

V

1841

(ÆT. 23-24)

Jan. 23. A day is lapsing. I hear cockerels crowing in the yard, and see them stalking among the chips in the sun. I hear busy feet on the floors, and the whole house jars with industry. Surely the day is well spent, and the time is full to overflowing. Mankind is as busy as the flowers in summer, which make haste to unfold themselves in the forenoon, and close their petals in the afternoon.

The momentous topics of human life are always of secondary importance to the business in hand, just as carpenters discuss politics between the strokes of the hammer while they are shingling a roof.¹

The squeaking of the pump sounds as necessary as the music of the spheres.

The solidity and apparent necessity of this routine insensibly recommend it to me. It is like a cane or a cushion for the infirm, and in view of it all are infirm. If there were but one erect and solid-standing tree in the woods, all creatures would go to rub against it and make sure of their footing. Routine is a ground to stand on, a wall to retreat to; we cannot draw on our boots without bracing ourselves against it.² It is the fence over which neighbors lean when they talk. All this

¹ [*Week*, p. 230 ; *Riv.* 285.] ² [*Week*, p. 229 ; *Riv.* 284, 285.]

cockcrow, and hawing and geeing, and business in the streets, is like the spring-board on which tumblers perform and develop their elasticity. Our health requires that we should recline on it from time to time. When we are in it, the hand stands still on the face of the clock, and we grow like corn in the genial dankness and silence of the night.¹ Our weakness wants it, but our strength uses it. Good for the body is the work of the body, good for the soul the work of the soul, and good for either the work of the other. Let them not call hard names, nor know a divided interest.

When I detect a beauty in any of the recesses of nature, I am reminded, by the serene and retired spirit in which it requires to be contemplated, of the inexpressible privacy of a life, — how silent and unambitious it is. The beauty there is in mosses will have to be considered from the holiest, quietest nook.²

The gods delight in stillness; they say, 'St — 'st. My truest, serenest moments are too still for emotion; they have woollen feet. In all our lives we live under the hill, and if we are not gone we live there still.

Jan. 24. Sunday. I almost shrink from the arduousness of meeting men erectly day by day.

Be resolutely and faithfully what you are; be humbly what you aspire to be. Be sure you give men the best of your wares, though they be poor enough, and the gods will help you to lay up a better store for the future.

¹ [*Week*, p. 229; Riv. 285. See also p. 124 of this volume.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 106; Riv. 131.]

Man's noblest gift to man is his sincerity, for it embraces his integrity also. Let him not dole out of himself anxiously, to suit their weaker or stronger stomachs, but make a clean gift of himself, and empty his coffers at once. I would be in society as in the landscape; in the presence of nature there is no reserve, nor effrontery.

Coleridge says of the "*ideas* spoken out everywhere in the Old and New Testament," that they "resemble the fixed stars, which appear of the same size to the naked as to the armed eye; the magnitude of which the telescope may rather seem to diminish than to increase."

It is more proper for a spiritual fact to have suggested an analogous natural one, than for the natural fact to have preceded the spiritual in our minds.

By spells seriousness will be forced to cut capers, and drink a deep and refreshing draught of silliness; to turn this sedate day of Lucifer's and Apollo's, into an all fools' day for Harlequin and Cornwallis. The sun does not grudge his rays to either, but they are alike patronized by the gods. Like overtaken schoolboys, all my members and nerves and sinews petition Thought for a recess, and my very thigh-bones itch to slip away from under me, and run and join the *mêlée*. I exult in stark inanity, leering on nature and the soul. We think the gods reveal themselves only to sedate and musing gentlemen. But not so; the buffoon in the midst of his antics catches unobserved glimpses, which he treasures for the lonely hour. When I have been playing tom-

fool, I have been driven to exchange the old for a more liberal and catholic philosophy.

Jan. 25. Monday. To-day I feel the migratory instinct strong in me, and all my members and humors anticipate the breaking up of winter. If I yielded to this impulse, it would surely guide me to summer haunts. This indefinite restlessness and fluttering on the perch do, no doubt, prophesy the final migration of souls out of nature to a serene summer, in long harrows and waving lines¹ in the spring weather, over what fair uplands and fertile Elysian meadows winging their way at evening and seeking a resting-place with loud cackling and uproar!

Wealth, no less than knowledge, is power. Among the Bedouins the richest man is the sheik, among savages he who has most iron and wampum is chief, and in England and America he is the merchant prince.

We should strengthen, and beautify, and industriously mould our bodies to be fit companions of the soul, — assist them to grow up like trees, and be agreeable and wholesome objects in nature. I think if I had had the disposal of this soul of man, I should have bestowed it sooner on some antelope of the plains than upon this sickly and sluggish body.

Jan. 26. Tuesday. I have as much property as I can command and use. If by a fault in my character I do

¹ [See *Excursions*, p. 110; Riv. 135.]

not derive my just revenues, there is virtually a mortgage on my inheritance. A man's wealth is never entered in the registrar's office. Wealth does not come in along the great thoroughfares, it does not float on the Erie or Pennsylvania canal, but is imported by a solitary track without bustle or competition, from a brave industry to a quiet mind.

I had a dream last night which had reference to an act in my life in which I had been most disinterested and true to my highest instinct but completely failed in realizing my hopes; and now, after so many months, in the stillness of sleep, complete justice was rendered me. It was a divine remuneration. In my waking hours I could not have conceived of such retribution; the presumption of desert would have damned the whole. But now I was permitted to be not so much a subject as a partner to that retribution. It was the award of divine justice, which will at length be and is even now accomplished.¹

Good writing as well as good acting will be obedience to conscience. There must not be a particle of will or whim mixed with it. If we can listen, we shall hear. By reverently listening to the inner voice, we may reinstate ourselves on the pinnacle of humanity.

Jan. 27. Wednesday. In the compensation of the dream, there was no implied loss to any, but immeasurable advantage to all.²

¹ [*Week*, p. 315; Riv. 390, 391. See also below.] ² [See above.]

The punishment of sin is not positive, as is the reward of virtue.

For a flower, I like the name pansy, or *pensée*, best of any.

Jan. 28. No innocence can quite stand up under suspicion, if it is conscious of being suspected. In the company of one who puts a wrong construction upon your actions, they are apt really to deserve a mean construction. While in that society I can never retrieve myself. Attribute to me a great motive, and I shall not fail to have one; but a mean one, and the fountain of virtue will be poisoned by the suspicion. Show men unlimited faith as the coin with which you will deal with them, and they will invariably exhibit the best wares they have. I would meet men as the friends of all their virtue, and the foes of all their vice, for no man is the partner of his guilt. If you suspect me you will never see me, but all our intercourse will be the politest leave-taking; I shall constantly defer and apologize, and postpone myself in your presence. The self-defender is accursed in the sight of gods and men; he is a superfluous knight, who serves no lady in the land. He will find in the end that he has been fighting wind-mills, and battered his mace to no purpose. The injured man with querulous tone resisting his fate is like a tree struck by lightning, which rustles its sere leaves the winter through, not having vigor enough [to] cast them off.

As for apologies, I must be off with the dew and the

frost, and leave mankind to repair the damage with their gauze screens and straw.

Resistance is a very wholesome and delicious morsel at times. When Venus advanced against the Greeks with resistless valor, it was by far the most natural attitude into which the poet could throw his hero to make him resist heroically. To a devil one might yield gracefully, but a god would be a worthy foe, and would pardon the affront.

It would be worth while, once for all, fairly and cleanly to tell how we are to be used, as vendors of lucifer matches send directions in the envelope, both how light may be readily procured and no accident happen to the user.

Let your mood determine the form of salutation, and approach the creature with a natural nonchalance, as though he were anything but what he is, and you were anything but what you are, — as though he were he, and you were you; in short, as though he were so insignificant that it did not signify, and so important that it did not import. Depend upon it, the timber is well seasoned and tough, and will bear rough usage; and if it should crack, there is plenty more where it came from. I am no piece of china-ware that cannot be jostled against my neighbor, without danger of rupture from the collision, and must needs ring a scannel strain to the end of my days when once I am cracked; but rather one of the old-fashioned wooden trenchers, which one

while stands at the head of the table, and at another is a milking-stool, and at another a seat for children, and finally goes down to its grave not unadorned with honorable scars, and does not die till it is *worn* out. Use me, for I am useful in my way. I stand as one of many petitioners, from toadstool and henbane up to dahlia and violet, supplicating to be put to my use, if by any means ye may find me serviceable; whether for a medicated drink or bath, as balm and lavender; or for fragrance, as verbena and geranium; or for sight, as cactus; or for thoughts, as pansy.¹

Jan. 29. There is something proudly thrilling in the thought that this obedience to conscience and trust in God, which is so solemnly preached in extremities and arduous circumstances, is only to retreat to one's self, and rely on our own strength. In trivial circumstances I find myself sufficient to myself, and in the most momentous I have no ally but myself, and must silently put by their harm by my own strength, as I did the former. As my own hand bent aside the willow in my path, so must my single arm put to flight the devil and his angels. God is not our ally when we shrink, and neuter when we are bold. If by trusting in God you lose any particle of your vigor, trust in Him no longer. When you trust, do not lay aside your armor, but put it on and buckle it tighter. If by reliance on the gods I have disbanded one of my forces, then was it poor policy. I had better have retained the most inexperienced tyro who had straggled into the camp, and let go

¹ [Week, p. 304; Riv. 377, 378. See also p. 205.]

the heavenly alliance. I cannot afford to relax discipline because God is on my side, for He is on the side of discipline. And if the gods were only the heavens I fought under, I would not care if they stormed or were calm. I do not want a countenance, but a help. And there is more of God and divine help in a man's little finger than in idle prayer and trust.

The best and bravest deed is that which the whole man — heart, lungs, hands, fingers, and toes — at any time prompts. Each hanger-on in the purlieu of the camp, must strike his standard at the signal from the Prætorian tent, and fall into the line of march; but if a single sutler delay to make up his pack, then suspect the fates and consult the omens again. This is the meaning of integrity; this is to be an integer, and not a fraction. Be even for all virtuous ends, but odd for all vice. Be a perfect power, so that any of your roots multiplied into itself may give the whole again.

Beauty is compared, not measured, for it is the creature of proportions, not of size. Size must be subdued to it. It is hard for a tall or a short person to be beautiful.

To graft the Persian lilac on the ash, is as if you were to splice the thigh-bones of the Venus de Medici.

Friends will have to be introduced each time they meet. They will be eternally strange to one another, and when they have mutually appropriated their value for the last hour, they will go and gather a new measure

of strangeness for the next. They are like two boughs crossed in the wood, which play backwards and forwards upon one another in the wind, and only wear into each other, but never the sap of the one flows into the pores of the other, for then the wind would no more draw from them those strains which enchanted the wood. They are not two united, but rather one divided.

Of all strange and unaccountable things this journalizing is the strangest. It will allow nothing to be predicated of it; its good is not good, nor its bad bad. If I make a huge effort to expose my innermost and richest wares to light, my counter seems cluttered with the meanest homemade stuffs; but after months or years I may discover the wealth of India, and whatever rarity is brought overland from Cathay, in that confused heap, and what perhaps seemed a festoon of dried apple or pumpkin will prove a string of Brazilian diamonds, or pearls from Coromandel.

Men lie behind the barrier of a relation as effectually concealed as the landscape by a mist; and when at length some unforeseen accident throws me into a new attitude to them, I am astounded, as if for the first time I saw the sun on the hillside. They lie out before me like a new order of things. As, when the master meets his pupil as a man, then first do we stand under the same heavens, and master and pupil alike go down the resistless ocean stream together.

Jan. 30. Saturday. Far over the fields, between the

tops of yonder wood, I see a slight cloud not larger than the vapor from a kettle, drifting by its own inward purpose in a direction contrary to the planet. As it flits across the dells and defiles of the tree-tops, now seen, then lost beyond a pine, I am curious to know wherein its will resides, for to my eye it has no heart, nor lungs, nor brain, nor any interior and private chamber which it may inhabit.

Its motion reminds me of those lines of Milton:—

“As when far off at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood,
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole.”

The snow collects upon the plumes of the pitch pine in the form of a pineapple, which if you divide in the middle will expose three red kernels like the tamarind-stone. So does winter with his mock harvest jeer at the sincerity of summer. The tropical fruits, which will not bear the rawness of our summer, are imitated in a thousand fantastic shapes by the whimsical genius of winter.

In winter the warmth comes directly from the sun, and is not radiated from the earth. In summer I forget to bless the sun for his heat; but when I feel his beams on my back as I thread some snowy dale, I am grateful as for a special kindness which would not be weary of well doing but had pursued me even into that by-place.

When the wind blows, the fine snow comes filtering down through all the aisles of the wood in a golden cloud.

The trees covered with snow admit a very plain and clean light, but not brilliant, as if through windows of ground glass; a sort of white darkness it is, all of the sun's splendor that can be retained.

The fashions of the wood are more fluctuating than those of Paris; snow, rime, ice, green and dry leaves incessantly make new patterns. There are all the shapes and hues of the kaleidoscope and the designs and ciphers of books of heraldry in the outlines of the trees. Every time I see a nodding pine-top, it seems as if a new fashion of wearing plumes had come into vogue.

I saw a team come out of a path in the woods, as though it had never gone in, but belonged there, and only came out like Elisha's bears. It was wholly of the village, and not at all of the wood.

These particles of snow which the early wind shakes down are what is stirring, or the morning news of the wood. Sometimes it is blown up above the trees, like the sand of the desert.

You glance up these paths, closely imbowered by bent trees, as through the side aisles of a cathedral, and expect to hear a choir chanting from their depths. You are never so far in them as they are far before you.

Their secret is where you are not and where your feet can never carry you.

I tread in the tracks of the fox which has gone before me by some hours, or which perhaps I have started, with such a tiptoe of expectation as if I were on the trail of the Spirit itself which resides in these woods, and expected soon to catch it in its lair.¹

The snow falls on no two trees alike, but the forms it assumes are as various as those of the twigs and leaves which receive it. They are, as it were, predetermined by the genius of the tree. So one divine spirit descends alike on all, but bears a peculiar fruit in each. The divinity subsides on all men, as the snowflakes settle on the fields and ledges and takes the form of the various clefts and surfaces on which it lodges.

Here is the distinct trail of a fox stretching [a] quarter of a mile across the pond. Now I am curious to know what has determined its graceful curvatures, its greater or less spaces and distinctness, and how surely they were coincident with the fluctuations of some mind, why they now lead me two steps to the right, and then three to the left. If these things are not to be called up and accounted for in the Lamb's Book of Life, I shall set them down for careless accountants. Here was one expression of the divine mind this morning. The pond was his journal, and last night's snow made a *tabula rasa* for him. I know which way a mind wended this

¹ [Excursions, p. 117; Riv. 144.]

morning, what horizon it faced, by the setting of these tracks; whether it moved slowly or rapidly, by the greater or less intervals and distinctness, for the swiftest step leaves yet a lasting trace.¹

Sometimes I come out suddenly upon a high plain, which seems to be the upper level and true surface of the earth, and by its very baldness aspires and lies up nearer to the stars, — a place where a decalogue might be let down or a saint translated.

I take a horse and oxen, standing among the wood-piles in the forest, for one of them, and when at length the horse pricks his ears, and I give him another name, where's the difference? I am startled by the possibility of such errors, and the indifference with [which] they are allowed to occur.

Fair Haven Pond is *scored* with the trails of foxes, and you may see where they have gambolled and gone through a hundred evolutions, which testify to a singular listlessness and leisure in nature.

Suddenly, looking down the river, I saw a fox some sixty rods off, making across to the hills on my left. As the snow lay five inches deep, he made but slow progress, but it was no impediment to me. So, yielding to the instinct of the chase, I tossed my head aloft and bounded away, snuffing the air like a fox-hound, and spurning the world and the Humane Society at each bound. It seemed the woods rang with the hunter's

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 117; Riv. 144.]

horn, and Diana and all the satyrs joined in the chase and cheered me on. Olympian and Elean youths were waving palms on the hills. In the meanwhile I gained rapidly on the fox; but he showed a remarkable presence of mind, for, instead of keeping up the face of the hill, which was steep and unwooded in that part, he kept along the slope in the direction of the forest, though he lost ground by it. Notwithstanding his fright, he took no step which was not beautiful. The course on his part was a series of most graceful curves. It was a sort of leopard canter, I should say, as if he were nowise impeded by the snow, but were husbanding his strength all the while. When he doubled I wheeled and cut him off, bounding with fresh vigor, and Antæus-like, recovering my strength each time I touched the snow. Having got near enough for a fair view, just as he was slipping into the wood, I gracefully yielded him the palm. He ran as though there were not a bone in his back, occasionally dropping his muzzle to the snow for a rod or two, and then tossing his head aloft when satisfied of his course. When he came to a declivity he put his fore feet together and slid down it like a cat. He trod so softly that you could not have heard it from any nearness, and yet with such expression that it would not have been quite inaudible at any distance. So, hoping this experience would prove a useful lesson to him, I returned to the village by the highway of the river.¹

There is all the romance of my youthfulest moment in music. Heaven lies about us, as in our infancy. There

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 117, 118; Riv. 144, 145.]

is nothing so wild and extravagant that it does not make true. It makes a dream my only real experience, and prompts faith to such elasticity that only the incredible can satisfy it. It tells me again to trust the remotest and finest, as the divinest, instinct. All that I have imagined of heroism, it reminds and reassures me of. It is a life un-lived, a life beyond life, where at length my years will pass. I look under the lids of Time.

Jan. 31. Sunday. At each step man measures himself against the system. If he cannot actually bely the sun and make it fast to this planet, yet the British man alone spins a yarn in one year which will reach fifty-one times the distance from the earth to the sun. So, having his cable ready twisted and coiled, the fixed stars are virtually within his grasp. He carries his lasso coiled at his saddle bow, but is never forced to cast it.

All things are subdued to me by virtue of that coiled lasso I carry, and I lead them without the trouble of a cast. It is the rope that lies coiled on the deck, which moors my ship, and I have never to bend a cable.

In God's hall hang cables of infinite length, and in His entries stand bars of infinite strength; but those cables were never bent, nor those bars ever poised, for all things have been subdued to the divinity from the first, and these are the seals of His power.

The guilty never escape, for a steed stands ever ready saddled and bridled at God's door, and the sinner surrenders at last.

End of my Journal of 396 pages.

Feb. 2. Tuesday. It is easy to repeat, but hard to originate. Nature is readily made to repeat herself in a thousand forms, and in the daguerreotype her own light is amanuensis, and the picture too has more than a surface significance, — a depth equal to the prospect, — so that the microscope may be applied to the one as the spy-glass to the other. Thus we may easily multiply the forms of the outward; but to give the within outwardness, that is not easy.

That an impression may be taken, perfect stillness, though but for an instant, is necessary. There is something analogous in the birth of all rhymes.

Our sympathy is a gift whose value we can never know, nor when we impart it. The instant of communion is when, for the least point of time, we cease to oscillate, and coincide in rest by as fine a point as a star pierces the firmament.

The stars are the mountain peaks of celestial countries.

A child asked its father what became of the old moon, and he said it was cut up into stars.

There is always a single ear in the audience, to which we address ourselves.

How much does it concern you, the good opinion of your friend? Therein is the measure of fame. For the herd of men multiplied many times will never come up to the value of one friend. In this society there is no

fame but love; for as our name may be on the lips of men, so are we in each other's hearts. There is no ambition but virtue; for why should we go round about, who may go direct?

All those contingences which the philanthropist, statesman, and housekeeper write so many books to meet are simply and quietly settled in the intercourse of friends.

For our aspirations there is no expression as yet, but if we obey steadily, by another year we shall have learned the language of last year's aspirations.

When I read the other day the weight of some of the generals of the Revolution, it seemed no unimportant fact in their biography. It is at least one other means of comparing ourselves with them. Tell me how much Milton or Shakespeare weighed, and I will get weighed myself, that I may know better what they are to me.

Weight has something very imposing in it, for we cannot get rid of it. Once in the scales we must weigh. And are we not always in the scales, and weighing just our due, though we kick the beam, and do all we can to heavy or lighten ourselves?

Feb. 3. Wednesday. The present seems never to get its due: it is the least obvious, — neither before, nor behind, but within us. All the past plays into this moment, and we are what we are. My aspiration is one thing, my reflection another, but, over all, myself and condition is and does. To men and nature I am each

moment a finished tool, — a spade, a barrow, or a pick-axe. This immense promise is no *efficient* quality. For all practical purposes I am done.

When we do a service to our neighbor, we serve our next neighbor.

We are constantly invited to be what we are; as to something worthy and noble. I never waited but for myself to come round; none ever detained me, but I lagged or tagged after myself.

It steads us to be as true to children and boors as to God himself. It is the only attitude which will suit all occasions; it only will make the earth yield her increase, and by it do we effectually expostulate with the wind. If I run against a post, this is the remedy. I would meet the morning and evening on very sincere ground. When the sun introduces me to a new day, I silently say to myself, "Let us be faithful all round; we will do justice and receive it." Something like this is the secret charm of Nature's demeanor toward us, strict conscientiousness [?] and disregard of us when we have ceased to have regard for ourselves. So she can never offend us. How true she is! — and never swerves. In her most genial moment her laws are as steadfastly and relentlessly fulfilled — though the decalogue is rhymed and set to sweetest music — as in her sternest.

Any exhibition of affection — as an inadvertent word, or act, or look — seems premature, as if the time

were not ripe for it; like the buds which the warm days near the end of winter cause to push out and unfold before the frosts are yet gone.

My life must seem as if it were passing at a higher level than that which I occupy. It must possess a dignity which will not allow me to be familiar.

The unpretending truth of a simile implies sometimes such distinctness in the conception as only experience could have supplied. Homer could not improve the simile of a soldier who was careful enough to tell the truth. If he knows what it was, he will know what it was like.

As the ancient Britons were exhibited in Rome in their native costume, and the Dacian came to display his swordsmanship in the arena, so Tyrolese peasants have come farther yet, even from the neighborhood of Rome to Concord, for our entertainment this night.

Feb. 4. Thursday. When you are once comfortably seated at a public meeting, there is something unmanly in the sitting on tiptoe and *qui vive* attitude, — the involuntarily rising into your throat, as if gravity had ceased to operate, — when a lady approaches, with quite godlike presumption, to elicit the miracle of a seat where none is.

Music will make the most nervous chord vibrate healthily.

Such a state of unrest becomes only a fluttered virtue. When once I have learned my place in the sphere, I will fill it once for all, rather like a fixed star than a planet. I will rest as the mountains do, so that your ladies might as well walk into the midst of the Tyrol, and look for Nature to spread them a green lawn for their disport in the midst of those solemn fastnesses, as that I should fly out of my orbit at their approach and go about eccentric, like a comet, to endanger other systems. No, be true to your instincts, and sit; wait till you can be genuinely polite, if it be till doomsday, and not lose your chance everlastingly by a cowardly yielding to young etiquette. By your look say unto them, The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and I will fill that station God has assigned me. As well Miss Cassiopeia up there might ask the brazen-fronted Taurus to draw in his horns, that she might shine in his stead. No, no! not till my cycle is completed.

How is it that motion will always find space to move in, and rest a seat? Men hate antagonism, and the weaker will always yield to the stronger. If a stranger enter with sufficient determination into a crowded assembly, as if commissioned by the gods to find a seat there, as the falling stone by a divine impulse seeks a resting-place, each one will rise without thinking to offer his place. Now we have only to be commissioned to sit, and depend upon it the gods will not balk their own work. Ye came one day too late, as did the poet after the world had been divided, and so returned to dwell with the god that sent him. When presumptuous womanhood demands to surrender my position, I bide

my time, — though it be with misgiving, — and yield to no mortal shove, but expect a divine impulse. Produce your warrant, and I will retire; for not now can I give you a clear seat, but must leave part of my manhood behind and wander a diminished man, who at length will not have length and breadth enough to fill any seat at all. It was very kind in the gods who gave us a now condition, or condition of rest, in which we might unhurriedly deliberate before taking a step. When I give up my now and here without having secured my then and there, I am the prodigal son of a kind father and deserve no better than the husks which the swine eat, nor that the fatted calf be killed for me.

Rest forever. When instinct comes to the rescue of your politeness, it will seat you securely still, though it be to hang by a rail or poise yourself on a stick. To do otherwise is to be polite only as the soldier who runs away when the enemy demands his post. Politeness is rather when the generals interchange civilities before the fight, not when one returns a sword after the victory.

Not only in his cunning hand and brain, but when he speaks, too, does man assert his superiority. He conquers the spaces with his voice, as well as the lion. The voice of a strong man modulated to the cadence of some tune is more imposing than any natural sound. The keeper's is the most commanding, and is heard over all the din of the menagerie. A strong, musical voice imposes a new order and harmony upon nature; from it as a centre the law is promulgated to the universe. What it lacks in volume and loudness may

always be made up in musical expression and distinctness. The brute growls to secure obedience; he threatens. The man speaks as though obedience were already secured.

Brave speaking is the most entire and richest sacrifice to the gods.

Feb. 5. Friday. Only on rare occasions am I reminded that man too has a voice, as well as birds and quadrupeds, which breaks on the stillness of nature with its peculiar accent. The least sound pervades and subdues all space to it as long as it fills my ear. Contrasted single with the silence, it is as wide as it. Music is the crystallization of sound. There is something in the effect of a harmonious voice upon the disposition of its neighborhood analogous to the law of crystals; it centralizes itself and sounds like the published law of things. If the law of the universe were to be audibly promulgated, no mortal lawgiver would suspect it, for it would be a finer melody than his ears ever attended to. It would be sphere music.¹

When by tutoring their voices singers enhance one another's performance, the harmony is more complete and essential than is heard. The quire is one family held together by a very close bond. Hence the romance we associate with Gypsies and circus companies and strolling musicians. The idea of brotherhood is so strong in them. Their society is ideal for that one end.

¹ [*Week*, p. 184; *Riv.* 228.]

There is something in this brotherhood — this feeling of kind, or kindness — which insensibly elevates the subjects of it in our eyes. However poor or mean, they have something which counterbalances our contempt. This is that in the strolling pauper *family* which does not court our charity but can even bless and smile on us and make the kindness reciprocal. It sanctifies the place and the hour.

These Rainers, if they are not brothers and sisters, must be uncles and cousins at least. These Swiss who have come to sing to us, we have no doubt are the flower of the Tyrol.¹ Such is the instinctive kindness with which the foreigner is always received, that he is ever presumed to be the fairest and noblest of his race. The traveller finds that it is not easy to move away from his friends, after all, but all people whom he visits are anxious to supply the place to him of his parents and brothers and sisters. To these Swiss I find that I have attributed all Tell's patriotism and the devotion of Arnold Winkelried and whatever goodness or greatness belongs to the nation.

All costume off a man, when not simply doffed, is grotesque. There must be a heart inside it. When these Swiss appear before me in gaiters and high-crowned hats with feathers, I am disposed to laugh, but soon I see that their serious eye becomes these and they it. It is the sincere life passed within it which consecrates the costume of any people. A sufficiently sober eye will

¹ [See Emerson's Journal (1841), quoted in E. W. Emerson's *Emerson in Concord*, p. 99.]

retrieve itself and subordinate any grotesqueness. Let Harlequin be taken with a fit of the colic in the midst of his buffoonery, and his trappings and finery will serve that mood too and with their drooping sympathy enhance the sincerity of his misfortune. When the soldier is hit by a cannon-ball, rags are as becoming as purple.¹ So soon as a man engages to eat, drink, sleep, walk, and sit, and meet all the contingencies of life therein, his costume is hallowed and a theme for poetry, whether it be a bear's skin or ermine, a beaver hat or a Turkish turban. He will not wear anything because it is blue, or black, or round, or square, but from a necessity which cannot be superseded.

I look into the face and manners for something familiar and homely even, to be assured that the costume of the foreigner is not whimsical or finical.

In all emergencies there is always one step which you may take on firm ground where gravity will assure you footing. So you hold a draft on Fate payable at sight.

Feb. 6. Saturday. One may discover a new side to his most intimate friend when for the first time he hears him speak in public. He will be stranger to him as he is more familiar to the audience. The longest intimacy could not foretell how he would behave then. When I observe my friend's conduct toward others, then chiefly I learn the traits in his character, and in each case I am unprepared for the issue.

When one gets up to address briefly a strange audi-

¹ [*Walden*, p. 28 ; Riv. 43.]

ence, in that little he may have opportunity to say he will not quite do himself injustice. For he will instantly and instinctively average himself to his audience, and while he is true to his own character still, he will in a few moments make that impression which a series of months and years would but expand. Before he answers, his thought like lightning runs round the whole compass of his experiences, and he is scrupulous to speak from that which he is and with a more entire truthfulness than usual. How little do we know each other then! Who can tell how his friend would behave on any occasion?

As for those Swiss, I think of the fields their hands have plowed and reaped, and respect their costume as the memorial or rather cotemporary and witness of this. What is there in a toga but a Roman? What but a Quaker in a broad-brimmed hat? He who describes the dress of a Janizary going to war does me a similar service as when he paints the scenery of the battle-field. It helps make his exploit picturesque.

Costume is not determined by whim, not even the tattooing and paint of the savage. Sun, wind, rain, and the form of our bodies shape our hats and coats for us, more even than taste. Good taste secures the utmost gratification without sacrificing any conveniences. If all nations derived their fashions from Paris or London, the world would seem like a Vanity Fair or all fools' day, and the Tartar and Bedouin ride in it like jesters in a circus, and the Pawnee and Esquimau hunt in masquerade. What I am must make you forget what I

wear. The fashionable world is content to be eclipsed by its dress, and never will bear the contrast. Only industry will reform *their* dress. They are idle, — exostrious, building without.

The value of the recess in any public entertainment consists in the opportunity for self-recovery which it offers. We who have been swayed as one heart, expanding and contracting with the common pulse, find ourselves in the interim, and set us up again, and feel our own hearts beating in our breasts. We are always a little astonished to see a man walking across the room, through an attentive audience, with any degree of self-possession. He makes himself strange to us. He is a little stubborn withal, and seems to say, "I am self-sustained and independent as well as the performer, and am not to be swallowed up in the common enthusiasm. No, no, there are two of us, and John's as good as Thomas." In the recess the audience is cut up into a hundred little coteries, and as soon as each individual life has recovered its tone and the purposes of health have been answered, it is time for the performances to commence again.

In a public performer, the simplest actions, which at other times are left to unconscious nature, as the ascending a few steps in front of an audience, acquire a fatal importance and become arduous deeds.

When I select one here and another there, and strive to join sundered thoughts, I make but a partial heap

after all. Nature strews her nuts and flowers broadcast, and never collects them into heaps. A man does not tell us all he has thought upon truth or beauty at a sitting, but, from his last thought on the subject, wanders through a varied scenery of upland, meadow, and woodland to his next. Sometimes a single and casual thought rises naturally and inevitably with a queenly majesty and escort, like the stars in the east. Fate has surely enshrined it in this hour and circumstances for some purpose. What she has joined together, let not man put asunder. Shall I transplant the primrose by the river's brim, to set it beside its sister on the mountain? *This* was the soil it grew in, *this* the hour it bloomed in. If sun, wind, and rain came *here* to cherish and expand it, shall not we come here to pluck it? Shall we require it to grow in a conservatory for our convenience?

I feel slightly complimented when Nature condescends to make use of me without my knowledge, as when I help scatter her seeds in my walk, or carry burs and cockles on my clothes from field to field.¹ I feel as though I had done something for the commonweal, and were entitled to board and lodging. I take such airs upon me as the boy who holds a horse for the circus company, whom all the spectators envy.

"Lu ral lu ral lu" may be more impressively sung than very respectable wisdom talked. It is well-timed, as wisdom is not always.

¹ [Week, p. 415; Riv. 512.]

All things prophesy but the prophet. In augury and divination nature is put to the torture. In Ben Jonson's tragedy of "Catiline," Lentulus makes answer to Catiline, who has bribed the augurs to say that he is that third Cornelius who is to be king of Rome, "All prophecies, you know, suffer the torture." He who inspects the entrails is *always* bribed, but they are unbribable. He who seeks to know the future by unlawful means has unavoidably subjected the oracle to the torture of *private* and *partial* interests. The oracles of God serve the public interest without fee. To the just and benevolent mind nature *declares*, as the sun lights the world.

Feb. 7. Sunday. Without greatcoat or drawers I have advanced thus far into the snow-banks of the winter, without thought and with impunity.¹ When I meet my neighbors in muffs and furs and tippets, they look as if they had retreated into the interior fastnesses from some foe invisible to me. They remind me that this is the season of winter, in which it becomes a man to be cold. For feeling, I am a piece of clean wood of this shape, which will do service till it rots, and though the cold has its physical effect on me, it is a kindly one, for it "finds its acquaintance there." My diet is so little stimulating, and my body in consequence so little heated, as to excite no antagonism in nature, but flourishes like a tree, which finds even the winter genial to its expansion and the secretion of sap. May not the body defend itself against cold by its very nakedness, and its elements be so simple and single that they cannot congeal? Frost

¹ [See p. 214, — bronchitis!]

does not affect one but several. My body now affords no more pasture for cold than a leafless twig.¹ I call it a protestant warmth. My limbs do not tire as formerly, but I use myself as any other piece of nature, and from mere indifference and thoughtlessness may break the timber.

It is the vice of the last season which compels us to arm ourselves for the next. If man always conformed to Nature, he would not have to defend himself against her, but find her his constant nurse and friend, as do plants and quadrupeds.

In the sunshine and the crowing of cocks I feel an illimitable holiness, which makes me bless God and myself. The warm sun casts his incessant gift at my feet as I walk along, unfolding his yellow worlds. Yonder sexton with a few cheap sounds makes me richer than these who mind his summons. The true gift is as wide as my gratitude, and as frequent, and the donor is as grateful as the recipient. There would be a New Year's gift indeed, if we would bestow on each other our sincerity. We should communicate our wealth, and not purchase that which does not belong to us for a sign. Why give each other a sign to keep? If we gave the thing itself, there would be no need of a sign.

I am not sure I should find out a really great person soon. He would be simple Thomas or Oliver for some centuries first. The lesser eminences would hide

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 167; Riv. 203, 204.]

the higher, and I should at last reach his top by a gentle acclivity. I felt it would be necessary to remain some weeks at the Notch to be impressed by the grandeur of the scenery. We do not expect that Alexander will conquer Asia the first time we are introduced to him. A great man accepts the occasion the fates offer him. Let us not be disappointed. We stand at first upon the pampas which surround him. It is these mountains round about which make the valleys here below. He is not a dead level, so many feet above low-water mark. Greatness is in the ascent. But there is no accounting for the little men.

“They must sweat no less
To fit their properties, than t' express their parts.”

Or the line before this: —

“Would you have
Such an Herculean actor in the scene,
And not his hydra?” — JONSON.

The caves are running on the south side of the house; the titmouse lisps in the poplar; the bells are ringing for church; while the sun presides over all and makes his simple warmth more obvious than all else.¹ What shall I do with this hour, so like time and yet so fit for eternity? Where in me are these russet patches of ground, and scattered logs and chips in the yard? I do not feel cluttered. I have some notion what the John's-wort and life-everlasting may be thinking about when the sun shines on me as on them and turns my prompt thought into just such a seething shimmer. I lie out in-

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 173; Riv. 211.]

distinct as a heath at noonday. I am evaporating and ascending into the sun.

Nothing stands in the way to success, but to failure. To victory is all the way up hill; to defeat the simplest wight that weighs may soon slide down. Cowards would not have victory but the fruits of victory; but she it is that sweetens all the spoil. Thus, by a just fate, the booty cannot fall to him who did not win it. There is victory in every effort. In the least swing of the arm, in indignant thought, in stern content, we conquer our foes.

Great thoughts make great men. Without these no heraldry nor blood will avail.

The blood circulates to the feet and hands, but the thought never descends from the head.

The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend. I have no wealth to bestow on him. If he knows that I am happy in loving him, he will want no other reward. Is not Friendship divine in this?

I have myself to respect, but to myself I am not amiable; but my friend is my amiableness personified.

And yet we walk the stage indifferent actors, not thinking what a sublime drama we might enact if we would be joint workers and a mutual material. Why go to the woods to cut timber to display our art upon, when here are men as trees walking? The world has never learned what men can build each other up to be, when both master and pupil work in love.

He that comes as a stranger to my house will have to stay as a stranger. He has made his own reception. But persevering love was never yet refused.

“The vicious count their years, virtuous their acts.”

JONSON.

The former consider the length of their service, the latter its quality.

Wait not till I invite thee, but observe
I'm glad to see thee when thou com'st.¹

The most ardent lover holds yet a private court, and his love can never be so strong or ethereal that there will not be danger that judgment may be rendered against the beloved.

I would have men make a *greater* use of me.² Now I must belittle myself to have dealings with them. My friend will show such a noble confidence that I shall aspire to the society of his good opinion. Never presume men less that you may make them more. So far as we respond to our ideal estimate of each other do we have profitable intercourse.

A brave man always knows the way, no matter how intricate the roads.

Feb. 8. All we have experienced is so much gone within us, and there lies. It is the company we keep. One day,

¹ [*Week*, p. 289; *Riv.* 359.]

² [Sec p. 180.]

in health or sickness, it will come out and be remembered. Neither body nor soul forgets anything. The twig always remembers the wind that shook it, and the stone the cuff it received. Ask the old tree and the sand.

To be of most service to my brother I must meet him on the most equal and even ground, the platform on which our lives are passing. But how often does politeness permit this?

I seek a man who will appeal to me when I am in fault. We will treat as gods settling the affairs of men. In his intercourse I shall be always a god to-day, who was a man yesterday. He will never confound me with my guilt, but let me be immaculate and hold up my skirts. Differences he will make haste to clear up, but leave agreements unsettled the while.

As time is measured by the lapse of ideas, we may grow of our own force, as the mussel adds new circles to its shell. My thoughts secrete the lime. We may grow old with the vigor of youth. Are we not always in youth so long as we face heaven? We may always live in the morning of our days. To him who seeks early, the sun never gets over the edge of the hill, but his rays fall slanting forever. His wise sayings are like the chopping of wood and crowing of cocks in the dawn.

My Journal is that of me which would else spill over and run to waste, gleanings from the field which in action I reap. I must not live for it, but in it for the gods.

They are my correspondent, to whom daily I send off this sheet postpaid. I am clerk in their counting-room, and at evening transfer the account from day-book to ledger. It is as a leaf which hangs over my head in the path. I bend the twig and write my prayers on it; then letting it go, the bough springs up and shows the scrawl to heaven. As if it were not kept shut in my desk, but were as public a leaf as any in nature. It is papyrus by the riverside; it is vellum in the pastures; it is parchment on the hills. I find it everywhere as free as the leaves which troop along the lanes in autumn. The crow, the goose, the eagle carry my quill, and the wind blows the leaves as far as I go. Or, if my imagination does not soar, but gropes in slime and mud, then I write with a reed.

It is always a chance scrawl, and commemorates some accident, — as great as earthquake or eclipse. Like the sere leaves in yonder vase, these have been gathered far and wide. Upland and lowland, forest and field have been ransacked.

In our holiest moment our devil with a leer stands close at hand. He is a very busy devil. It gains vice some respect, I must confess, thus to be reminded how indefatigable it is. It has at least the merit of industriousness. When I go forth with zeal to some good work, my devil is sure to get his robe tucked up the first and arrives there as soon as I, with a look of sincere earnestness which puts to shame my best intent. He is as forward as I to a good work, and as disinterested. He has a winning way of recommending himself by mak-

ing himself useful. How readily he comes into my best project, and does his work with a quiet and steady cheerfulness which even virtue may take pattern from.

I never was so rapid in my virtue but my vice kept up with me. It always came in by a hand, and never panting, but with a curried coolness halted, as if halting were the beginning not the end of the course. It only runs the swifter because it has no rider. It never was behind me but when I turned to look and so fell behind myself. I never did a charitable thing but there he stood, scarce in the rear, with hat in hand, partner on the same errand, ready to share the smile of gratitude. Though I shut the door never so quick and tell it to stay at home like a good dog, it will out with me, for I shut in my own legs so, and it escapes in the meanwhile and is ready to back and reinforce me in most virtuous deeds. And if I turn and say, "Get thee behind me," he then indeed turns too and takes the lead, though he seems to retire with a pensive and compassionate look, as much as to say, "Ye know not what ye do."

Just as active as I become to virtue, just so active is my remaining vice. Every time we teach our virtue a new nobleness, we teach our vice a new cunning. When we sharpen the blade it will stab better as well as whittle. The scythe that cuts will cut our legs. We are double-edged blades, and every time we whet our virtue the return stroke straps our vice. And when we cut a clear descending blow, our vice on tother edge rips up the work. Where is the skillful swordsman that can draw his blade straight back out of the wound? ¹

¹ [Work, p. 236: Riv. 293.]

Every man proposes fairly, and does not willfully take the devil for his guide; as our shadows never fall between us and the sun. Go towards the sun and your shadow will fall behind you.

Feb. 9. Tuesday.

"*Cato.* Good Marcus Tullius (which is more than great),
Thou hadst thy education with the gods."

JONSON.

Better be defamed than overpraised. Thou canst then justly praise thyself. What notoriety art thou that can be defamed? Who can be praised for what they are not deserve rather to be damned for what they are. It is hard to wear a dress that is too long and loose without stumbling.

"Whoe'er is raised,

For wealth he has not, he is tax'd, not prais'd,"

says Jonson. If you mind the flatterer, you rob yourself and still cheat him. The fates never exaggerate; men pass for what they are. The state never fails to get a revenue out of you without a direct tax. Flattery would lay a direct tax. What I am praised for what I am not I put to the account of the gods. It needs a skillful eye to distinguish between their coin and my own. But however there can be no loss either way, for what meed I have earned is equally theirs. Let neither fame nor infamy hit you, but the one go as far beyond as the other falls behind. Let the one glance past you to the gods, and the other wallow where it was engendered. The home thrusts are at helmets upon blocks, and my worst foes but stab an armor through.

My life at this moment is like a summer morning when birds are singing. Yet that is false, for nature's is an idle pleasure in comparison: my hour has a more solid serenity. I have been breaking silence these twenty-three years and have hardly made a rent in it. Silence has no end; speech is but the beginning of it. My friend thinks I *keep* silence, who am only choked with letting it out so fast. Does he forget that new mines of secrecy are constantly opening in me?

If any scorn your love, let them see plainly that you serve not them but another. If these bars are up, go your way to other of God's pastures, and browse there the while. When your host shuts his door on you he incloses you in the dwelling of nature. He thrusts you over the threshold of the world. My foes restore me to my friends.

I might say friendship had no ears as love has no eyes, for no word is evidence in its court. The least act fulfills more than all words profess. The most gracious speech is but partial kindness, but the least genuine deed takes the whole man. If we had waited till doomsday it could never have been uttered.

Feb. 10. Wednesday. That was fine praise which Ben Jonson gave to Thomas, Lord Chancellor: —

“Whilst thou art certain to thy words, once gone,
As is thy conscience, which is always one.”

Words do not lose their truth by time or misinterpretation, but stand unscathed longer than he who spoke them.

Let our words be such as we may unblushingly behold sculptured in granite on the walls to the least syllable. Our thoughts and actions may be very private for a long time, for they demand a more catholic publicity to be displayed in than the world can afford. Our best deeds shun the narrow walks of men, and are not ambitious of the faint light the world can shed on them, but delight to unfold themselves in that public ground between God and conscience.

Truth has for audience and spectator all the world. Within, where I resolve and deal with principles, there is more space and room than anywhere without, where my hands execute. Men should hear of your virtue only as they hear the creaking of the earth's axle and the music of the spheres. It will fall into the course of nature and be effectually concealed by publicness.

I asked a man to-day if he would rent me some land, and he said he had four acres as good soil “as any outdoors.” It was a true poet's account of it. He and I, and all the world, went outdoors to breathe the free air and stretch ourselves. For the world is but outdoors, — and we duck behind a panel.

Feb. 11. True help, for the most part, implies a greatness in him who is to be helped as well as in the helper. It takes a god to be helped even. A great person, though unconsciously, will constantly give you great opportunities to serve him, but a mean one will quite preclude all active benevolence. It needs but simply and *greatly* to want it for once, that all true men may contend who

shall be foremost to render aid. My neighbor's state must pray to heaven so devoutly yet disinterestedly as he never prayed in words, before my ears can hear. It must ask divinely. But men so cobble and botch their request, that you must stoop as low as they to give them aid. Their meanness would drag down your deed to be a compromise with conscience, and not leave it to be done on the high table-land of the benevolent soul. They would have you doff your bright and knightly armor and drudge for them, — serve *them* and not God. But if I am to serve them I must not serve the devil.

What is called charity is no charity, but the interference of a third person. Shall I interfere with fate? Shall I defraud man of the opportunities which God gave him, and so take away his life? Beggars and silent poor cry — how often! — “Get between me and my god.” I will not stay to cobble and patch God's rents, but do clean, new work when he has given me my hands full. This almshouse charity is like putting new wine into old bottles, when so many tuns in God's cellars stand empty. We go about mending the times, when we should be building the eternity.

I must serve a strong master, not a weak one. Help implies a sympathy of energy and effort, else no alleviation will avail.

Feb. 12. Friday. Those great men who are unknown to their own generation are already famous in the society of the great who have gone before them. All worldly fame but subsides from their high estimate beyond the

stars. We may still keep pace with those who have gone out of nature, for we run on as smooth ground as they.

The early and the latter saints are separated by no eternal interval.

The child may soon stand face to face with the best father.

Feb. 13. By the truthfulness of our story to-day we help explain ourselves for all our life henceforth. How we hamper and belay ourselves by the least exaggeration! The truth is God's concern; He will sustain it; but who can afford to maintain a lie? We have taken away one of the Pillars of Hercules, and must support the world on our shoulders, who might have walked freely upon it.

My neighbor says that his hill-farm is poor stuff and “only fit to hold the world together.”¹ He deserves that God should give him better for so brave a treating of his gifts, instead of humbly putting up therewith. It is a sort of stay, or gore, or gusset, and he will not be blinded by modesty or gratitude, but sees it for what it is; knowing his neighbor's fertile land, he calls his by its right name. But perhaps my farmer forgets that his lean soil has sharpened his wits. This is a crop it was good for. And beside, you see the heavens at a lesser angle from the hill than from the vale.

We have nothing to fear from our foes; God keeps a standing army for that service; but we have no ally

¹ [*Week*, p. 50; Riv. 63.]

against our friends, those ruthless vandals whose kind intent is a subtler poison than the Colchian, a more fatal shaft than the Lydian.¹

Feb. 14. Sunday. I am confined to the house by bronchitis, and so seek to content myself with that quiet and serene life there is in a warm corner by the fireside, and see the sky through the chimney-top. Sickness should not be allowed to extend further than the body. We need only to retreat further within us to preserve uninterrupted the continuity of serene hours to the end of our lives.

As soon as I find my chest is not of tempered steel, and heart of adamant, I bid good-by to these and look out a new nature. I will be liable to no accidents.

I shall never be poor while I can command a still hour in which to take leave of my sin.

The jingling team which is creaking past reminds me of that verse in the Bible which speaks of God being heard in the bells of the horses.

Feb. 15. There is elevation in every hour. No part of the earth is so low and withdrawn that the heavens cannot be seen from it, but every part supports the sky. We have only to stand on the eminence of the hour, and look out thence into the empyrean, allowing no pinnacle above us, to command an uninterrupted horizon. The moments will lie outspread around us like a blue ex-

¹ [Week, p. 305; Riv. 379.]

pause of mountain and valley, while we stand on the summit of our hour as if we had descended on eagle's wings. For the eagle has stooped to his perch on the highest cliff and has never climbed the rock; he stands by his wings more than by his feet. We shall not want a foothold, but wings will sprout from our shoulders, and we shall walk securely, self-sustained.

For how slight an accident shall two noble souls wait to bring them together!

Feb. 17. Our work should be fitted to and lead on the time, as bud, flower, and fruit lead the circle of the seasons.

The mechanic works no longer than his labor will pay for lights, fuel, and shop rent. Would it not be well for us to consider if our deed will warrant the expense of nature? Will it maintain the sun's light?

Our actions do not use time independently, as the bud does. They should constitute its lapse. It is their room. But they shuffle after and serve the hour.

Feb. 18. Thursday. I do not judge men by anything they can do. Their greatest deed is the impression they make on me. Some serene, inactive men can do everything. Talent only indicates a depth of character in some direction. We do not acquire the ability to do new deeds, but a new capacity for all deeds. My recent growth does not appear in any visible new talent, but

its deed will enter into my gaze when I look into the sky, or vacancy. It will help me to consider ferns and everlasting. Man is like a tree which is limited to no age, but grows as long as it has its root in the ground. We have only to live in the alburnum and not in the old wood. The gnarled stump has as tender a bud as the sapling.

Sometimes I find that I have frequented a higher society during sleep, and my thoughts and actions proceed on a higher level in the morning.

A man is the hydrostatic paradox, the counterpoise of the system. You have studied flowers and birds cheaply enough, but you must lay yourself out to buy him.

Feb. 19. A truly good book attracts very little favor to itself. It is so true that it teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down and commence living on its hint. I do not see how any can be written more, but this is the last effusion of genius. When I read an indifferent book, it seems the best thing I can do, but the inspiring volume hardly leaves me leisure to finish its latter pages. It is slipping out of my fingers while I read. It creates no atmosphere in which it may be perused, but one in which its teachings may be practiced. It confers on me such wealth that I lay it down with the least regret. What I began by reading I must finish by acting. So I cannot stay to hear a *good* sermon and applaud at the conclusion, but shall be half-way to Thermopylæ before that.

When any joke or hoax traverses the Union in the newspapers it apprises me of a fact which no geography or guide-book contains, of a certain leisure and nonchalance pervading society. It is a piece of information from over the Alleghanies, which I know how to prize, though I did not expect it. And it is just so in Nature. I sometimes observe in her a strange trifling, almost listlessness, which conducts to beauty and grace, — the fantastic and whimsical forms of snow and ice, the unaccountable freaks which the tracks of rabbits exhibit. I know now why all those busy speculators do not die of fever and ague.

Coleridge observed the “landscapes made by damp on a whitewashed wall,” and so have I.

We seem but to linger in manhood to tell the dreams of our childhood, and they vanish out of memory ere we learn the language.¹

It is the unexplored grandeur of the storm which keeps up the spirits of the traveller.² When I contemplate a hard and bare life in the woods, I find my last consolation in its untrivialness. Shipwreck is less distressing because the breakers do not trifle with us. We are resigned as long as we recognize the sober and solemn mystery of nature. The dripping mariner finds consolation and sympathy in the infinite sublimity of the storm. It is a moral force as well as he. With courage he can lay down his life on the strand, for it never

¹ [*Week*, p. 406; Riv. 501.] ² [*Excursions*, p. 182; Riv. 222.]

turned a deaf ear to him, nor has he ever exhausted its sympathy.

In the love of narrow souls I make many short voyages, but in vain; I find no sea-room. But in great souls I sail before the wind without a watch, and never reach the shore.

You demand that I be less your friend that you may know it.

Nothing will reconcile friends but love. They make a fatal mistake when they go about like foes to explain and treat with one another. It is a mutual mistake. None are so unmanageable.

Feb. 20. Saturday. I suspect the moral discrimination of the oldest and best authors. I doubt if Milton distinguished greatly between his Satan and his Raphael. In Homer and Æschylus and Dante I miss a nice discrimination of the *important* shades of character.

When I am going out for an evening I arrange the fire in my stove so that I do not fail to find a good one when I return, though it would have engaged my frequent attention present. So that, when I know I am to be at home, I sometimes make believe that I may go out, to save trouble. And this is the art of living, too, — to leave our life in a condition to go alone, and not to require a constant supervision. We will then sit down serenely to live, as by the side of a stove.

When I sit in earnest, nothing must stand, all must be sedentary with me.

I hear the faint sound of a viol and voices from the neighboring cottage, and think to myself, "I will believe the Muse only for evermore." It assures me that no gleam which comes over the serene soul is deceptive. It warns me of a reality and substance, of which the best that I see is but the phantom and shadow. O music, thou tellest me of things of which memory takes no heed; thy strains are whispered aside from memory's ear.

This is the noblest plain of earth, over which these sounds are borne, the plain of Troy or Eleusis.

Thou openest all my senses to catch thy least hint, and givest me no thought. It would be good to sit at my door of summer evenings forever and hear thy strains. Thou makest me to toy with speech, or walk content without it, not regretting its absence. I am pleased to think how ignorant and shiftless the wisest are. My imperfect sympathies with my friend are cheerful, glimmering light in the valley.

Feb. 21. Sunday. It is hard to preserve equanimity and greatness on that debatable ground between love and esteem. There is nothing so stable and unfluctuating as love. The waves beat steadfast on its shore forever, and its tide has no ebb. It is a resource in all extremities, and a refuge even from itself. And yet love will not be leaned on.

Feb. 22. Love is the tenderest mood of that which is tough — and the toughest mood of that which is tender. It may be roughly handled as the nettle, or gently as the violet. It has its holidays, but is not made for them.

The whole of the day should not be daytime, nor of the night night-time, but some portion be rescued from time to oversee time in. All our hours must not be current; all our time must not lapse. There must be one hour at least which the day did not bring forth, — of ancient parentage and long-established nobility, — which will be a serene and lofty platform overlooking the rest. We should make our notch every day on our characters, as Robinson Crusoe on his stick. We must be at the helm at least once a day; we must feel the tiller-rope in our hands, and know that if we sail, we steer.

Friends will be much apart; they will respect more each other's privacy than their communion, for therein is the fulfillment of our high aims and the conclusion of our arguments. That we know and would associate with not only has high intents, but goes on high errands, and has much private business. The hours he devotes to me were snatched from higher society. He is hardly a gift level to me, but I have to reach up to take it. My imagination always assigns him a nobler employment in my absence than ever I find him engaged in.¹

We have to go into retirement religiously, and en-

¹ [*Week*, p. 288; *Riv.* 358.]

hance our meeting by rarity and a degree of unfamiliarity. Would you know why I see thee so seldom, my friend? In solitude I have been making up a packet for thee. ¶

The actions which grow out of some common but natural relations affect me strangely, as sometimes the behavior of a mother to her children. So quiet and noiseless an action often moves me more than many sounding exploits.

Feb. 23. Tuesday. Let all our stores and munitions be provided for the lone state.

The care of the body is the highest exercise of prudence. If I have brought this weakness on my lungs, I will consider calmly and disinterestedly how the thing came about, that I may find out the truth and render justice. Then, after patience, I shall be a wiser man than before.

Let us apply all our wit to the repair of our bodies, as we would mend a harrow, for the body will be dealt plainly and implicitly with. We want no moonshine nor surmises about it. This matter of health and sickness has no fatality in it, but is a subject for the merest prudence. If I know not what ails me, I may resort to amulets and charms and, moonstruck, die of dysentery.

We do wrong to slight our sickness and feel so ready to desert our posts when we are harassed. So much the more should we rise above our condition, and make

the most of it, for the fruit of disease may be as good as that of health.¹

There is a subtle elixir in society which makes it a fountain of health to the sick. We want no consolation which is not the overflow of our friend's health. We will have no condolence who are not dolent ourselves. We would have our friend come and respire healthily before us, with the fragrance of many meadows and heaths in his breath, and we will inhabit his body while our own recruits.

Nothing is so good medicine in sickness as to witness some nobleness in another which will advertise us of health. In sickness it is our faith that ails, and noble deeds reassure us.

That anybody has thought of you on some indifferent occasion frequently implies more good will than you had reason to expect. You have henceforth a higher motive for conduct. We do not know how many amiable thoughts are current.

Feb. 26. Friday. My prickles or smoothness are as much a quality of your hand as of myself. I cannot tell you what I am, more than a ray of the summer's sun. What I am I am, and say not. Being is the great explainer. In the attempt to explain, shall I plane away all the spines, till it is no thistle, but a corn-stalk?

¹ [See his sister's account of his last sickness in Sanborn's *Thoreau*, pp. 310-313.]

If my world is not sufficient without thee, my friend, I will wait till it is and then call thee. You shall come to a palace, not to an almshouse.

My homeliest thought, like the diamond brought from farthest within the mine, will shine with the purest lustre.

Though I write every day, yet when I say a good thing it seems as if I wrote but rarely.

To be great, we do as if we would be tall merely, be longer than we are broad, stretch ourselves and stand on tiptoe. But greatness is well proportioned, unstrained, and stands on the soles of the feet.

How many are waiting for health and warm weather! But they wait for none.

In composition I miss the hue of the mind. As if we could be satisfied with the dews of the morning and evening without their colors, or the heavens without their azure.¹

This good book helps the sun shine in my chamber. The rays fall on its page as if to explain and illustrate it.²

I who have been sick hear cattle low in the street, with such a healthy ear as prophesies my cure. These sounds lay a finger on my pulse to some purpose. A

¹ [*Week*, p. 106; Riv. 132.]

² [*Week*, p. 157; Riv. 195.]

fragrance comes in at all my senses which proclaims that I am still of Nature the child. The threshing in yonder barn and the tinkling of the anvil come from the same side of Styx with me. If I were a physician I would try my patients thus. I would wheel them to a window and let Nature feel their pulse. It will soon appear if their sensuous existence is sound. These sounds are but the throbbing of some pulse in me.¹

Nature seems to have given me these hours to pry into her private drawers. I watch the shadow of the insensible perspiration rising from my coat or hand on the wall. I go and feel my pulse in all the recesses of the house and see if I am of force to carry a homely life and comfort into them.

Feb. 27. Saturday. Life looks as fair at this moment as a summer's sea, or a blond dress in a saffron light, with its sun and grass and walled towns so bright and chaste, as fair as my own virtue which would adventure therein. Like a Persian city or hanging gardens in the distance, so washed in light, so untried, only to be thridded by clean thoughts. All its flags are flowing, and tassels streaming, and drapery flapping, like some gay pavilion. The heavens hang over it like some low screen, and seem to undulate in the breeze.

Through this pure, unwiped hour, as through a crystal glass, I look out upon the future, as a smooth lawn for my virtue to disport in. It shows from afar as unrepulsive as the sunshine upon walls and cities, over

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 182; *Riv.* 223.]

which the passing life moves as gently as a shadow. I see the course of my life, like some retired road, wind on without obstruction into a country maze.¹

I am attired for the future so, as the sun setting presumes all men at leisure and in contemplative mood, — and am thankful that it is thus presented blank and indistinct. It still o'ertops my hope. My future deeds bestir themselves within me and move grandly towards a consummation, as ships go down the Thames. A steady onward motion I feel in me, as still as that, or like some vast, snowy cloud, whose shadow first is seen across the fields. It is the material of all things loose and set afloat that makes my sea.

These various words are not without various meanings. The combined voice of the race makes nicer distinctions than any individual. There are the words "diversion" and "amusement." It takes more to amuse than to divert. We must be surrendered to our amusements, but only turned aside to our diversions. We have no will in the former, but oversee the latter. We are oftenest diverted in the street, but amused in our chambers. We are diverted from our engagements, but amused when we are listless. We may be diverted from an amusement, and amused by a diversion. It often happens that a diversion becomes our amusement, and our amusement our employment.

Feb. 28. Nothing goes by luck in composition. It allows of no tricks. The best you can write will be the

¹ [See *Week*, p. 45; *Riv.* 57.]

best you are. Every sentence is the result of a long probation. The author's character is read from title-page to end. Of this he never corrects the proofs. We read it as the essential character of a handwriting without regard to the flourishes. And so of the rest of our actions; it runs as straight as a ruled line through them all, no matter how many curvets about it. Our whole life is taxed for the least thing well done; it is its net result. How we eat, drink, sleep, and use our desultory hours, now in these indifferent days, with no eye to observe and no occasion [to] excite us, determines our authority and capacity for the time to come.

March 3. I hear a man blowing a horn this still evening, and it sounds like the plaint of nature in these times. In this, which I refer to some man, there is something greater than any man. It is as if the earth spoke. It adds a great remoteness to the horizon, and its very distance is grand, as when one draws back the head to speak. That which I now hear in the west seems like an invitation to the east. It runs round the earth as a whisper gallery. It is the spirit of the West calling to the spirit of the East, or else it is the rattling of some team lagging in Day's train. Coming to me through the darkness and silence, all things great seem transpiring there. It is friendly as a distant hermit's taper. When it is trilled, or undulates, the heavens are crumpled into time, and successive waves flow across them.

It is a strangely healthy sound for these disjointed times. It is a rare soundness when cow-bells and horns are heard from over the fields. And now I see the beauty

and full meaning of that word "sound." Nature always possesses a certain sonorosity, as in the hum of insects, the booming of ice, the crowing of cocks in the morning, and the barking of dogs in the night, which indicates her sound state.¹ God's voice is but a clear bell sound. I drink in a wonderful health, a cordial, in sound. The effect of the slightest tinkling in the horizon measures my own soundness. I thank God for sound; it always mounts, and makes me mount. I think I will not trouble myself for any wealth, when I can be so cheaply enriched. Here I contemplate to drudge that I may own a farm — and may have such a limitless estate for the listening. All good things are cheap: all bad are very dear.

As for these communities, I think I had rather keep bachelor's hall in hell than go to board in heaven. Do you think your virtue will be boarded with you? It will never live on the interest of your money, depend upon it. The boarder has no home. In heaven I hope to bake my own bread and clean my own linen. The tomb is the only boarding-house in which a hundred are served at once. In the catacomb we may dwell together and prop one another without loss.

March 4. Ben Jonson says in his epigrams, —

"He makes himself a thorough-fare of Vice."

This is true, for by vice the substance of a man is not changed, but all his pores, and cavities, and avenues are

¹ [Week, p. 40; Riv. 50.]

prophaned by being made the thoroughfares of vice. He is the highway of his vice. The searching devil courses through and through him. His flesh and blood and bones are cheapened. He is all trivial, a place where three highways of sin meet. So is another the thoroughfare of virtue, and virtue circulates through all his aisles like a wind, and he is hallowed.

We reprove each other unconsciously by our own behavior. Our very carriage and demeanor in the streets should be a reprimand that will go to the conscience of every beholder. An infusion of love from a great soul gives a color to our faults, which will discover them, as lunar caustic detects impurities in water.

The best will not seem to go contrary to others, but, as if *they* could afford to travel the same way, they go a parallel but higher course, a sort of upper road. Jonson says, —

“That to the vulgar canst thyself apply,
Treading a better path not contrary.”

Their way is a mountain slope, a river valley's course, a tide which mingles a myriad lesser currents.

March 5. Friday. How can our love increase, unless our loveliness increase also? We must securely love each other as we love God, with no more danger that our love be unrequited or ill-bestowed. There is that in my friend before which I must first decay and prove untrue. Love is the least moral and the most. Are the best good in their love? or the worst, bad?

March 6. An honest misunderstanding is often the ground of future intercourse.

“THE SPHINX”¹

March 7, 8, 9, 10. The Sphinx is man's insatiable and questioning spirit, which still, as of old, stands by the roadside in us and proposes the riddle of life to every passer. The ancients represented this by a monster who was a riddle of herself, having a body composed of various creatures, as if to hint that she had no individual existence, but was nearly allied to and brooded over all. They made her devour those who were unable to explain her enigmas, as we are devoured by doubt, and struggle towards the light, as if to be assured of our lives. For we live by confidence, and our bravery is in some moment when we are certain to that degree that our certainty cannot be increased; as, when a ray bursts through a gap in a cloud, it darts as far, and reaches the earth as surely, as the whole sun would have done.

1. In the first four lines is described the mood in which the Sphinx bestirs herself in us. We must look on the world with a drowsy and half-shut eye, that it may not be too much in our eye, and rather stand aloof from than within it. When we are awake to the real world, we are asleep to the actual. The sinful drowse to eternity, the virtuous to time. Menu says that the “supreme omnipresent intelligence” is “a spirit which can only be conceived by a mind *slumbering*.” Wisdom

¹ [An interpretation of Emerson's poem. The numbers refer to the stanzas.]

and holiness always slumber; they are never active in the ways of the world. As in our night-dreams we are nearest to awakening, so in our day-dreams we are nearest to a supernatural awakening, and the plain and flat satisfactoriness of life becomes so significant as to be questioned.

The Sphinx hints that in the ages her secret is kept, but in the annihilation of ages alone is it revealed. So far from solving the problem of life, Time only serves to propose and keep it in. Time waits but for its solution to become eternity. Its lapse is measured by the successive failures to answer the incessant question, and the generations of men are the unskillful passengers devoured.

2. She hints generally at man's mystery. He knows only that he is, not what, nor whence. Not only is he curiously and wonderfully wrought, but with Dædalian intricacy. He is lost in himself as a labyrinth and has no clue to get out by. If he could get out of his humanity, he would have got out of nature. "Dædalian" expresses both the skill and the inscrutable design of the builder.

The insolubleness of the riddle is only more forcibly expressed by the lines, —

"Out of sleeping a waking,
Out of waking a sleep."

They express the complete uncertainty and renunciation of knowledge of the propounder.

3, 4, 5, 6. In these verses is described the integrity of all animate and inanimate things but man,—how each is a problem of itself and not the solution of one

and presides over and uses the mystery of the universe as unhesitatingly as if it were the partner of God; how, by a sort of *essential and practical faith*, each understands all, for to see that we understand is to know that we misunderstand. Each natural object is an end to itself. A brave, undoubting life do they all live, and are content to be a part of the mystery which is God, and throw the responsibility on man of explaining them and himself too.

3. The outlines of the trees are as correct as if ruled by God on the sky. The motions of quadrupeds and birds Nature never thinks to mend, but they are a last copy and the flourishes of His hand.

4. The waves lapse with such a melody on the shore as shows that they have long been at one with Nature. Theirs is as perfect play as if the heavens and earth were not. They meet with a sweet difference and independently, as old playfellows. Nothing do they lack more than the world. The ripple is proud to be a ripple and balances the sea. The atoms, which are in such a continual flux, notwithstanding their minuteness, have a certain essential valor and independence. They have the integrity of worlds, and attract and repel firmly as such. The least has more manhood than Democritus.

5. So also in Nature the perfection of the whole is the perfection of the parts, and what is itself perfect serves to adorn and set off all the rest. Her distinctions are but reliefs. Night veileth the morning for the morning's sake, and the vapor adds a new attraction to the hill. Nature looks like a conspiracy for the advantage

of all her parts; when one feature shines, all the rest seem suborned to heighten its charm. In her circle each gladly gives precedence to the other. Day gladly alternates with night. Behind these the vapor atones to the hill for its interference, and this harmonious scene is the effect of that at-one-ment.

6. In a sense the babe takes its departure from Nature as the grown man his departure out of her, and so during its nonage is at one with her, and as a part of herself. It is indeed the very flower and blossom of Nature.

"Shines the peace of all being
Without cloud, in its eyes;
And the *sum* of the world
In soft *miniature* lies."¹

To the charming consistency of the palm and thrush, this universal and serene beauty is added, as all the leaves of the tree flower in the blossom.

7. But alas, the fruit to be matured in these petals is fated to break the stem which holds it to universal consistency. It passes *through Nature* to manhood, and becomes unnatural, without being as yet quite supernatural. Man's most approved life is but conformity, not a simple and independent consistency, which would make all things conform to it. His actions do not adorn Nature nor one another, nor does she exist in harmony but in contrast with them. She is not their willing scenery. We conceive that if a true action were to be performed it would be assisted by Nature, and perhaps be fondled and reflected many times as the rainbow. The sun is a true light for the trees in a picture, but not

¹ [The italics are Thorcau's.]

for the actions of men. They will not bear so strong a light as the stubble; the universe has little sympathy with them, and sooner or later they rebound hollowly on the memory. The April shower should be as reviving to our life as to the garden and the grove, and the scenery in which we live reflect our own beauty, as the dew-drop the flower. It is the actual man, not the actual Nature, that hurts the romance of the landscape. "He poisons the ground." The haymakers must be lost in the grass of the meadow. They may be Faustus and Amyntas here, but near at hand they are Reuben and Jonas. The woodcutter must not be better than the wood, lest he be *worse*. Neither will bear to be considered as a distinct feature. Man's works must lie in the bosom of Nature, cottages be buried in trees, or under vines and moss, like rocks, that they may not outrage the landscape. The hunter must be dressed in Lincoln green, with a plume of eagle's feathers, to imbosom him in Nature. So the skillful painter secures the distinctness of the whole by the indistinctness of the parts. We can endure best to consider our repose and silence. Only when the city, the hamlet, or the cottage is viewed from a distance does man's life seem in harmony with the universe; but seen closely his actions have no eagle's feathers or Lincoln green to redeem them. The sunlight on cities at a distance is a deceptive beauty, but foretells the final harmony of man with Nature.

Man as he is, is not the subject of any art, strictly speaking. The naturalist pursues his study with love, but the moralist persecutes his with hate. In man is the material of a picture, with a design partly sketched,

but Nature is such a picture drawn and colored. He is a studio, Nature a gallery. If men were not idealists, no sonnets to beautiful persons nor eulogies on worthy ones would ever be written. We wait for the preacher to express *such* love for his congregation as the botanist for his herbarium.

8. Man, however, detects something in the lingering ineradicable sympathy of Nature which seems to side with him against the stern decrees of the soul. Her essential friendliness is only the more apparent to his waywardness, for disease and sorrow are but a rupture with her. In proportion as he renounces his will, she repairs his hurts, and, if she burns, does oftener warm, if she freezes, oftener refreshes. This is the motherliness which the poet personifies, and the Sphinx, or wisely inquiring man, makes express a real concern for him. Nature shows us a stern kindness, and only we are unkind. She endures long with us, and though the severity of her law is unrelaxed, yet its evenness and impartiality look relenting, and almost sympathize with our fault.

9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. But to the poet there are no riddles. They are "pleasant songs" to him; his faith solves the enigmas which recurring wisdom does not fail to repeat. Poetry is the only solution time can offer. But the poet is soonest a pilgrim from his own faith. Our brave moments may still be distinguished from our wise. Though the problem is always solved for the soul, still does it remain to be solved by the intellect. Almost faith puts the question, for only in her light can it be answered. However true the answer, it does not pre-

vent the question; for the best answer is but plausible, and man can only tell his relation to truth, but render no account of truth to herself.

9. Believe, and ask not, says the poet.

"Deep love lieth under
These pictures of time;
They fade in the light of
Their meaning sublime."

Nothing is plain but love.

10, 11, 12, 13. Man comes short, because he seeks perfection. He adorns no world, while he is seeking to adorn a better. His best actions have no reference to their actual scenery. For when our actions become of that worth that they might confer a grace on Nature, they pass out of her into a higher arena, where they are still mean and awkward. So that the world beholds only the rear of great deeds, and mistakes them often for inconsistencies, not knowing with what higher they consist. Nature is beautiful as in repose, not promising a higher beauty to-morrow. Her actions are level to one another, and so are never unfit or inconsistent. Shame and remorse, which are so unsightly to her, have a prospective beauty and fitness which redeem them. We would have our lover to be nobler than we, and do not fear to sacrifice our love to his greater nobleness. Better the disagreement of noble lovers than the agreement of base ones. In friendship each will be nobler than the other, and so avoid the cheapness of a level and idle harmony. Love will have its chromatic strains, — discordant yearnings for higher chords, — as well as symphonies. Let us expect no finite satisfaction.

13. Who looks in the sun will see no light else; but also he will see no shadow. Our life revolves unceasingly, but the centre is ever the same, and the wise will regard only the seasons of the soul.

14. The poet concludes with the same trust he began with, and jeers at the blindness which could inquire. But our sphinx is so wise as to put no riddle that can be answered. It is a great presumption to answer conclusively a question which any sincerity has put. The wise answer no questions, — nor do they ask them. She silences his jeers with the conviction that she is the eye-beam of his eye. Our proper eye never quails before an answer. To rest in a reply, as a response of the oracle, that is error; but to suspect time's reply, because we would not degrade one of God's meanings to be intelligible to us, that is wisdom. We shall never arrive at his meaning, but it will ceaselessly arrive to us. The truth we seek with ardor and devotion will not reward us with a cheap acquisition. We run unhesitatingly in our career, not fearing to pass any goal of truth in our haste. We career toward her eternally. A truth rested in stands for all the vice of an age, and revolution comes kindly to restore health.

16. The cunning Sphinx, who had been hushed into stony silence and repose in us, arouses herself and detects a mystery in all things, — in infancy, the moon, fire, flowers, sea, mountain, — and,

(17) in the spirit of the old fable, declares proudly, —

“Who telleth one of my meanings
Is master of all I am.”

When some *Œdipus* has solved one of her enigmas, she will go dash her head against a rock.

You may find this as enigmatical as the Sphinx's riddle. Indeed, I doubt if she could solve it herself.

March 11. Thursday. Every man understands why a fool sings.

March 13. Saturday. There is a sort of homely truth and naturalness in some books, which is very rare to find, and yet looks quite cheap. There may be nothing lofty in the sentiment, or polished in the expression, but it is careless, countrified talk. The scholar rarely writes as well as the farmer talks. Homeliness is a great merit in a book; it is next to beauty and a high art. Some have this merit only. A few homely expressions redeem them. Rusticity is pastoral, but affectation merely civil. The scholar does not make his most familiar experience come gracefully to the aid of his expression, and hence, though he live in it, his books contain no tolerable pictures of the country and simple life. Very few men can speak of Nature with any truth. They confer no favor; they do not speak a good word for her. Most cry better than they speak. You can get more nature out of them by pinching than by addressing them. It is naturalness, and not simply good nature, that interests. I like better the surliness with which the woodchopper speaks of his woods, handling them as indifferently as his axe, than the mealy-mouthed enthusiasm of the lover of nature. Better that the primrose by the river's brim be a yellow prim-

rose and nothing more, than the victim of his bouquet or herbarium, to shine with the flickering dull light of his imagination, and not the golden gleam of a star.

Aubrey relates of Thomas Fuller that his was "a very working head, in so much, that walking and meditating before dinner, he would eat up a penny loaf, not knowing that he did it. His natural memory was very great, to which he added the art of memory. He would repeat to you forwards and backwards all the signs from Ludgate to Charing-cross." These are very good and wholesome facts to know of a man, as copious as some modern volumes.

He also says of Mr. John Hales, that, "he loved Canarie" and was buried "under an altar monument of black marble . . . with a too long epitaph;" of Edmund Halley, that he "at sixteen could make a dial, and then he said he thought himself a brave fellow;" of William Holder, who wrote a book upon his curing one Popham, who was deaf and dumb, "He was beholding to no author; did only consult with nature." For the most part an author but consults with all who have written before upon any subject, and his book is but the advice of so many. But a true book will never have been forestalled, but the topic itself will be new, and, by consulting with nature, it will consult not only with those who have gone before, but with those who may come after. There is always room and occasion enough for a true book on any subject, as there is room for more light the brightest day, and more rays will not interfere with the first.¹

¹ [Week, pp. 111, 112; Riv. 138-140.]

How alone must our life be lived! We dwell on the seashore, and none between us and the sea. Men are my merry companions, my fellow-pilgrims, who beguile the way but leave me at the first turn in the road, for none are travelling *one* road so far as myself.

Each one marches in the van. The weakest child is exposed to the fates henceforth as barely as its parents. Parents and relations but entertain the youth; they cannot stand between him and his destiny. This is the one bare side of every man. There is no fence; it is clear before him to the bounds of space.

What is fame to a living man? If he live aright, the sound of no man's voice will resound through the aisles of his secluded life. His life is a hallowed silence, a fane. The loudest sounds have to thank my little ear that they are heard.

March 15. When I have access to a man's barrel of sermons, which were written from week to week, as his life lapsed, though I now know him to live cheerfully and bravely enough, still I cannot conceive what interval there was for laughter and smiles in the midst of so much sadness. Almost in proportion to the sincerity and earnestness of the life will be the sadness of the record. When I reflect that twice a week for so many years he pondered and preached such a sermon, I think he must have been a splenetic and melancholy man, and wonder if his food digested well. It seems as if the fruit of virtue was never a careless happiness.

A great cheerfulness have all great wits possessed,

almost a prophane levity to such as understood them not, but their religion had the broader basis in proportion as it was less prominent. The religion I love is very laic. The clergy are as diseased, and as much possessed with a devil, as the reformers. They make their topic as offensive as the politician, for our religion is as unpublic and incommunicable as our poetical vein, and to be approached with as much love and tenderness.

March 17. Wednesday. The stars go up and down before my only eye. Seasons come round to me alone. I cannot lean so hard on any arm as on a sunbeam. So solid men are not to my sincerity as is the shimmer of the fields.

March 19. Friday. No true and brave person will be content to live on such a footing with his fellow and himself as the laws of every household now require. The house is the very haunt and lair of our vice. I am impatient to withdraw myself from under its roof as an unclean spot. There is no circulation there; it is full of stagnant and mephitic vapors.

March 20. Even the wisest and best are apt to use their lives as the occasion to do something else in than to live greatly. But we should hang as fondly over this work as the finishing and embellishment of a poem.

It is a great relief when for a few moments in the day we can retire to our chamber and be completely true to

ourselves. It leavens the rest of our hours. In that moment I will be nakedly as vicious as I am; this false life of mine shall have a being at length.

March 21. Sunday. To be associated with others by my friend's generosity when he bestows a gift is an additional favor to be grateful for.

March 27. Saturday. Magnanimity, though it look expensive for a short course, is always economy in the long run. Be generous in your poverty, if you would be rich. To make up a great action there are no subordinate mean ones. We can never afford to postpone a true life to-day to any future and anticipated nobleness. We think if by tight economy we can manage to arrive at independence, then indeed we will begin to be generous without stay. We sacrifice all nobleness to a little present meanness. If a man charges you eight hundred pay him eight hundred and fifty, and it will leave a clean edge to the sum. It will be like nature, overflowing and rounded like the bank of a river, not close and precise like a drain or ditch.

It is always a short step to peace — of mind.

Under this line there is or has been life; as, when I see the mole's raised gallery in the meadow, I know that he has passed underneath.

I must not lose any of my freedom by being a farmer and landholder. Most who enter on any profession

are doomed men. The world might as well sing a dirge over them forthwith. The farmer's muscles are rigid. He can do one thing long, not many well. His pace seems determined henceforth; he never quickens it. A very rigid Nemesis is his fate. When the right wind blows or a star calls, I can leave this arable and grass ground, without making a will or settling my estate. I would buy a farm as freely as a silken streamer. Let me not think my front windows must face east henceforth because a particular hill slopes that way. My life must undulate still. I will not feel that my wings are clipped when once I have settled on ground which the law calls my own, but find new pinions grown to the old, and talaria to my feet beside.

March 30. Tuesday. I find my life growing slovenly when it does not exercise a constant supervision over itself. Its duds accumulate. Next to having lived a day well is a clear and calm overlooking of all our days.

FRIENDSHIP

Now we are partners in such legal trade,
We'll look to the beginnings, not the ends,
Nor to pay-day, knowing true wealth is made
For current stock and not for dividends.

I am amused when I read how Ben Jonson engaged that the ridiculous masks with which the royal family and nobility were to be entertained should be "grounded upon antiquity and solid learning."¹

¹ [*Week*, p. 108; *Riv.* 134.]

April 1. ON THE SUN COMING OUT IN THE AFTERNOON
Methinks all things have travelled since you shined,
But only Time, and clouds, Time's team, have moved;
Again foul weather shall not change my mind,
But in the shade I will believe what in the sun I loved.

In reading a work on agriculture, I skip the author's moral reflections, and the words "Providence" and "He" scattered along the page, to come at the profitable level of what he has to say. There is no science in men's religion; it does not teach me so much as the report of the committee on swine. My author shows he has dealt in corn and turnips and can worship God with the hoe and spade, but spare me his morality.¹

April 3. Friends will not only live in harmony, but in melody.²

April 4. Sunday. The rattling of the tea-kettle below stairs reminds me of the cow-bells I used to hear when berrying in the Great Fields many years ago, sounding distant and deep amid the birches. That cheap piece of tinkling brass which the farmer hangs about his cow's neck has been more to me than the tons of metal which are swung in the belfry.

They who prepare my evening meal below
Carelessly hit the kettle as they go,
With tongs or shovel,
And, ringing round and round,

¹ [*Week*, p. 79; *Riv.* 98.]

² [*Week*, p. 283; *Riv.* 351.]

Out of this hovel
It makes an Eastern temple by the sound.

At first I thought a cow-bell, right at hand
'Mid birches, sounded o'er the open land,
Where I plucked flowers
Many years ago,
Speeding midsummer hours
With such secure delight they hardly seemed to flow.

April 5. This long series of desultory mornings does not tarnish the brightness of the prospective days. Surely faith is not dead. Wood, water, earth, air are essentially what they were; only society has degenerated. This lament for a golden age is only a lament for golden men.

I only ask a clean seat. I will build my lodge on the southern slope of some hill, and take there the life the gods send me. Will it not be employment enough to accept gratefully all that is yielded me between sun and sun?¹ Even the fox digs his own burrow. If my jacket and trousers, my boots and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do. Won't they, Deacon Spaulding?²

April 7. Wednesday. My life will wait for nobody, but is being matured still irresistibly while I go about the streets and chaffer with this man and that to secure it a living. It will cut its own channel, like the mountain stream, which by the longest ridges and by level

¹ [See p. 299.]

² [Walden, p. 25; Riv. 39.]

prairies is not kept from the sea finally. So flows a man's life, and will reach the sea water, if not by an earthy channel, yet in dew and rain, overleaping all barriers, with rainbows to announce its victory. It can wind as cunningly and unerringly as water that seeks its level; and shall I complain if the gods make it meander? This staying to buy me a farm is as if the Mississippi should stop to chaffer with a clamshell.

What have I to do with plows? I cut another furrow than you see. Where the off ox treads, there is it not, it is farther off; where the nigh ox walks, it will not be, it is nigher still. If corn fails, my crop fails not. What of drought? What of rain? Is not my sand well clayed, my peat well sanded? Is it not underdrained and watered?¹

My ground is high,
But 't is not dry,
What you call dew
Comes filtering through;
Though in the sky,
It still is nigh;
Its soil is blue
And virgin too.

If from your price ye will not swerve,
Why, then I'll think the gods reserve
A greater bargain there above,
Out of their sup'rabundant love

¹ [Week, p. 54; Riv. 67, 68.]

Have meantime better for me cared,
 And so will get my stock prepared,
 Plows of new pattern, hoes the same,
 Designed a different soil to tame,
 And sow my seed broadcast in air,
 Certain to reap my harvest there.

April 8. Friends are the ancient and honorable of the earth. The oldest men did not begin friendship. It is older than Hindostan and the Chinese Empire. How long has it been cultivated, and is still the staple article! It is a divine league struck forever. Warm, serene days only bring it out to the surface. There is a friendliness between the sun and the earth in pleasant weather; the gray content of the land is its color.

You can tell what another's suspicions are by what you feel forced to become. You will wear a new character, like a strange habit, in their presence.

April 9. Friday. It would not be hard for some quiet brave man to leap into the saddle to-day and eclipse Napoleon's career by a grander, — show men at length the meaning of war. One reproaches himself with supineness, that he too has sat quiet in his chamber, and not treated the world to the sound of the trumpet; that the indignation which has so long rankled in his breast does not take to horse and to the field. The bravest warrior will have to fight his battles in his dreams, and no earthly war note can arouse him. There are who would not run with Leonidas. Only the third-rate Napoleons

and Alexanders does history tell of. The brave man does not mind the call of the trumpet nor hear the idle clashing of swords without, for the infinite din within. War is but a training, compared with the active service of his peace. Is he not at war? Does he not resist the ocean swell within him, and walk as gently as the summer's sea? Would you have him parade in uniform, and manoeuvre men, whose equanimity is his uniform and who is himself manoeuvred?

The times have no heart. The true reform can be undertaken any morning before unbarring our doors. It calls no convention. I can do two thirds the reform of the world myself. When two neighbors begin to eat corn bread, who before ate wheat, then the gods smile from ear to ear, for it is very pleasant to them. When an individual takes a sincere step, then all the gods attend, and his single deed is sweet.¹

April 10. Saturday. I don't know but we should make life all too tame if we had our own way, and should miss these impulses in a happier time.

How much virtue there is in simply seeing! We may almost say that the hero has striven in vain for his pre-eminency, if the student oversees him. The woman who sits in the house and *sees* is a match for a stirring captain. Those still, piercing eyes, as faithfully exercised on their talent, will keep her even with Alexander or Shakespeare. They may go to Asia with parade, or to

¹ [See *Week*, p. 131; Riv. 163.]

fairlyland, but not beyond her ray. We are as much as we see. Faith is sight and knowledge. The hands only serve the eyes. The farthest blue streak in the horizon I can see, I may reach before many sunsets. What I saw alters not; in my night, when I wander, it is still steadfast as the star which the sailor steers by.

Whoever has had one thought quite lonely, and could contentedly digest that in solitude, knowing that none could accept it, may rise to the height of humanity, and overlook all living men as from a pinnacle.

Speech never made man master of men, but the eloquently refraining from it.

April 11. Sunday. A greater baldness my life seeks, as the crest of some bare hill, which towns and cities do not afford. I want a directer relation with the sun.

FRIENDSHIP'S STEADFASTNESS

True friendship is so firm a league
That's maintenance falls into the even tenor
Of our lives, and is no tie,
But the continuance of our life's thread.

If I would safely keep this new-got pelf,
I have no care henceforth but watch myself,
For lo! it goes untended from my sight,
Waxes and wanes secure with the safe star of night.

See with what liberal step it makes its way,
As we could well afford to let it stray

Throughout the universe, with the sun and moon,
Which would dissolve allegiance as soon.

Shall I concern myself for fickleness,
And undertake to make my friends more sure,
When the great gods out of sheer kindness,
Gave me this office for a sinecure?

Death cannot come too soon
Where it can come at all,
But always is too late
Unless the fates it call.

April 15. Thursday. The gods are of no sect; they side with no man. When I imagine that Nature inclined rather to some few earnest and faithful souls, and specially existed for them, I go to see an obscure individual who lives under the hill, letting both gods and men alone, and find that strawberries and tomatoes grow for him too in his garden there, and the sun lodges kindly under his hillside, and am compelled to acknowledge the unbribable charity of the gods.

Any simple, unquestioned mode of life is alluring to men. The man who picks peas steadily for a living is more than respectable. He is to be envied by his neighbors.

April 16. I have been inspecting my neighbors' farms to-day and chaffering with the landholders, and I must confess I am startled to find everywhere the old system

of things so grim and assured. Wherever I go the farms are run out, and there they lie, and the youth must buy old land and bring it to. Everywhere the relentless opponents of reform are a few old maids and bachelors, who sit round the kitchen fire, listening to the singing of the tea-kettle and munching cheese-rinds.¹

April 18. Sunday. We need pine for no office for the sake of a certain culture, for all valuable experience lies in the way of a man's duty. My necessities of late have compelled me to study Nature as she is related to the farmer, — as she simply satisfies a want of the body. Some interests have got a footing on the earth which I have not made sufficient allowance for. That which built these barns and cleared the land thus had some valor.²

We take little steps, and venture small stakes, as if our actions were very fatal and ir retrievable. There is no swing to our deeds. But our life is only a retired valley where we rest on our packs awhile. Between us and our end there is room for any delay. It is not a short and easy southern way, but we must go over snow-capped mountains to reach the sun.

April 20. You can't beat down your virtue; so much goodness it must have.

When a room is furnished, comfort is not furnished.

Great thoughts hallow any labor. To-day I earned

¹ [*Week*, p. 131; Riv. 163.] ² [*Week*, p. 129; Riv. 161.]

seventy-five cents heaving manure out of a pen, and made a good bargain of it. If the ditcher muses the while how he may live uprightly, the ditching spade and turf knife may be engraved on the coat-of-arms of his posterity.

There are certain current expressions and blasphemous moods of viewing things, as when we say "he is doing a good business," more prophane than cursing and swearing. There is death and sin in such words. Let not the children hear them.

April 22. Thursday. There are two classes of authors: the one write the history of their times, the other their biography.

April 23. Friday. Any greatness is not to be mistaken. Who shall cavil at it? It stands once for all on a level with the heroes of history. It is not to be patronized. It goes alone.

When I hear music, I flutter, and am the scene of life, as a fleet of merchantmen when the wind rises.

April 24. Music is the sound of the circulation in nature's veins. It is the flux which melts nature. Men dance to it, glasses ring and vibrate, and the fields seem to undulate. The healthy ear always hears it, nearer or more remote.

It has been a cloudy, drizzling day, with occasional

brightenings in the mist, when the trill of the tree sparrow seemed to be ushering in sunny hours.¹

April 25. A momentous silence reigns always in the woods, and their meaning seems just ripening into expression. But alas! they make no haste. The rush sparrow,² Nature's minstrel of serene hours, sings of an immense leisure and duration.

When I hear a robin sing at sunset, I cannot help contrasting the equanimity of Nature with the bustle and impatience of man. We return from the lyceum and caucus with such stir and excitement, as if a crisis were at hand; but no natural scene or sound sympathizes with us, for Nature is always silent and unpretending as at the break of day. She but rubs her eyelids.

I am struck with the pleasing friendships and unanimities of nature in the woods, as when the moss on the trees takes the form of their leaves.

There is all of civilized life in the woods. Their wildest scenes have an air of domesticity and homeliness, and when the flicker's cackle is heard in the clearings, the musing hunter is reminded that civilization has imported nothing into them.³ The ball-room is represented

¹ [*Week*, pp. 318, 319; Riv. 395. Tree sparrow=chipping sparrow? The "hair-bird" of *Week*, p. 317 (Riv. 393), is called tree sparrow in the commonplace-book referred to on p. 438.]

² [Field sparrow, Nuttall's *Fringilla juncoorum*. Nuttall gives both field sparrow and rush sparrow as its vernacular names.]

³ [*Week*, p. 336; Riv. 416.]

by the catkins of the alder at this season, which hang gracefully like a lady's ear-drops.

All the discoveries of science are equally true in their deepest recesses; nature there, too, obeys the same laws. Fair weather and foul concern the little red bug upon a pine stump; for him the wind goes round the right way and the sun breaks through the clouds.¹

April 26. Monday. At R. W. E.'s.

The charm of the Indian to me is that he stands free and unconstrained in Nature, is her inhabitant and not her guest, and wears her easily and gracefully. But the civilized man has the habits of the house. His house is a prison, in which he finds himself oppressed and confined, not sheltered and protected. He walks as if he sustained the roof; he carries his arms as if the walls would fall in and crush him, and his feet remember the cellar beneath. His muscles are never relaxed. It is rare that he overcomes the house, and learns to sit at home in it, and roof and floor and walls support themselves, as the sky and trees and earth.

It is a great art to saunter.

April 27. It is only by a sort of voluntary blindness, and omitting to see, that we know ourselves, as when we see stars with the side of the eye. The nearest approach to discovering what we are is in dreams. It is as hard to see one's self as to look backwards without turning round. And foolish are they that look in glasses with that intent.

¹ [*Week*, p. 336; Riv. 416.]

The porters have a hard time, but not so hard as he that carries his own shoulders. That beats the Smyrna Turks. Some men's broad shoulders are load enough. Even a light frame can stand under a great burden, if it does not have to support itself. Virtue is buoyant and elastic; it stands without effort and does not feel gravity; but sin plods and shuffles. Newton needed not to wait for an apple to fall to discover the attraction of gravitation; it was implied in the fall of man.

April 28. Wednesday. We falsely attribute to men a determined character; putting together all their yesterdays and averaging them, we presume we know them. Pity the man who has a character to support. It is worse than a large family. He is silent poor indeed. But in fact character is never explored, nor does it get developed in time, but eternity is its development, time its envelope. In view of this distinction, a sort of divine politeness and heavenly good breeding suggests itself, to address always the enveloped character of a man. I approach a great nature with infinite expectation and uncertainty, not knowing what I may meet. It lies as broad and unexplored before me as a scraggy hillside or pasture. I may hear a fox bark, or a partridge drum, or some bird new to these localities may fly up. It lies out there as old, and yet as new. The aspect of the woods varies every day, what with their growth and the changes of the seasons and the influence of the elements, so that the eye of the forester never twice rests upon the same prospect. Much more does a character show newly and variedly, if directly seen. It is the highest

compliment to suppose that in the intervals of conversation your companion has expanded and grown. It may be a deference which he will not understand, but the nature which underlies him will understand it, and your influence will be shed as finely on him as the dust in the sun settles on our clothes. By such politeness we may educate one another to some purpose. So have I felt myself educated sometimes; I am expanded and enlarged.

April 29. Birds and quadrupeds pass freely through nature, without prop or stilt. But man very naturally carries a stick in his hand, seeking to ally himself by many points to nature, as a warrior stands by his horse's side with his hand on his mane. We walk the gracefuler for a cane, as the juggler uses a leaded pole to balance him when he dances on a slack wire.

Better a monosyllabic life than a ragged and muttered one; let its report be short and round like a rifle, so that it may hear its own echo in the surrounding silence.

April 30. Where shall we look for standard English but to the words of any man who has a depth of feeling in him? Not in any smooth and leisurely essay. From the gentlemanly windows of the country-seat no sincere eyes are directed upon nature, but from the peasant's horn windows a true glance and greeting occasionally. "For summer being ended, all things," said the Pilgrim, "stood in appearance with a weather-beaten face,

and the whole country full of woods and thickets represented a wild and savage hue." Compare this with the agricultural report.

May 1. Saturday. Life in gardens and parlors is unpalatable to me. It wants rudeness and necessity to give it relish. I would at least strike my spade into the earth with as good will as the woodpecker his bill into a tree.¹

May 2.

WACHUSETT²

Especial I remember thee,
Wachusett, who like me
Standest alone without society.
Thy far blue eye,
A remnant of the sky,
Seen through the clearing or the gorge,
Or from the windows of the forge,
Doth leaven all it passes by.
Nothing is true
But stands 'tween me and you,
Thou western pioneer,
Who know'st not shame nor fear,
By venturous spirit driven
Under the caves of heaven;
And canst expand thee there,
And breathe enough of air?

¹ [*Week*, p. 54; Riv. 67.]

² [In *Excursions*, p. 135 (Riv. 165), these lines are printed as part of a poem beginning, "With frontier strength ye stand your ground." The poem appears also, in extended form, in *Week*, pp. 170-173; Riv. 212-215.]

Upholding heaven, holding down earth,
Thy pastime from thy birth,
Not steadied by the one, nor leaning on the other;
May I approve myself thy worthy brother!

May 3. Monday. We are all pilots of the most intricate Bahama channels. Beauty may be the sky overhead, but Duty is the water underneath. When I see a man with serene countenance in the sunshine of summer, drinking in peace in the garden or parlor, it looks like a great inward leisure that he enjoys; but in reality he sails on no summer's sea, but this steady sailing comes of a heavy hand on the tiller. We do not attend to larks and bluebirds so leisurely but that conscience is as erect as the attitude of the listener. The man of principle gets never a holiday. Our true character silently underlies all our words and actions, as the granite underlies the other strata. Its steady pulse does not cease for any deed of ours, as the sap is still ascending in the stalk of the fairest flower.

May 6. Thursday. The fickle person is he that does not know what is true or right absolutely, — who has not an ancient wisdom for a lifetime, but a new prudence for every hour. We must sail by a sort of dead reckoning on this course of life, not speak any vessel nor spy any headland, but, in spite of all phenomena, come steadily to port at last. In general we must have a catholic and universal wisdom, wiser than any particular, and be prudent enough to defer to it always. We are literally wiser than we know. Men do not fail

for want of knowledge, but for want of prudence to give wisdom the preference.¹ These low weathercocks on barns and fences show not which way the general and steady current of the wind sets, — which brings fair weather or foul, — but the vane on the steeple, high up in another stratum of atmosphere, tells that. What we need to know in any case is very simple.² I shall not mistake the direction of my life; if I but know the high land and the main, — on this side the Cordilleras, on that the Pacific, — I shall know how to run. If a ridge intervene, I have but to seek, or make, a gap to the sea.

May 9. Sunday. The pine stands in the woods like an Indian, — untamed, with a fantastic wildness about it, even in the clearings. If an Indian warrior were well painted, with pines in the background, he would seem to blend with the trees, and make a harmonious expression. The pitch pines are the ghosts of Philip and Massasoit. The white pine has the smoother features of the squaw.

The poet speaks only those thoughts that come unbidden, like the wind that stirs the trees, and men cannot help but listen. He is not listened to, but heard. The weathercock might as well dally with the wind as a man pretend to resist eloquence. The breath that inspires the poet has traversed a whole Campagna, and this new climate here indicates that other latitudes are chilled or heated.

Speak to men as to gods and you will not be insincere.

¹ [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 164.]

² [*Week*, p. 132; Riv. 164.]

WESTWARD, HO!

The needles of the pine
All to the west incline.¹

THE ECHO OF THE SABBATH BELL HEARD IN
THE WOODS²

Dong, sounds the brass in the east,
As if for a civic feast,
But I like that sound the best
Out of the fluttering west.

The steeple rings a knell,
But the fairies' silvery bell
Is the voice of that gentle folk,
Or else the horizon that spoke.

Its metal is not of brass,
But air, and water, and glass,
And under a cloud it is swung,
And by the wind is rung,
With a slim silver tongue.

When the steeple tolls the noon,
It soundeth not so soon,
Yet it rings an earlier hour,
And the sun has not reached its tower.

May 10. Monday. A good warning to the restless

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 133; Riv. 163.]

² [This poem appears in *Week*, p. 50 (Riv. 62), with some variations and without title.]

tourists of these days is contained in the last verses of Claudian's "Old Man of Verona."

"Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.
Plus habet hic vitæ, plus habet ille viæ."¹

May 23. Sunday. Barn.—The distant woods are but the tassels of my eye.

Books are to be attended to as new sounds merely. Most would be put to a sore trial if the reader should assume the attitude of a listener. They are but a new note in the forest. To our lonely, sober thought the earth is a wild unexplored. Wildness as of the jay and muskrat reigns over the great part of nature. The oven-bird and plover are heard in the horizon. Here is a new book of heroes, come to me like the note of the chewink from over the fen, only over a deeper and wider fen. The pines are unrelenting sifters of thought; nothing petty leaks through them. Let me put my ear close, and hear the sough of this book, that I may know if any inspiration yet haunts it. There is always a later edition of every book than the printer wots of, no matter how recently it was published. All nature is a new impression every instant.

The aspects of the most simple object are as various as the aspects of the most compound. Observe the same sheet of water from different eminences. When I have travelled a few miles I do not recognize the profile of the hills of my native village.

May 27. Thursday. I sit in my boat on Walden, playing the flute this evening, and see the perch, which I

¹ [Walden, p. 354; Riv. 496.]

seem to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the bottom, which is strewn with the wrecks of the forest, and feel that nothing but the wildest imagination can conceive of the manner of life we are living. Nature is a wizard. The Concord nights are stranger than the Arabian nights.

We not only want elbow-room, but eye-room in this gray air which shrouds all the fields. Sometimes my eyes see over the county road by daylight to the tops of yonder birches on the hill, as at others by moonlight.

Heaven lies above, because the air is deep.

In all my life hitherto I have left nothing behind.

May 31. Monday. That title, "The Laws of Menu¹ with the Gloss of Culluca," comes to me with such a volume of sound as if it had swept unobstructed over the plains of Hindostan; and when my eye rests on yonder birches, or the sun in the water, or the shadows of the trees, it seems to signify the laws of them all. They are the laws of you and me, a fragrance wafted down from those old times, and no more to be refuted than the wind.

When my imagination travels eastward and backward to those remote years of the gods, I seem to draw near to the habitation of the morning, and the dawn at length has a place. I remember the book as an hour before sunrise.

We are height and depth both, a calm sea at the foot of a promontory. Do we not overlook our own depths?

¹ [See *Week*, p. 154; Riv. 192.]

June 1. To have seen a man out of the East or West is sufficient to establish their reality and locality. I have seen a Mr. Wattles to-day, from Vermont, and now know where that is and that it is; a reformer, with two soldier's eyes and shoulders, who began to belabor the world at ten years, a ragged mountain boy, as fifer of a company, with set purpose to remould it from those first years.

The great person never wants an opportunity to be great, but makes occasion for all about him.

June 2. Wednesday. I am brought into the near neighborhood and am become a silent observer of the moon's paces to-night, by means of a glass, while the frogs are peeping all around me on the earth, and the sound of the accordion seems to come from some bright saloon yonder. I am sure the moon floats in a human atmosphere. It is but a distant scene of the world's drama. It is a wide theatre the gods have given us, and our actions must befit it. More sea and land, mountain and valley, here is, — a further West, a freshness and wildness in reserve when all the land shall be cleared.

I see three little lakes between the hills near its edge, reflecting the sun's rays. The light glimmers as on the water in a tumbler. So far off do the laws of reflection hold. I seem to see the ribs of the creature. This is the aspect of their day, its outside, — their heaven above their heads, towards which they breathe their prayers. So much is between me and them. It is noon there, perchance, and ships are at anchor in the havens or

sailing on the seas, and there is a din in the streets, and in this light or that shade some leisurely soul contemplates.

But now dor-bugs fly over its disk and bring me back to earth and night.

June 7. Monday. The inhabitants of those Eastern plains seem to possess a natural and hereditary right to be conservative and magnify forms and traditions. "Immemorial custom is transcendent law," says Menu. That is, it was the custom of gods before men used it. The fault of our New England custom is that it is memorial. What is morality but immemorial custom? It is not manner but character, and the conservative conscience sustains it.¹

We are accustomed to exaggerate the immobility and stagnation of those eras, as of the waters which levelled the steppes; but those slow revolving "years of the gods" were as rapid to all the needs of virtue as these bustling and hasty seasons. Man stands to revere, he kneels to pray. Methinks history will have to be tried by new tests to show what centuries were rapid and what slow. Corn grows in the night.² Will this bustling era detain the future reader longer? Will the earth seem to have conversed more with the heavens during these times? Who is writing better Vedas? How science and art spread and flourished, how trivial conveniences were multiplied, that which is the gossip of the world is not recorded in them; and if they are left out of our scripture, too, what will remain?

¹ [Week, p. 140; Riv. 174, 175.]

[See pp. 124 and 174.]

Since the Battle of Bunker Hill we think the world has *not* been at a standstill.

When I remember the treachery of memory and the manifold accidents to which tradition is liable, how soon the vista of the past closes behind, — as near as night's crescent to the setting day, — and the dazzling brightness of noon is reduced to the faint glimmer of the evening star, I feel as if it were by a rare indulgence of the fates that any traces of the past are left us, — that my ears which do not hear across the interval over which a crow caws should chance to hear this far-travelled sound. With how little coöperation of the societies, after all, is the past remembered!

I know of no book which comes to us with grander pretensions than the "Laws of Menu;" and this immense presumption is so impersonal and sincere that it is never offensive or ridiculous. Observe the modes in which modern literature is advertised, and then consider this Hindoo prospectus. Think what a reading public it addresses, what criticism it expects. What wonder if the times were not ripe for it?¹

June 8. Having but one chair, I am obliged to receive my visitors standing, and, now I think of it, those old sages and heroes must always have met erectly.

July 10 to 12. This town, too, lies out under the sky, a port of entry and departure for souls to and from heaven.²

¹ [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 193.]

² [*Week*, p. 12; Riv. 15.]

A slight sound at evening lifts me up by the ears, and makes life seem inexpressibly serene and grand. It may be in Uranus, or it may be in the shutter. It is the original sound of which all literature is but the echo. It makes all fear superfluous. Bravery comes from further than the sources of fear.

Aug. 1. Sunday. I never met a man who cast a free and healthy glance over life, but the best live in a sort of Sabbath light, a Jewish gloom. The best thought is not only without sombreness, but even without morality. The universe lies outspread in floods of white light to it. The moral aspect of nature is a jaundice reflected from man. To the innocent there are no cherubim nor angels. Occasionally we rise above the necessity of virtue into an unchangeable morning light, in which we have not to choose in a dilemma between right and wrong, but simply to live right on and breathe the circumambient air.¹ There is no name for this life unless it be the very vitality of *vita*. Silent is the preacher about this, and silent must ever be, for he who knows it will not preach.

Aug. 4. Wednesday. My pen is a lever which, in proportion as the near end stirs me further within, the further end reaches to a greater depth in the reader.

Nawshawtucl. — Far in the east I read *Nature's Corn Law Rhymes*. Here, in sight of Wachusett and these rivers and woods, my mind goes singing to itself of other themes than taxation. The rush sparrow sings

¹ [*Week*, p. 394; Riv. 486.]

still unintelligible, as from beyond a depth in me which I have not fathomed, where my future lies folded up. I hear several faint notes, quite outside me, which populate the waste.

This is such fresh and flowing weather, as if the waves of the morning had subsided over the day.

Aug. 6. If I am well, then I see well. The bulletins of health are twirled along my visual rays, like pasteboards on a kite string.

I cannot read a sentence in the book of the Hindoos without being elevated as upon the table-land of the Ghauts. It has such a rhythm as the winds of the desert, such a tide as the Ganges, and seems as superior to criticism as the Himmaleh Mounts. Even at this late hour, unworn by time, with a native and inherent dignity it wears the English dress as indifferently as the Sanscrit. The great tone of the book is of such fibre and such severe tension that no time nor accident can relax it.¹ The great thought is never found in a mean dress, but is of virtue to ennoble any language. Let it issue from the lips of the Wolofs, or from the forum of Rome, the nine Muses will seem to have been purveyors for it. Its education is always liberal; it has all the graces of oratory and of poetry. The lofty tone which is its indispensable breath is grace to the eye and music to the ear. It can endow a college.²

So supremely religious a book imposes with authority on the latest age. The very simplicity of style of the

¹ [*Week*, p. 155; *Riv.* 193.] ² [*Week*, p. 109; *Riv.* 136.]

ancient lawgiver, implying all in the omission of all, proves an habitual elevation of thought, which the multiplied glosses of later days strive in vain to slope up to. The whole book by noble gestures and inclinations seems to render words unnecessary. The abbreviated sentence points to the thing for explanation. As the sublimest thought is most faithfully printed in the face, and needs the fewest interpreting words. The page nods toward the fact and is silent.

As I walk across the yard from the barn to the house through the fog, with a lamp in my hand, I am reminded of the Merrimack nights, and seem to see the sod between tent-ropes. The trees, seen dimly through the mist, suggest things which do not at all belong to the past, but are peculiar to my fresh New England life. It is as novel as green peas. The dew hangs everywhere upon the grass, and I breathe the rich, damp air in slices.

Aug. 7. Saturday. The impression which those sublime sentences made on me last night has awakened me before any cockerowing. Their influence lingers around me like a fragrance, or as the fog hangs over the earth late into the day.

The very locusts and crickets of a summer day are but later or older glosses on the Dherma Sâstra of the Hindoos, a continuation of the sacred code.¹

Aug. 9. It is vain to try to write unless you feel strong in the knees.

¹ [*Week*, p. 157; *Riv.* 195, 196.]

Any book of great authority and genius seems to our imagination to permeate and pervade all space. Its spirit, like a more subtle ether, sweeps along with the prevailing winds of the country. Its influence conveys a new gloss to the meadows and the depths of the wood, and bathes the huckleberries on the hills, as sometimes a new influence in the sky washes in waves over the fields and seems to break on some invisible beach in the air. All things confirm it. It spends the mornings and the evenings.¹

Everywhere the speech of Menu demands the widest apprehension and proceeds from the loftiest plateau of the soul. It is spoken unbendingly to its own level, and does not imply any contemporaneous speaker.

I read history as little critically as I consider the landscape, and am more interested in the atmospheric tints and various lights and shades which the intervening spaces create than in its groundwork and composition. It is the morning now turned evening and seen in the west, — the same sun, but a new light and atmosphere. Its beauty is like the sunset; not a fresco painting on a wall, flat and bounded, but atmospheric and roving, or free. But, in reality, history fluctuates as the face of the landscape from morning to evening. What is of moment in it is its hue and color. Time hides no treasures; we want not its *then*, but its *now*. We do not complain that the mountains in the horizon are blue and indistinct; they are the more like the heavens.

¹ [Week, p. 157; Riv. 195.]

Of what moment are facts that can be lost, — which need to be commemorated? The monument of death will outlast the memory of the dead. The Pyramids do not tell the tale confided to them. The living fact commemorates itself. Why look in the dark for light? Look in the light rather. Strictly speaking, the Societies have not recovered one fact from oblivion, but they themselves are instead of the fact that is lost. The researcher is more memorable than the researched. The crowd stood admiring the mist and the dim outline of the trees seen through it, and when one of their number advanced to explore the phenomenon, with fresh admiration all eyes were turned on his dimly retreating figure. Critical acumen is exerted in vain to uncover the past; the *past* cannot be *presented*; we cannot know what we are not. But one veil hangs over past, present, and future, and it is the province of the historian to find out, not what was, but what is. Where a battle has been fought, you will find nothing but the bones of men and beasts; where a battle is being fought, there are hearts beating. We will sit on a mound and muse, and not try to make these skeletons stand on their legs again. Does Nature remember, think you, that they *were* men, or not rather that they *are* bones?

Ancient history has an air of antiquity. It should be more modern. It is written as if the spectator should be thinking of the back side of the picture on the wall, as if the author expected 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 incroachments of time; but while they loiter, they and their works both fall a prey to the enemy.

Biography is liable to the same objection; it should be autobiography. Let us not leave ourselves empty that, so vexing our bowels, we may go abroad and be somebody else to explain him. If I am not I, who will be? As if it were to dispense justice to all. But the time has not come for that.¹

Aug. 12. We take pleasure in beholding the form of a mountain in the horizon, as if by retiring to this distance we had then first conquered it by our vision, and were made privy to the design of the architect; so when we behold the shadow of our earth on the moon's disk. When we climb a mountain and observe the lesser irregularities, we do not give credit to the comprehensive and general intelligence which shaped them; but when we see the outline in the horizon, we confess that the hand which moulded those opposite slopes, making one balance the other, worked round a deep centre, and was privy to the plan of the universe. The smallest of nature's works fits the farthest and widest view, as if it had been referred in its bearings to every point in space.² It harmonizes with the horizon line and the orbits of the planets.

Aug. 13. Friday. I have been in the swamp by Charles Miles's this afternoon, and found it so bosky and sylvan that Art would never have freedom or cour-

¹ [*Week*, pp. 161-163; *Riv.* 200-204.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 148; *Riv.* 181.]

age to imitate it. It can never match the luxury and superfluity of Nature. In Art all is seen; she cannot afford concealed wealth, and in consequence is niggardly; but Nature, even when she is scant and thin outwardly, contents us still by the assurance of a certain generosity at the roots. Surely no stinted hand has been at work here for these centuries to produce these particular tints this summer. The double spruce attracts me here, which I had hardly noticed in the gardens, and now I understand why men try to make them grow about their houses.¹

Nature has her luxurious and florid style as well as Art. Having a pilgrim's cup to make, she gives to the whole — stem, bowl, handle, and nose — some fantastic shape, as if it were to be the car of a fabulous marine deity, — a Nereus or Triton. She is mythical and mystical always, and spends her whole genius upon the least work.²

Aug. 16. There is a double virtue in the sound that can wake an echo, as in the lowing of the cows this morning. Far out in the horizon that sound travels quite round the town, and invades each recess of the wood, advancing at a grand pace and with a sounding Eastern pomp.

Aug. 18. I sailed on the North River last night with

¹ [*Week*, p. 339; *Riv.* 419. The "double spruce" is now generally known as the black spruce. Thoreau makes it "single spruce" (*i. e.*, white spruce) in the book, but the tree he was familiar with was the black. He confused these two species for a time, but eventually discovered his error.]

² [*Excursions*, pp. 125, 126; *Riv.* 154, 155.]

my flute, and my music was a tinkling stream which meandered with the river, and fell from note to note as a brook from rock to rock. I did not hear the strains after they had issued from the flute, but before they were breathed into it, for the original strain precedes the sound by as much as the echo follows after, and the rest is the perquisite of the rocks and trees and beasts.¹ Unpremeditated music is the true gauge which measures the current of our thoughts, the very undertow of our life's stream.

Of all the duties of life it is hardest to be in earnest; it implies a good deal both before and behind. I sit here in the barn this flowing afternoon weather, while the school bell is ringing in the village, and find that all the things immediate to be done are very trivial. I could postpone them to hear this locust sing. The cockerels crow and the hens cluck in the yard as if time were dog-cheap. It seems something worth detaining time, — the laying of an egg. Cannot man do something to comfort the gods, and not let the world prove such a piddling concern? No doubt they would be glad to sell their shares at a large discount by this time. Eastern Railroad stock promises a better dividend.

The best poets, after all, exhibit only a tame and civil side of nature. They have not seen the west side of any mountain.

Day and night, mountain and wood, are visible from the wilderness as well as the village. They have their

¹ [*Week*, p. 363; Riv. 449.]

primeval aspects, sterner, savager than any poet has sung. It is only the white man's poetry. We want the Indian's report. Wordsworth is too tame for the Chipeway.¹

The landscape contains a thousand dials which indicate the natural divisions of time; the shadows of a thousand styles point to the hour. The afternoon is now far advanced, and a fresh and leisurely wind is blowing on the river, causing long reaches of serene ripples. It has done its stent, and seems not to flow but lie at its length reflecting the light. The haze over the woods seems like the breath of all nature, rising from a myriad pores into the attenuated atmosphere.² It is sun smoke, the woof he has woven, his day's toil displayed.³

If I were awaked from a deep sleep, I should know which side the meridian the sun might be by the chirping of the crickets. Night has already insidiously set her foot in the valley in many places, where the shadows of the shrubs and fences begin to darken the landscape. There is a deeper shading in the colors of the afternoon landscape. Perhaps the forenoon is brighter than the afternoon, not only because of the greater transparency of the atmosphere then, but because we naturally look most into the west, — as we look forward into the day, — and so in the forenoon see the sunny side of things, but in the afternoon the shadow of every tree.

What a drama of light and shadow from morning to night! Soon as the sun is over the meridian, in deep

¹ [*Week*, p. 56; Riv. 70.]

² [*Week*, p. 341; Riv. 422.]

³ [*Week*, p. 229; Riv. 234.]

ravines under the east side of the cliffs night forwardly plants her foot, and, as day retreats, steps into his trenches, till at length she sits in his citadel. For long time she skulks behind the needles of the pine, before she dares draw out her forces into the plain. Sun, moon, wind, and stars are the allies of one side or the other.¹

How much will some officious men give to preserve an old book, of which perchance only a single [copy] exists, while a wise God is already giving, and will still give, infinitely more to get it destroyed!

Aug. 20. Friday. It seems as if no cock lived so far in the horizon but a faint vibration reached me here, spread the wider over earth as the more distant.

In the morning the crickets snore, in the afternoon they chirp, at midnight they dream.

Aug. 24. Let us wander where we will, the universe is built round about us, and we are central still. By reason of this, if we look into the heavens, they are concave, and if we were to look into a gulf as bottomless, it would be concave also. The sky is curved downward to the earth in the horizon, because I stand in the plain. I draw down its skirts. The stars so low there seem loth to go away from me, but by a circuitous path to be remembering and returning to me.²

Aug. 28. Saturday. A great poet will write for his peers alone, and indite no line to an inferior. He will

¹ [*Week*, p. 341; Riv. 421, 422.] ² [*Week*, p. 353; Riv. 436, 437.]

remember only that he saw truth and beauty from his position, and calmly expect the time when a vision as broad shall overlook the same field as freely.¹

Johnson can no more criticise Milton than the naked eye can criticise Herschel's map of the sun.

The art which only gilds the surface and demands merely a superficial polish, without reaching to the core, is but varnish and filigree. But the work of genius is rough-hewn from the first, because it anticipates the lapse of time and has an ingrained polish, which still appears when fragments are broken off, an essential quality of its substance. Its beauty is its strength. It breaks with a lustre, and splits in cubes and diamonds. Like the diamond, it has only to be cut to be polished, and its surface is a window to its interior splendors.

True verses are not counted on the poet's fingers, but on his heart-strings.

My life hath been the poem I would have writ,
But I could not both live and live to utter it.²

In the Hindoo scripture the idea of man is quite illimitable and sublime. There is nowhere a loftier conception of his destiny. He is at length lost in Brahma himself, "the divine male." Indeed, the distinction of races in this life is only the commencement of a series of degrees which ends in Brahma.

The veneration in which the Vedas are held is itself

¹ [*Week*, p. 363; Riv. 450.] ² [*Week*, p. 365; Riv. 453.]

a remarkable fact. Their code embraced the whole moral life of the Hindoo, and in such a case there is no other truth than sincerity. Truth is such by reference to the heart of man within, not to any standard without. There is no creed so false but faith can make it true.

In inquiring into the origin and genuineness of this scripture it is impossible to tell when the divine agency in its composition ceased, and the human began. "From fire, from air, and from the sun" was it "milked out."

There is no grander conception of creation anywhere. It is peaceful as a dream,¹ and so is the annihilation of the world. It is such a beginning and ending as the morning and evening, for they had learned that God's methods are not violent. It was such an awakening as might have been heralded by the faint dreaming chirp of the crickets before the dawn.

The very indistinctness of its theogony implies a sublime truth. It does not allow the reader to rest in any supreme first cause, but directly hints of a supreamer still which created the last. The creator is still behind, increate.² The divinity is so fleeting that its attributes are never expressed.

Aug. 30. What is a day, if the day's work be not done? What are the divisions of time to them who have nothing to do? What is the present or the future to him who has no occasion for them, who does not create them by his industry?

¹ [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.]

² [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 199.]

It is now easy to apply to this ancient scripture such a catholic criticism as it will become the part of some future age, to apply to the Christian, — wherein the design and idea which underlies it is considered, and not the narrow and partial fulfillment.

These verses are so eminently textual, that it seems as if those old sages had concentrated all their wisdom in little fascicles, of which future times were to be the commentary; as the light of this lower world is only the dissipated rays of the sun and stars.¹ They seem to have been uttered with a sober morning prescience, in the dawn of time.² There is a sort of holding back, or withdrawal of the full meaning, that the ages may follow after and explore the whole. The sentence opens unexpensively and almost unmeaningly, as the petals of a flower.³

To our nearsightedness this mere outward life seems a constituent part of us, and we do not realize that as our soul expands it will cast off the shell of routine and convention, which afterward will only be an object for the cabinets of the curious. But of this people the temples are now crumbled away, and we are introduced to the very hearth of Hindoo life and to the primeval conventicle where how to eat and to drink and to sleep were the questions to be decided.⁴

The simple life herein described confers on us a degree of freedom even in the perusal. We throw down

¹ [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 194.]

³ [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 194.]

² [*Week*, p. 155; Riv. 193.]

⁴ [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 195.]

our packs and go on our way unencumbered. Wants so easily and gracefully satisfied that they seem like a more refined pleasure and repleteness.¹

Sept. 1. Wednesday. When I observe the effeminate taste of some of my contemporaries in this matter of poetry, and how hardly they bear with certain incongruities, I think if this age were consulted it would not choose granite to be the backbone of the world, but Bristol spar or Brazilian diamonds. But the verses which have consulted the refinements even of a golden age will be found weak and nerveless for an iron one. The poet is always such a Cincinnatus in literature as with republican simplicity to raise all to the chiefest honors of the state.

Each generation thinks to inhabit only a west end of the world, and have intercourse with a refined and civilized Nature, not conceiving of her broad equality and republicanism. They think her aristocratic and exclusive because their own estates are narrow. But the sun indifferently selects his rhymes, and with a liberal taste weaves into his verse the planet and the stubble.²

Let us know and conform only to the fashions of eternity.

The very austerity of these Hindoos is tempting to the devotional as a more refined and nobler luxury.³ They seem to have indulged themselves with a certain moderation and temperance in the severities which their

¹ [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.] ² [*Week*, p. 402; Riv. 496.]

³ [*Week*, p. 159; Riv. 198.]

code requires, as divine exercises not to be excessively used as yet. One may discover the root of a Hindoo religion in his own private history, when, in the silent intervals of the day or the night, he does sometimes inflict on himself like austerities with a stern satisfaction.

The "Laws of Menu" are a manual of private devotion, so private and domestic and yet so public and universal a word as is not spoken in the parlor or pulpit in these days.¹ It is so impersonal that it exercises our sincerity more than any other. It goes with us into the yard and into the chamber, and is yet later spoken than the advice of our mother and sisters.²

Sept. 2. Thursday. There is but one obligation, and that is the obligation to obey the highest dictate. None can lay me under another which will supersede this. The gods have given me these years without any incumbrance; society has no mortgage on them. If any man assist me in the way of the world, let him derive satisfaction from the deed itself, for I think I never shall have dissolved my prior obligations to God. Kindness repaid is thereby annulled. I would let his deed lie as fair and generous as it was intended. The truly beneficent never relapses into a creditor; his great kindness is still extended to me and is never done. Of those noble deeds which have me for their object I am only the most fortunate spectator, and would rather be the abettor of their nobleness than stay their tide with the obstructions of impatient gratitude. As true as action and reaction are equal, that nobleness which was as wide as the

¹ [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 194.]

² [*Week*, p. 156; Riv. 195.]

universe will rebound not on him the individual, but on the world. If any have been kind to me, what more do they want? I cannot make them richer than they are. If they have not been kind, they cannot take from me the privilege which they have not improved. My obligations will be my lightest load, for that gratitude which is of kindred stuff in me, expanding every pore, will easily sustain the pressure. We walk the freest through the air we breathe.

The sublime sentences of Menu carry us back to a time when purification and sacrifice and self-devotion had a place in the faith of men, and were not as now a superstition. They contain a subtle and refined philosophy also, such as in these times is not accompanied with so lofty and pure a devotion.

I saw a green meadow in the midst of the woods to-day which looked as if Dame Nature had set her foot there, and it had bloomed in consequence. It was the print of her moccasin.

Sometimes my thought rustles in midsummer as if ripe for the fall.¹ I anticipate the russet hues and the dry scent of autumn, as the feverish man dreams of balm and sage.

I was informed to-day that no Hindoo tyranny presided at the framing of the world, — that I am a free-man of the universe, and not sentenced to any caste.²

¹ [Week, p. 358; Riv. 443.]

² [Week, p. 155; Riv. 193.]

When I write verses I serve my thoughts as I do tumblers; I rap them to see if they will ring.

Sept. 3. Friday. Next to Nature, it seems as if man's actions were the most natural, they so gently accord with her. The small seines of flax or hemp stretched across the shallow and transparent parts of the river are no more intrusion than the cobweb in the sun. It is very slight and refined outrage at most. I stay my boat in mid-current and look down in the running water to see the civil meshes of his nets, and wonder how the blustering people of the town could have done this elvish work. The twine looks like a new river-weed and is to the river like a beautiful memento of man, man's presence in nature discovered as silently and delicately as Robinson discovered that there [were] savages on his island by a footprint in the sand.¹

Moonlight is the best restorer of antiquity. The houses in the village have a classical elegance as of the best days of Greece, and this half-finished church reminds me of the Parthenon, or whatever is most famous and excellent in art.² So serene it stands, reflecting the moon, and intercepting the stars with its rafters, as if it were refreshed by the dews of the night equally with me. By day Mr. Hosmer, but by night Vitruvius rather. If it were always to stand in this mild and sombre light it would be finished already. It is in progress by day but completed by night, and already its

¹ [Excursions, p. 119; Riv. 146, 147.]

² [Excursions, pp. 331, 332; Riv. 408.]

designer is an old master. The projecting rafter so carelessly left on the tower, holding its single way through the sky, is quite architectural, and in the unnecessary length of the joists and flooring of the staging around the walls there is an artistic superfluity and grace. In these fantastic lines described upon the sky there is no trifling or conceit. Indeed, the staging for the most part is the only genuine native architecture and deserves to stand longer than the building it surrounds. In this obscurity there are no fresh colors to offend, and the light and shade of evening adorn the new equally with the old.

Sept. 4. Saturday. I think I could write a poem to be called "Concord." For argument I should have the River, the Woods, the Ponds, the Hills, the Fields, the Swamps and Meadows, the Streets and Buildings, and the Villagers. Then Morning, Noon, and Evening, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, Night, Indian Summer, and the Mountains in the Horizon.

A book should be so true as to be intimate and familiar to all men, as the sun to their faces, — such a word as is occasionally uttered to a companion in the woods in summer, and both are silent.

As I pass along the streets of the village on the day of our annual fair, when the leaves strew the ground, I see how the trees keep just such a holiday all the year. The lively spirits of their sap mount higher than any plow-boy's let loose that day. A walk in the autumn woods, when, with serene courage, they are preparing for their

winter campaign, if you have an ear for the rustling of their camp or an eye for the glancing of their armor, is more inspiring than the Greek or Peninsular war.¹ Any grandeur may find society as great as itself in the forest.

Pond Hill. — I see yonder some men in a boat, which floats buoyantly amid the reflections of the trees, like a feather poised in mid-air, or a leaf wafted gently from its twig to the water without turning over. They seem very delicately to have availed themselves of the natural laws, and their floating there looks like a beautiful and successful experiment in philosophy. It reminds me how much more refined and noble the life of man might be made, how its whole economy might be as beautiful as a Tuscan villa,² — a new and more catholic art, the art of life, which should have its impassioned devotees and make the schools of Greece and Rome to be deserted.

Sept. 5. Saturday. Barn.

Greater is the depth of sadness
Than is any height of gladness.

I cannot read much of the best poetry in prose or verse without feeling that it is a partial and exaggerated plaint, rarely a carol as free as Nature's. That content which the sun shines for between morning and evening is unsung. The Muse solaces herself; she is not delighted but consoled.³ But there are times when we feel a vigor in our limbs, and our thoughts are like a

¹ [*Week*, p. 358; Riv. 443.]

² [*Week*, p. 48; Riv. 60.]

³ [*Week*, p. 393; Riv. 486.]

flowing morning light, and the stream of our life without reflection shows long reaches of serene ripples. And if we were to sing at such an hour, there would be no catastrophe contemplated in our verse, no tragic element in it,¹ nor yet a comic. For the life of the gods is not in any sense dramatic, nor can be the subject of the drama; it is epic without beginning or end, an eternal interlude without plot, — not subordinate one part to another, but supreme as a whole, at once leaf and flower and fruit. At present the highest strain is Hebraic. The church bell is the tone of all religious thought, the most musical that men consent to sing. In the youth of poetry, men love to praise the lark and the morning, but they soon forsake the dews and skies for the nightingale and evening shades. Without instituting a wider comparison I might say that in Homer there is more of the innocence and serenity of youth than in the more modern and moral poets. The Iliad is not Sabbath but morning reading, and men cling to this old song, because they have still moments of unbaptized and uncommitted life which give them an appetite for more. There is no cant in him, as there is no religion. We read him with a rare sense of freedom and irresponsibility, as though we trod on native ground, and were autochthones of the soil.²

Through the fogs of this distant vale we look back and upward to the source of song, whose crystal stream still ripples and gleams in the clear atmosphere of the mountain's side.

¹ [Week, pp. 393, 394; Riv. 486.] ² [Week, p. 394; Riv. 486.]

Some hours seem not to be occasion for anything, unless for great resolves to draw breath and repose in, so religiously do we postpone all action therein. We do not straight go about to execute our thrilling purpose, but shut our doors behind us, and saunter with prepared mind, as if the half were already done.¹

Sometimes a day serves only to hold time together.²

Sept. 12. Sunday.

Where I have been
There was none seen.

Sept. 14. No bravery is to be named with that which can face its own deeds.

In religion there is no society.

Do not dissect a man till he is dead.

Love does not analyze its object.

We do not know the number of muscles in a caterpillar dead; much less the faculties of a man living.

You must believe that I know before you can tell me.

To the highest communication I can make no reply;
I lend only a silent ear.

¹ [Week, p. 111; Riv. 138.]

² [See p. 213 for the possible origin of this figure.]

Sept. 18. Saturday. Barn.—It is a great event, the hearing of a bell ring in one of the neighboring towns, particularly in the night. It excites in me an unusual hilarity, and I feel that I am in season wholly and enjoy a prime and leisure hour.

Sept. 20. Monday. Visited Sampson Wilder of Boston. His method of setting out peach trees is as follows:—

Dig a hole six feet square and two deep, and remove the earth; cover the bottom to the depth of six inches with lime and ashes in equal proportions, and upon this spread another layer of equal thickness, of horn parings, tips of horns, bones, and the like, then fill up with a compost of sod and strong animal manure, say four bushels of hog manure to a cartload of sod. Cover the tree — which should be budded at two years old — but slightly, and at the end of two years dig a trench round it three feet from the tree and six inches deep, and fill it with lime and ashes.

For grapes:—

Let your trench be twelve feet wide and four deep, cover the bottom with paving-stones six inches, then old bricks with mortar attached or loose six inches more, then beef-bones, horns, etc., six more (Captain Bobadil), then a compost similar to the preceding. Set your roots one foot from the north side, the trench running east and west, and bury eight feet of the vine crosswise the trench, not more than eight inches below the surface. Cut it down for three or four years, that root may accumulate, and then train it from the sun up an inclined plane.

Sept. 28. Tuesday. I anticipate the coming in of spring as a child does the approach of some pomp through a gate of the city.

Sept. 30. Better wait
Than be too late.¹

Nov. 29. Cambridge.—One must fight his way, after a fashion, even in the most civil and polite society. The most truly kind and gracious have to be won by a sort of valor, for the seeds of suspicion seem to lurk in every spadeful of earth, as well as those of confidence. The president and librarian turn the cold shoulder to your application, though they are known for benevolent persons. They wonder if you can be anything but a thief, contemplating frauds on the library. It is the instinctive and salutary principle of self-defense; that which makes the cat show her talons when you take her by the paw.²

Certainly that valor which can open the hearts of men is superior to that which can only open the gates of cities.³

You must always let people see that they serve them-

¹ [On the back lining-page of the manuscript Journal volume which ends with this date are the following sentences in pencil:]

There is another young day let loose to roam the earth.

Happiness is very unprofitable stock.

The love which is preached nowadays is an ocean of new milk for a man to swim in. I hear no surf nor surge, but the winds coo over it.

² [See *Week*, pp. xx, xxi; *Misc.*, Riv. 8, 9 (Emerson's Biographical Sketch of Thoreau).]

³ [*Week*, p. 291; Riv. 361.]

selves more than you, — not by your ingratitude, but by sympathy and congratulation.

The twenty-first volume of Chalmers's English Poets contains Hoole's and Mickle's Translations. In the shape of a note to the Seventh Book of the *Lusiad*, Mickle has written a long "Inquiry into the Religious Tenets and Philosophy of the Bramins."

Nov. 30. Tuesday. Cambridge. — When looking over the dry and dusty volumes of the English poets, I cannot believe that those fresh and fair creations I had imagined are contained in them. English poetry from Gower down, collected into one alcove, and so from the library window compared with the commonest nature, seems very mean. Poetry cannot breathe in the scholar's atmosphere. The Aubreys and Hickerses, with all their learning, prophane it yet indirectly by their zeal. You need not envy his feelings who for the first time has cornered up poetry in an alcove. I can hardly be serious with myself when I remember that I have come to Cambridge after poetry; and while I am running over the catalogue and collating and selecting, I think if it would not be a shorter way to a complete volume to step at once into the field or wood, with a very low reverence to students and librarians. Milton did not foresee what company he was to fall into.¹ On running over the titles of these books, looking from time to time at their first pages or farther, I am oppressed by an inevitable sadness. One must have come into a

¹ [Week, p. 363; Riv. 450.]

library by an oriel window, as softly and undisturbed as the light which falls on the books through a stained window, and not by the librarian's door, else all his dreams will vanish. Can the Valhalla be warmed by steam and go by clock and bell?

Good poetry seems so simple and natural a thing that when we meet it we wonder that all men are not always poets. Poetry is nothing but healthy speech. Though the speech of the poet goes to the heart of things, yet he is that one especially who speaks civilly to Nature as a second person and in some sense is the patron of the world. Though more than any he stands in the midst of Nature, yet more than any he can stand aloof from her. The best lines, perhaps, only suggest to me that that man simply saw or heard or felt what seems the commonest fact in my experience.

One will know how to appreciate Chaucer best who has come down to him the natural way through the very meagre pastures of Saxon and ante-Chaucerian poetry. So human and wise he seems after such diet that we are as liable to misjudge him so as usually.¹

The Saxon poetry extant seems of a more serious and philosophical cast than the very earliest that can be called English. It has more thought, but less music. It translates Boëthius, it paraphrases the Hebrew Bible, it solemnly sings of war, of life and death, and chronicles events. The earliest English poetry is tintured with romance through the influence of the Normans, as the Saxon was not. The ballad and metrical romance

¹ [Week, p. 395; Riv. 488.]

belong to this period. Those old singers were for the most part imitators or translators.¹ Or will it not appear, when viewed at a sufficient distance, that our brave new poets are also secondary as they, and refer the eye that reads them and their poetry, too, back and backward without end?

Nothing is so attractive and unceasingly curious as character. There is no plant that needs such tender treatment, there is none that will endure so rough. It is the violet and the oak. It is the thing we mean, let us say what we will. We mean our own character, or we mean yours. It is divine and related to the heavens, as the earth is by the flashes of the Aurora. It has no acquaintance nor companion. It goes silent and unobserved longer than any planet in space, but when at length it does show itself, it seems like the flowering of all the world, and its before unseen orbit is lit up like the trail of a meteor. I hear no good news ever but some trait of a noble character. It reproaches me plaintively. I am mean in contrast, but again am thrilled and elevated that I can see my own meanness, and again still, that my own aspiration is realized in that other. You reach me, my friend, not by your kind or wise words to me here or there; but as you retreat, perhaps after years of vain familiarity, some gesture or unconscious action in the distance speaks to me with more emphasis than all those years. I am not concerned to know what eighth planet is wandering in space up there, or when Venus or Orion rises,

¹ [*Week*, p. 395 ; Riv. 488.]

but if, in any cot to east or west and set behind the woods, there is any planetary character illuminating the earth.

Packed in my mind lie all the clothes
Which outward nature wears,
For, as its hourly fashions change,
It all things else repairs.

My eyes look inward, not without,
And I but hear myself,
And this new wealth which I have got
Is part of my own self.

For while I look for change abroad,
I can no difference find,
Till some new ray of peace uncalled
Lumines my inmost mind,

As, when the sun streams through the wood,
Upon a winter's morn,
Where'er his silent beams may stray
The murky night is gone.

How could the patient pine have known
The morning breeze would come,
Or simple flowers anticipate
The insect's noonday hum,

Till that new light with morning cheer
From far streamed through the aisles,

And nimbly told the forest trees
For many stretching miles?¹

[*Dec.*] 12. *Sunday*. All music is only a sweet striving to express character. Now that lately I have heard of some traits in the character of a fair and earnest maiden whom I had only known superficially, but who has gone hence to make herself more known by distance, they sound like strains of a wild harp music. They make all persons and places who had thus forgotten her to seem late and behindhand. Every maiden conceals a fairer flower and more luscious fruit than any calyx in the field, and if she go with averted face, confiding in her own purity and high resolves, she will make the heavens retrospective, and all nature will humbly confess its queen.²

There is apology enough for all the deficiency and shortcoming in the world in the patient waiting of any bud of character to unfold itself.

Only character can command our reverent love. It is all mysteries in itself.

What is it gilds the trees and clouds
And paints the heavens so gay,
But yonder fast-abiding light
With its unchanging ray?

¹ [This poem, with the four additional stanzas of the next date, appears in the *Week*, pp. 313, 314 (Rev. 388, 389) under the title of "The Inward Morning." The second stanza is there omitted and there are other alterations.]

² [*Familiar Letters*, Sept., 1852.]

I've felt within my inmost soul
Such cheerful morning news,
In the horizon of my mind
I've seen such morning hues,

As in the twilight of the dawn,
When the first birds awake,
Is heard within some silent wood
Where they the small twigs break;

Or in the eastern skies is seen
Before the sun appears,
Foretelling of the summer heats
Which far away he bears.

P. M. Walden. — I seem to discern the very form of the wind when, blowing over the hills, it falls in broad flakes upon the surface of the pond, this subtle element obeying the same law with the least subtle. As it falls it spreads itself like a mass of lead dropped upon an anvil. I cannot help being encouraged by this blithe activity in the elements in these degenerate days of men. Who hears the rippling of the rivers will not utterly despair of anything. The wind in the wood yonder sounds like an incessant waterfall, the water dashing and roaring among rocks.

[*Dec.*] 13. *Monday*. We constantly anticipate repose. Yet it surely can only be the repose that is in entire and healthy activity. It must be a repose without rust. What is leisure but opportunity for more complete and

entire action? Our energies pine for exercise. That time we spend in our duties is so much leisure, so that there is no man but has sufficient of it.

I make my own time, I make my own terms. I cannot see how God or Nature can ever get the start of me.

This ancient Scotch poetry, at which its contemporaries so marvelled, sounds like the uncertain lisping of a child. When man's speech flows freest it but stutters and stammers. There is never a free and clear deliverance; but, read now when the illusion of smooth verse is destroyed by the antique spelling, the sense is seen to stammer and stumble all the plainer. To how few thoughts do all these sincere efforts give utterance! An hour's conversation with these men would have done more. I am astonished to find how meagre that diet is which has fed so many men. The music of sound, which is all-sufficient at first, is speedily lost, and then the fame of the poet must rest on the music of the sense. A great philosophical and moral poet would give permanence to the language by making the best sound convey the best sense.

[Dec.] 14. *Tuesday*. To hear the sunset described by the old Scotch poet Douglas, as I have seen it, repays me for many weary pages of antiquated Scotch. Nothing so restores and humanizes antiquity and makes it blithe as the discovery of some natural sympathy between it and the present. Why is it that there is something melancholy in antiquity? We forget that it had any other future than our present. As if it were not as

near to *the* future as ourselves! No, thank heavens, these ranks of men to right and left, posterity and ancestry, are not to be thriddled by any earnest mortal. The heavens stood over the heads of our ancestors as near as to us. Any living word in their books abolishes the difference of time. It need only be considered from the present standpoint.

[Dec.] 15. *Wednesday*. A mild summer sun shines over forest and lake. The earth looks as fair this morning as the Valhalla of the gods. Indeed our spirits never go beyond nature. In the woods there is an inexpressible happiness. Their mirth is but just repressed. In winter, when there is but one green leaf for many rods, what warm content is in them! They are not rude, but tender, even in the severest cold. Their nakedness is their defense. All their sounds and sights are elixir to my spirit. They possess a divine health. God is not more well. Every sound is inspiriting and fraught with the same mysterious assurance, from the creaking of the boughs in January to the soft sough of the wind in July.

How much of my well-being, think you, depends on the condition of my lungs and stomach, — such cheap pieces of Nature as they, which, indeed, she is every day reproducing with prodigality. Is the arrow indeed fatal which rankles in the breast of the bird on the bough, in whose eye all this fair landscape is reflected, and whose voice still echoes through the wood?

The trees have come down to the bank to see the river go by. This old, familiar river is renewed each instant;

only the channel is the same.¹ The water which so calmly reflects the fleeting clouds and the primeval trees I have never seen before. It may have washed some distant shore, or framed a glacier or iceberg at the north, when I last stood here. Seen through a mild atmosphere, the works of the husbandman, his plowing and reaping, have a beauty to the beholder which the laborer never sees.²

I seem to see somewhat more of my own kith and kin in the lichens on the rocks than in any books. It does seem as if mine were a peculiarly wild nature, which so yearns toward all wildness. I know of no redeeming qualities in me but a sincere love for some things, and when I am reproved I have to fall back on to this ground.³ This is my argument in reserve for all cases. My love is invulnerable. Meet me on that ground, and you will find me strong. When I am condemned, and condemn myself utterly, I think straightway, "But I rely on my love for some things." Therein I am whole and entire. Therein I am God-propped.

When I see the smoke curling up through the woods from some farmhouse invisible, it is more suggestive of the poetry of rural and domestic life than a nearer inspection can be. Up goes the smoke as quietly as the dew exhales in vapor from these pine leaves and oaks; as busy, disposing itself in circles and in wreaths, as the housewife on the hearth below. It is cotemporary with a piece of human biography, and waves as a feather in some man's cap. Under that rod of sky there is some

¹ [See p. 347.]

² [*Week*, p. 373; Riv. 461.]

³ [*Week*, p. 54; Riv. 67.]

plot a-brewing, some ingenuity has planted itself, and we shall see what it will do. It tattles of more things than the boiling of the pot. It is but one of man's breaths. All that is interesting in history or fiction is transpiring beneath that cloud. The subject of all life and death, of happiness and grief, goes thereunder.

When the traveller in the forest, attaining to some eminence, descries a column of smoke in the distance, it is a very gentle hint to him of the presence of man. It seems as if it would establish friendly relations between them without more ado.¹

[*Dec.*] 18. *Saturday*. Some men make their due impression upon their generation, because a petty occasion is enough to call forth all their energies; but are there not others who would rise to much higher levels, whom the world has never provoked to make the effort? I believe there are men now living who have never opened their mouths in a public assembly, in whom nevertheless there is such a well of eloquence that the appetite of any age could never exhaust it; who pine for an occasion worthy of them, and will pine till they are dead; who can admire, as well as the rest, at the flowing speech of the orator, but do yet miss the thunder and lightning and visible sympathy of the elements which would garnish their own utterance.

If in any strait I see a man fluttered and his ballast gone, then I lose all hope of him, he is undone; but if he reposes still, though he do nothing else worthy of him, if he is still a man in reserve, then is there every-

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 174; Riv. 212.]

thing to hope of him. The age may well go pine itself that it cannot put to use this gift of the gods. He lives on, still unconcerned, not needing to be used. The greatest occasion will be the slowest to come.

Sometimes a particular body of men do unconsciously assert that their will is fate, that the right is decided by their fiat without appeal, and when this is the case they can never be mistaken; as when one man is quite silenced by the thrilling eloquence of another, and submits to be neglected as to his fate, because such is not the willful vote of the assembly, but their instinctive decision.

Dec. 23. Thursday. Concord. — The best man's spirit makes a fearful sprite to haunt his tomb. The ghost of a priest is no better than that of a highwayman. It is pleasant to hear of one who has blest whole regions after his death by having frequented them while alive, who has prophaned or tabooed no place by being buried in it.¹ It adds not a little to the fame of Little John that his grave was long "celebrous for the yielding of excellent whetstones."²

A forest is in all mythologies a sacred place, as the oaks among the Druids and the grove of Egeria; and even in more familiar and common life a celebrated wood is spoken of with respect, as "Barnsdale Wood"

¹ [Written in pencil on a fly-leaf of the Journal:] A man might well pray that he may not taboo or curse any portion of nature by being buried in it.

² [Channing, p. 241.]

and "Sherwood." Had Robin Hood no Sherwood to resort [to], it would be difficult to invest his story with the charms it has got. It is always the tale that is untold, the deeds done and the life lived in the unexplored secrecy of the wood, that charm us and make us children again, — to read his ballads, and hear of the greenwood tree.

Dec. 24. Friday. I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be success if I shall have left myself behind. But my friends ask what I will do when I get there. Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the seasons?¹

Dec. 25. Saturday. It does seem as if Nature did for a long time gently overlook the prophanity of man. The wood still kindly echoes the strokes of the axe, and when the strokes are few and seldom, they add a new charm to a walk. All the elements strive to *naturalize* the sound.²

Such is our sympathy with the seasons that we experience the same degree of heat in the winter as in the summer.

It is not a true apology for any coarseness to say that it is natural. The grim woods can afford to be very delicate and perfect in the details.

I don't want to feel as if my life were a sojourn any longer. That philosophy cannot be true which so paints it. It is time now that I begin to live.

¹ [See p. 244.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 173; *Riv.* 212.]

Dec. 26. Sunday. He is the rich man and enjoys the fruits of riches, who, summer and winter forever, can find delight in the contemplation of his soul. I could look as unweariedly up to that cope as into the heavens of a summer day or a winter night. When I hear this bell ring, I am carried back to years and Sabbaths when I was newer and more innocent, I fear, than now, and it seems to me as if there were a world within a world. Sin, I am sure, is not in overt acts or, indeed, in acts of any kind, but is in proportion to the time which has come behind us and displaced eternity, — that degree to which our elements are mixed with the elements of the world. The whole duty of life is contained in the question how to respire and aspire both at once.

Dec. 29. Wednesday. One does not soon learn the trade of life. That one may work out a true life requires more art and delicate skill than any other work. There is need of the nice fingers of the girl as well as the tough hand of the farmer. The daily work is too often toughening the pericarp of the heart as well as the hand. Great familiarity with the world must be nicely managed, lest it win away and bereave us of some susceptibility. Experience bereaves us of our innocence; wisdom bereaves us of our ignorance. Let us walk in the world without learning its ways. Whole weeks or months of my summer life slide away in thin volumes like mist or smoke, till at length some warm morning, perchance, I see a sheet of mist blown down the brook to the swamp, its shadow flitting across the fields, which have caught a new significance from that accident; and as that

vapor is raised above the earth, so shall the next weeks be elevated above the plane of the actual;¹ or when the setting sun slants across the pastures, and the cows low to my inward ear and only enhance the stillness, and the eve is as the dawn, a beginning hour and not a final one, as if it would never have done, with its clear western amber inciting men to lives of as limpid purity. Then do other parts of my day's work shine than I had thought at noon, for I discover the real purport of my toil, as, when the husbandman has reached the end of the furrow and looks back, he can best tell where the pressed earth shines most.²

All true greatness runs as level a course, and is as un aspiring, as the plow in the furrow. It wears the homeliest dress and speaks the homeliest language. Its theme is gossamer and dew lines, johnswort and loosestrife, for it has never stirred from its repose and is most ignorant of foreign parts. Heaven is the inmost place. The good have not to travel far. What cheer may we not derive from the thought that our courses do not diverge, and we wend not asunder, but as the web of destiny is woven it [is] fulled, and we are cast more and more into the centre! And our fates even are social.³ There is no wisdom which can take [the] place of humanity, and I find that in old Chaucer that love rings longest which rhymes best with some saw of Milton's or Edmunds's. I wish I could be as still as God is. I can recall to my mind the stillest summer hour,

¹ [*Week*, p. 314; Riv. 389.]

² [*Week*, p. 133; Riv. 166.]

³ [*Week*, p. 280; Riv. 347.]

in which the grasshopper sings over the mulleins, and there is a valor in that time the memory of which is armor that can laugh at any blow of fortune. A man should go out [of] nature with the chirp of the cricket or the trill of the veery ringing in his ear. These earthly sounds should only die away for a season, as the strains of the harp rise and swell. Death is that expressive pause in the music of the blast.¹ I would be as clean as ye, O woods. I shall not rest till I be as innocent as you. I know that I shall sooner or later attain to an unspotted innocence, for when I consider that state even now I am thrilled.

If we were wise enough, we should see to what virtue we were indebted for any happier moment we might have, nor doubt we had earned this at some time.

These motions everywhere in nature must surely [be] the circulations of God. The flowing sail, the running stream, the waving tree, the roving wind, — whence else their infinite health and freedom? ² I can see nothing so proper and holy as unrelaxed play and frolic in this bower God has built for us. The suspicion of sin never comes to this thought. Oh, if men felt this they would never build temples even of marble or diamond, but it would be sacrilege and prophane, but disport them forever in this paradise.

In the coldest day it melts somewhere.

It seems as if only one trait, one little incident in human biography, need to be said or written in some era, that all readers may go mad after it, and the man who did the miracle is made a demigod henceforth.

¹ [Week, p. 314; Riv. 390.] ² [Week, p. 384; Riv. 474.]

What we all do, not one can tell; and when some lucky speaker utters a truth of our experience and not of our speculation, we think he must have had the nine Muses and the three Graces to help him. I can at length stretch me when I come to Chaucer's breadth; and I think, "Well, I could be *that* man's acquaintance,"¹ for he walked in that low and retired way that I do, and was not too good to live. I am grieved when they hint of any unmanly submissions he may have made, for that subtracts from his breadth and humanity.

Dec. 30. Thursday. I admire Chaucer for a sturdy English wit. The easy height he speaks from in his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is as good as anything in it, — as if he were indeed better than any of the company there assembled.²

The poet does not have to go out of himself and cease to tattle of his domestic affairs, to win our confidence, but is so broad that we see no limits to his sympathy.

Great delicacy and gentleness of character is constantly displayed in Chaucer's verse. The simplest and humblest words come readily to his lips. The natural innocence of the man appears in the simple and pure spirit in which "The Prioresses Tale" is conceived, in which the child sings *O alma redemptoris mater*, and in the account of the departure of Custance with her child upon the sea, in "The Man of Lawes Tale."³ The whole story of Chanticleer and Dame Partlet in "The Nonnes Preestes Tale" is genuine humanity. I know

¹ [Week, p. 396; Riv. 489.] ² [Week, p. 397; Riv. 490.]

³ [Week, p. 398; Riv. 491.]

nothing better in its kind. The poets seem to be only more frank and plain-spoken than other men. Their verse is but confessions. They always confide in the reader, and speak privily with him, keeping nothing back.¹

I know of no safe rule by which to judge of the purity of a former age but that I see that the impure of the present age are not apt to rise to noble sentiments when they speak or write, and suspect, therefore, that there may be more truth than is allowed in the apology that such was the manner of the age.²

Within the circuit of this plodding life,
 There are moments of an azure hue
 And as unspotted fair as is the violet
 Or anemone, when the spring strews them
 By some south woodside; which make untrue
 The best philosophy which has so poor an aim
 But to console man for his grievance here.
 I have remembered when the winter came,
 High in my chamber in the frosty nights,
 How in the summer past some
 Unrecorded beam slanted across
 Some upland pasture where the Johnswort grew,
 Or heard, amidst the verdure of my mind, the bee's
 long-smothered hum,
 So by the cheap economy of God made rich to go upon
 my wintry work again.
 In the still, cheerful cold of winter nights,
 When, in the cold light of the moon,

¹ [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490.] ² [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 491, 492.]

On every twig and rail and jutting spout
 The icy spears are doubling their length
 Against the glancing arrows of the sun,
 And the shrunk wheels creak along the way,
 Some summer accident long past
 Of lakelet gleaming in the July beams,
 Or hum of bee under the blue flag,
 Loitering in the meads, or busy rill
 which now stands dumb and still,
 its own memorial, purling at its play along the slopes,
 and through the meadows next, till that its sound was
 quenched in the staid current of its parent stream.

In memory is the more reality. I have seen how the furrows shone but late upturned, and where the field-fare followed in the rear, when all the fields stood bound and hoar beneath a thick integument of snow.¹

When the snow is falling thick and fast, the flakes nearest you seem to be driving straight to the ground, while the more distant seem to float in the air in a quivering bank, like feathers, or like birds at play, and not as if sent on any errand. So, at a little distance, all the works of Nature proceed with sport and frolic. They are more in the eye and less in the deed.

Dec. 31. Friday. Books of natural history make the most cheerful winter reading. I read in Audubon with a thrill of delight, when the snow covers the ground, of the magnolia, and the Florida keys, and their warm sea breezes; of the fence-rail, and the cotton-tree, and

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 103, 104; Riv. 127, 128.]

the migrations of the rice-bird; or of the breaking up of winter in Labrador. I seem to hear the melting of the snow on the forks of the Missouri as I read. I imbibe some portion of health from these reminiscences of luxuriant nature.

There is a singular health for me in those words Labrador and East Main which no desponding creed recognizes. How much more than federal are these States! If there were no other vicissitudes but the seasons, with their attendant and consequent changes, our interest would never flag. Much more is a-doing than Congress wots of in the winter season. What journal do the persimmon and buckeye keep, or the sharp-shinned hawk? What is transpiring from summer to winter in the Carolinas, and the Great Pine Forest, and the Valley of the Mohawk? The merely political aspect of the land is never very cheering. Men are degraded when considered as the members of a political organization. As a nation the people never utter one great and healthy word. From this side all nations present only the symptoms of disease. I see but Bunker's Hill and Sing Sing, the District of Columbia and Sullivan's Island, with a few avenues connecting them. But paltry are all these beside one blast of the east or south wind which blows over them all.

In society you will not find health, but in nature. You must converse much with the field and woods, if you would imbibe such health into your mind and spirit as you covet for your body. Society is always diseased, and the best is the sickest. There is no scent in it so wholesome as that of the pines, nor any fragrance so

penetrating and restorative as that of everlasting in high pastures. Without that our feet at least stood in the midst of nature, all our faces would be pale and livid.

I should like to keep some book of natural history always by me as a sort of elixir, the reading of which would restore the tone of my system and secure me true and cheerful views of life. For to the sick, nature is sick, but to the well, a fountain of health. To the soul that contemplates some trait of natural beauty no harm nor disappointment can come. The doctrines of despair, of spiritual or political servitude, no priestcraft nor tyranny, was ever [*sic*] taught by such as drank in the harmony of nature.¹

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 103-105; Riv. 127-129.]