises darkly with full faith, as we silently ponder our fates.

In no presence are we so susceptible to shame. Our hour is a sabbath, our abode a temple, our gifts peace offerings, our conversation a communion, our silence a prayer. In prophanity we are absent, in holiness near, in sin estranged, in innocence reconciled.

June 28. The prophane never hear music; the holy ever hear it. It is God's voice, the divine breath audible. Where it is heard, there is a sabbath. It is omnipotent; all things obey it as they obey virtue. It is the herald of virtue.³ It passes by sorrow, for grief hangs its harp on the willows.

¹ [See p. 106.] ² [See p. 106.] ³ [*The Service*, p. 12.]

June 29. Of all phenomena, my own race are the most mysterious and undiscoverable. For how many years have I striven to meet one, even on common manly ground, and have not succeeded!

June 30. I sailed from Fair Haven last evening as gently and steadily as the clouds sail through the atmosphere. The wind came blowing blithely from the southwest fields, and stepped into the folds of our sail like a winged horse, pulling with a strong and steady impulse. The sail bends gently to the breeze, as swells some generous impulse of the heart, and anon flutters and flaps with a kind of human suspense. I could watch the motions of a sail forever, they are so rich and full of meaning. I watch the play of its pulse, as if it were my own blood beating there. The varying temperature of distant atmospheres is graduated on its scale. It is a free, buoyant creature, the bauble of the heavens and the earth. A gay pastime the air plays with it. If it swells and tugs, it is because the sun lays his windy finger on it. The breeze it plays with has been outdoors so long. So thin is it, and yet so full of life; so noiseless when it labors hardest, so noisy and impatient when least serviceable.¹ So am I blown on by God's breath, so flutter and flap, and fill gently out with the breeze.

In this fresh evening each blade and leaf looks as if it had been dipped in an icy liquid greenness. Let eyes that ache come here and look, — the sight will be a sovereign eyewater, — or else wait and bathe them in the dark.

¹ [*Week*, pp. 384, 385; *Riv.* 475.]

We go forth into the fields, and there the wind blows freshly onward, and still on, and we must make new efforts not to be left behind. What does the dogged wind intend, that, like a willful cur, it will not let me turn aside to rest or content? Must it always reprove and provoke me, and never welcome me as an equal?

The truth shall prevail and falsehood discover itself, as long as the wind blows on the hills.

A man's life should be a stately march to a sweet but unheard music, and when to his fellows it shall seem irregular and inharmonious, he will only be stepping to a livelier measure, or his nicer ear hurry him into a thousand symphonies and concordant variations. There will be no halt ever, but at most a marching on his post, or such a pause as is richer than any sound, when the melody runs into such depth and wildness as to be no longer heard, but implicitly consented to with the whole life and being. He will take a false step never, even in the most arduous times, for then the music will not fail to swell into greater sweetness and volume, and itself rule the movement it inspired.¹

I have a deep sympathy with war, it so apes the gait and bearing of the soul.

Value and effort are as much coincident as weight and a tendency to fall. In a very wide but true sense, effort is the deed itself, and it is only when these sensible stuffs intervene, that our attention is distracted from

¹ [*The Service*, pp. 15, 16.]

the deed to the accident. It is never the deed men praise, but some marble or canvas which are only a staging to the real work.¹

July 1. To be a man is to do a man's work; always our resource is to endeavor. We may well say, Success to our endeavors. Effort is the prerogative of virtue.²

The true laborer is recompensed by his labor, not by his employer. Industry is its own wages. Let us not suffer our hands to lose one jot of their handiness by looking behind to a mean recompense, knowing that our true endeavor cannot be thwarted, nor we be cheated of our earnings unless by not earning them.³

The true poem is not that which the public read. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, which is stereotyped in the poet's life, is what he has become through his work. Some symbol of value may shape itself to the senses in wood, or marble, or verse, but this is fluctuating as the laborer's hire, which may or may not be withheld. His very material is not material but supernatural. Perhaps the hugest and most effective deed may have no sensible result at all on earth, but paint itself in the heavens in new stars and constellations. Its very material lies out of nature. When, in rare moments, we strive wholly with one consent, which we call a yearning, we may not hope that our work will stand in any artist's gallery.⁴

¹ [*The Service*, p. 23.]

³ [*The Service*, p. 23.]

² [*The Service*, p. 23.]

⁴ [*The Service*, p. 23.]

Let not the artist expect that his true work will stand in any prince's gallery.

July 2. I am not taken up, like Moses, upon a mountain to learn the law, but lifted up in my seat here, in the warm sunshine and genial light.

They who are ready to go are already invited.

Neither men nor things have any true mode of invitation but to be inviting.

Can that be a task which all things abet, and to postpone which is to strive against nature? ¹

July 3. When Alexander appears, the Hercynian and Dodonean woods seem to wave a welcome to him.

Do not thoughts and men's lives enrich the earth and change the aspect of things as much as a new growth of wood?

What are Godfrey and Gonsalvo unless we breathe a life into them, and reënaet their exploits as a prelude to our own? The past is only so heroic as we see it; it is the canvas on which our conception of heroism is painted, the dim prospectus of our future field. We are dreaming of what we are to do.²

The last sunrise I witnessed seemed to outshine the

¹ [*The Service*, p. 23.]

² [*The Service*, pp. 25, 26.]

splendor of all preceding ones, and I was convinced that it behooved man to dawn as freshly, and with equal promise and steadiness advance into the career of life, with as lofty and serene a countenance to move onward through his midday to a yet fairer and more promising setting. Has the day grown old when it sets? and shall man wear out sooner than the sun? In the crimson colors of the west I discern the budding hues of dawn. To my western brother it is rising pure and bright as it did to me, but the evening exhibits in the still rear of day the beauty which through morning and noon escaped me.¹ When we are oppressed by the heat and turmoil of the noon, let us remember that the sun which scorches us with brazen beams is gilding the hills of morning and awaking the woodland quires for other men.

We will have a dawn, and noon, and serene sunset in ourselves.

What we call the gross atmosphere of evening is the accumulated deed of the day, which absorbs the rays of beauty, and shows more richly than the naked promise of the dawn. By earnest toil in the heat of the noon, let us get ready a rich western blaze against the evening of our lives.²

Low-thoughted, plodding men have come and camped in my neighbor's field to-night, with camp music and bustle. Their bugle instantly finds a sounding board in the heavens, though mean lips blow it. The sky is delighted with strains which the connois-

¹ [*The Service*, pp. 21, 22.]

² [*The Service*, p. 22.]

seur rejects. It seems to say, Now is this my own earth.¹

In music are the centripetal and centrifugal forces. The universe needed only to hear a divine harmony that every star might fall into its proper place and assume a true sphericity.²

July 4. 4 o'clock, A. M. The Townsend Light Infantry encamped last night in my neighbor's inclosure.

The night still breathes slumberously over field and wood, when a few soldiers gather about one tent in the twilight, and their band plays an old Scotch air, with bugle and drum and fife attempered to the season. It seems like the morning hymn of creation. The first sounds of the awakening camp, mingled with the chastened strains which so sweetly salute the dawn, impress me as the morning prayer of an army.³

And now the morning gun fires. The soldier awakens to creation and awakening it. I am sure none are cowards now. These strains are the roving dreams which steal from tent to tent, and break forth into distinct melody. They are the soldier's morning thought. Each man awakes himself with lofty emotions, and would do some heroic deed. You need preach no homily to him; he is the stuff they are made of.

¹ [*The Service*, p. 14.]

² [*The Service*, p. 12.]

³ I have heard a strain of music issuing from a soldiers' camp in the dawn, which sounded like the morning hymn of creation. The birches rustling in the breeze and the slumberous breathing of the crickets seemed to hush their murmuring to attend to it. [Written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the Journal.]

The whole course of our lives should be analogous to one day of the soldier's. His Genius seems to whisper in his ear what demeanor is befitting, and in his bravery and his march he yields a blind and partial obedience.

The fresher breeze which accompanies the dawn rustles the oaks and birches, and the earth respire calmly with the creaking of crickets. Some hazel leaf stirs gently, as if anxious not to awake the day too abruptly, while the time is hastening to the distinct line between darkness and light. And soldiers issue from their dewy tents, and as if in answer to expectant nature, sing a sweet and far-echoing hymn.

We may well neglect many things, provided we overlook them.

When to-day I saw the "Great Ball" rolled majestically along, it seemed a shame that man could not move like it. All dignity and grandeur has something of the undulatoriness of the sphere. It is the secret of majesty in the rolling gait of the elephant, and of all grace in action and in art. The line of beauty is a curve. Each man seems striving to imitate its gait, and keep pace with it, but it moves on regardless and conquers the multitude with its majesty. What shame that our lives, which should be the source of planetary motion and sanction the order of the spheres, are full of abruptness and angularity, so as not to roll, nor move majestically.¹

¹ [*The Service*, p. 7. Mr. Sanborn, in a note to this passage, says, "The allusion here is to the extraordinary sight of the gravest citizens

July 5. Go where we will, we discover infinite change in particulars only, not in generals.

You cannot rob a man of anything which he will miss.

July 6. All this worldly wisdom was once the un-amiabile heresy of some wise man.¹

I observe a truly wise practice on every hand, in education, in religion, and the morals of society, — enough embodied wisdom to have set up many an ancient philosopher.²

This society, if it were a person to be met face to face, would not only be tolerated but courted, with its so impressive experience and admirable acquaintance with things.

Consider society at any epoch, and who does not see that heresy has already *prevailed* in it?³

Have no mean hours, but be grateful for every hour, and accept what it brings. The reality will make any sincere record respectable. No day will have been wholly misspent, if one sincere, thoughtful page has been written.

of Concord, in that summer [1840], . . . turning out to roll a huge ball, emblematic of the popular movement against President Van Buren, from the battle-ground of Concord to that of Bunker Hill, singing as they rolled:—

‘It is the Ball a-rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too.’”

¹ [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.] ² [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 160, 161.]

³ [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.]

Let the daily tide leave some deposit on these pages, as it leaves sand and shells on the shore. So much increase of *terra firma*. This may be a calendar of the ebbs and flows of the soul; and on these sheets as a beach, the waves may cast up pearls and seaweed.

July 7. I have experienced such simple joy in the trivial matters of fishing and sporting, formerly, as might inspire the muse of Homer and Shakespeare. And now, when I turn over the pages and ponder the plates of the “Angler’s Souvenir,” I exclaim with the poet,—

“Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer’s cloud?”¹

When I hear a sudden burst from a horn, I am startled, as if one had provoked such wildness as he could not rule nor tame. He dares to wake the echoes which he cannot put to rest.²

July 8. Doubt and falsehood are yet good preachers. They affirm roundly, while they deny partially.

I am pleased to learn that Thales was up and stirring by night not unfrequently, as his astronomical discoveries prove.

It was a saying of Solon that “it is necessary to observe a medium in all things.”

The golden mean, in ethics as in physics, is the centre of the system, and that about which all revolve; and

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 119; Riv. 146.] ² [*The Service*, p. 13.]

though, to a distant and plodding planet, it is the uttermost extreme, yet, when that planet's year is complete, it will be found central.¹ They who are alarmed lest virtue run into extreme good, have not yet wholly embraced her, but described only a slight arc about her, and from so small a curvature you can calculate no centre whatever; but their mean is no better than meanness, nor their medium than mediocrity.

The brave man, while he observes strictly this golden mean, seems to run through all extremes with impunity; like the sun, which now appears in the zenith, now in the horizon, and again is faintly reflected from the moon's disk, and has the credit of describing an entire great circle, crossing the equinoctial and solstitial colures, without detriment to his steadfastness or mediocrity.²

Every planet asserts its own to be the centre of the system.

Only *meanness* is mediocre, *moderate*; but the true *medium* is not contained within any *bounds*, but is as wide as the ends it connects.

When Solon endeavored to prove that Salamis had formerly belonged to the Athenians and not to the Megarians, he caused the tombs to be opened, and showed that the inhabitants of Salamis turned the faces of their dead to the same side with the Athenians, but the Megarians to the opposite side.³

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 36.]

² [*The Service*, pp. 3, 4.] ³ [*Week*, p. 265; Riv. 329.]

So does each part bear witness to all, and the history of all the past may be read in a single grain of its ashes.

July 9. In most men's religion the ligature which should be its muscle and sinew is rather like that thread which the accomplices of Cylon held in their hands, when they went abroad from the temple of Minerva, the other end being attached to the statue of the goddess. But frequently, as in their case, the thread breaks, being stretched, and they are left without an asylum.¹

The value of many traits in Grecian history depends not so much on their importance as history, as [on] the readiness with which they accept a wide interpretation, and illustrate the poetry and ethics of mankind. When they announce no particular truth, they are yet central to all truth. They are like those examples by which we improve, but of which we never formally extract the moral. Even the isolated and unexplained facts are like the ruins of the temples which in imagination we restore, and ascribe to some Phidias, or other master.

The Greeks were boys in the sunshine, the Romans were men in the field, the Persians women in the house, the Egyptians old men in the dark.

He who receives an injury is an accomplice of the wrong-doer.

July 10. To myself I am as pliant as osier, and my

¹ [*Week*, p. 79; Riv. 99. *The Service*, p. 5.]

courses seem not so easy to be calculated as Encke's comet; but I am powerless to bend the character of another; he is like iron in my hands. I could tame a hyena more easily than my friend. I contemplate him as a granite boulder. He is material which no tool of mine will work. A naked savage will fell an oak with a fire-brand, and wear a hatchet out of the rock, but I cannot hew the smallest chip out of my fellow. There is a character in every one which no art can reach to beautify or deform.¹

Nothing was ever so unfamiliar and startling to me as my own thoughts.

We know men through their eyes. You might say that the eye was always original and unlike another. It is the feature of the individual, and not of the family, — in twins still different. All a man's privacy is in his eye, and its expression he cannot alter more than he can alter his character. So long as we look a man in the eye, it seems to rule the other features, and make them, too, original. When I have mistaken one person for another, observing only his form, and carriage, and inferior features, the unlikeness seemed of the least consequence; but when I caught his eye, and my doubts were removed, it seemed to pervade every feature.

The eye revolves on an independent pivot which we can no more control than our own will. Its axle is the axle of the soul, as the axis of the earth is coincident with the axis of the heavens.

¹ [*Week*, p. 301; Riv. 374.]

July 11. The true art is not merely a sublime consolation and holiday labor which the gods have given to sickly mortals, to be wrought at in parlors, and not in stithies amid soot and smoke, but such a masterpiece as you may imagine a dweller on the table-lands of Central Asia might produce, with threescore and ten years for canvas, and the faculties of a man for tools, — a human life, wherein you might hope to discover more than the freshness of Guido's Aurora, or the mild light of Titian's landscapes; not a bald imitation or rival of Nature, but the restored original of which she is the reflection. For such a work as this, whole galleries of Greece and Italy are a mere mixing of colors and preparatory quarrying of marble.¹

Not how is the idea expressed in stone or on canvas, is the question, but how far it has obtained form and expression in the life of the artist.

There is much covert truth in the old mythology which makes Vulcan a brawny and deformed smith, who sweat more than the other gods. His stithy was not like a modern studio.

Let us not wait any longer, but step down from the mountains on to the plain of earth. Let our delay be like the sun's, when he lingers on the dividing line of day and night a brief space when the world is grateful for his light. We will make such haste as the morning and such delay as the evening.²

It concerns us rather to be something here present than to leave something behind us.³

¹ [*The Service*, p. 24.] ² [*The Service*, p. 26.] ³ [*The Service*, p. 23.]

It is the man determines what is said, not the words. If a mean person uses a wise maxim, I bethink me how it can be interpreted so as to commend itself to his meanness; but if a wise man makes a commonplace remark, I consider what wider construction it will admit. When Pittacus says, "It is necessary to accommodate one's self to the time and take advantage of the occasion," I assent. He might have considered that to accommodate one's self to all times, and take advantage of all occasions, was really to be independent, and make our own opportunity.

July 12. What first suggested that necessity was grim, and made fate so fatal? The strongest is always the least violent. Necessity is a sort of Eastern cushion on which I recline. I contemplate its mild, inflexible countenance, as the haze in October days. When I am vexed I only ask to be left alone with it. Leave me to my fate. It is the bosom of time and the lap of eternity; since to be necessary is to be needful, it is only another name for inflexibility of good. How I welcome my grim fellow and aspire to be such a necessity as he! He is so flexible, and yields to me as the air to my body! I leap and dance in his midst, and play with his beard till he smiles. I greet thee, my elder brother, who with thy touch ennoblest all things. Must it be so, then is it good. Thou commendest even petty ills by thy countenance.

Over Greece hangs the divine necessity, ever a mel-lower heaven of itself, whose light too gilds the Acropolis and a thousand fanes and groves.¹

¹ [*The Service*, p. 10.]

Pittacus said there was no better course than to endeavor to do well what you are doing at any moment.

Go where he will, the wise man is proprietor of all things. Everything bears a similar inscription, if we could but read it, to that on the vase found in the stomach of a fish in old times, — "To the most wise."

When his impious fellow-passengers invoked the gods in a storm, Bias cried, "Hist! hist! lest the gods perceive that you are here, for we should all be lost."

A wise man will always have his duds picked up, and be ready for whatever may happen, as the prudent merchant, notwithstanding the lavish display of his wares, will yet have them packed or easy to be removed in emergencies. In this sense there is something sluttish in all finery. When I see a fine lady or gentleman dressed to the top of the fashion, I wonder what they would do if an earthquake should happen, or a fire suddenly break out, for they seem to have counted only on fair weather, and that things will go on smoothly and without jostling. Those curls and jewels, so nicely adjusted, expect an unusual deference from the elements.

Our dress should be such as will hang conveniently about us, and fit equally well in good and in bad fortune; such as will approve itself of the right fashion and fabric, whether for the cotillion or the earthquake. In the sack of Priene, when the inhabitants with much hurry and bustle were carrying their effects to a place

of safety, some one asked Bias, who remained tranquil amid the confusion, why he was not thinking how he should save something, as the others were. "I do so," said Bias, "for I carry all my effects with me."

July 14. Our discourse should be *ex tempore*, but not *pro tempore*.

July 16. We are as much refreshed by sounds as by sights, or scents, or flavors, — as the barking of a dog heard in the woods at midnight, or the tinklings which attend the dawn.

As I picked blackberries this morning, by starlight, the distant yelping of a dog fell on my inward ear, as the cool breeze on my cheek.

July 19. These two days that I have not written in my Journal, set down in the calendar as the 17th and 18th of July, have been really an æon in which a Syrian empire might rise and fall. How many Persias have been lost and won in the interim? Night is spangled with fresh stars.

July 26. When I consider how, after sunset, the stars come out gradually in troops from behind the hills and woods, I confess that I could not have contrived a more curious and inspiring night.

July 27. Some men, like some buildings, are bulky but not great. The Pyramids any traveller may measure with his line, but the dimensions of the Parthenon

in feet and inches will seem to dangle from its entablature like an elastic drapery.¹

Much credit is due to a brave man's eye. It is the focus in which all rays are collected. It sees from within, or from the centre, just as we scan the whole concave of the heavens at a glance, but can compass only one side of the pebble at our feet.²

The grandeur of these stupendous masses of clouds, tossed into such irregular greatness across the sky, seems thrown away on the meanness of my employment. The drapery seems altogether too rich for such poor acting.³

In vain the sun challenges man to equal greatness in his career. We look in vain over earth for a Roman greatness to answer the eternal provocation.⁴

We look up to the gilded battlements of the eternal city, and are contented to be suburban dwellers outside the walls.⁵

By the last breath of the May air I inhale I am reminded that the ages never got so far down as this before. The wood thrush is a more modern philosopher than Plato and Aristotle. They are now a dogma, but he preaches the doctrine of this hour.

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 277; *Misc.*, Riv. 36. *The Service*, p. 3.]

² [*The Service*, p. 3.]

³ [*Week*, p. 407; Riv. 502. *The Service*, p. 17.]

⁴ [*The Service*, p. 17.]

⁵ [*Week*, p. 407; Riv. 502. *The Service*, p. 17.]

This systole-diastole of the heart, the circulation of the blood from the centre to the extremities, the chyfication which is constantly going on in our bodies are a sort of military evolution, a struggle to outgeneral the decay of time by the skillfulest tactics.

When bravery is worsted, it joins the peace society.

A word is wiser than any man, than any series of words. In its present received sense it may be false, but in its inner sense by descent and analogy it approves itself. Language is the most perfect work of art in the world. The chisel of a thousand years retouches it.

Nature refuses to sympathize with our sorrow. She seems not to have provided for, but by a thousand contrivances against, it. She has bevelled the margins of the eyelids that the tears may not overflow on the cheek.¹

We can conceive of a Bravery so wide that nothing can meet to befall it, so omnipresent that nothing can lie in wait for it, so permanent that no obstinacy can reduce it. The stars are its silent sentries by night, and the sun its pioneer by day. From its abundant cheerfulness spring flowers and the rainbow, and its infinite humor and wantonness produce corn and vines.²

¹ [*The Service*, p. 9.]

² [The last two sentences appear also in pencil on a fly-leaf, preceded by, "It sleeps securely within its camp, not even dreaming of a foe."]