

VI

1842

(ÆT. 24-25)

Jan. 1. Virtue is the deed of the bravest. It is that art which demands the greatest confidence and fearlessness. Only some hardy soul ventures upon it. Virtue is a bravery so hardy that it deals in what it has no experience in. The virtuous soul possesses a fortitude and hardihood which not the grenadier nor pioneer can match. It never shrunk. It goes singing to its work. Effort is its relaxation. The rude pioneer work of this world has been done by the most devoted worshippers of beauty.¹ Their resolution has possessed a keener edge than the soldier's. In winter is their campaign; they never go into quarters. They are elastic under the heaviest burden, under the extremest physical suffering.

Methinks good courage will not flag here on the Atlantic border as long as we are outflanked by the *Fur Countries*. There is enough in that sound to cheer one under any circumstances. The spruce, the hemlock, and the pine will not countenance despair. Methinks some creeds in vestries and churches do forget the hunter wrapped in furs by the Great Slave Lake, or how the Esquimaux sledges are drawn by dogs, and in the twilight of the northern night the hunter does not give over to follow the seal and walrus over the

¹ [*Week*, p. 362; *Riv.* 449.]

ice. These men are sick and of diseased imaginations who would toll the world's knell so soon. Cannot these sedentary sects do better than prepare the shrouds and write the epitaphs of those other busy living men? The practical faith of men belies the preacher's consolation. This is the creed of the hypochondriac.¹

There is no infidelity so great as that which prays, and keeps the Sabbath, and founds churches. The sealer of the South Pacific preaches a truer doctrine. The church is the hospital for men's souls, but the reflection that he may one day occupy a ward in it should not discourage the cheerful labors of the able-bodied man. Let him remember the sick in their extremities, but not look thither as to his goal.²

Jan. 2. Sunday. The ringing of the church bell is a much more melodious sound than any that is heard within the church. All great values are thus public, and undulate like sound through the atmosphere. Wealth cannot purchase any great private solace or convenience. Riches are only the means of sociality. I will depend on the extravagance of my neighbors for my luxuries, for they will take care to pamper me if I will be overfed. The poor man who sacrificed nothing for the gratification seems to derive a safer and more natural enjoyment from his neighbor's extravagance than he does himself. It is a new natural product, from the contemplation of which he derives new vigor and solace as from a natural phenomenon.

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 105; *Riv.* 129, 130.]

² [*Week*, pp. 77, 78; *Riv.* 96, 97.]

In moments of quiet and leisure my thoughts are more apt to revert to some natural than any human relation.

Chaucer's sincere sorrow in his latter days for the grossness of his earlier works, and that he "cannot recall and annul" what he had "written of the base and filthy love of men towards women; but alas they are now continued from man to man," says he, "and I cannot do what I desire," is all very creditable to his character.

Chaucer is the make-weight of his century, — a worthy representative of England while Petrarch and Boccaccio lived in Italy, and Tell and Tamerlane in Switzerland and Asia, and Bruce and Rienzi in Europe, and Wickliffe and Gower in his own land. Edward III and John of Gaunt and the Black Prince complete the company. The fame of Roger Bacon came down from the preceding century, and Dante, though just departed, still exerted the influence of a living presence.¹

With all his grossness he is not undistinguished for the tenderness and delicacy of his muse. A simple pathos and feminine gentleness is peculiar to him which not even Wordsworth can match.² And then his best passages of length are marked by a happy and healthy wit which is rather rare in the poetry of any nation. On the whole, he impresses me as greater than his reputation, and not a little like Homer and Shakespeare, for he would have held up his head in their company. Among the earliest English poets he is their landlord and host, and has the authority of such. We read him with affec-

¹ [Week, p. 396; Riv. 489.]

² [Week, p. 398; Riv. 492.]

tion and without criticism, for he pleads no cause, but speaks for us, his readers, always. He has that greatness of trust and reliance which compels popularity. He is for a whole country and country [*sic*] to know and to be proud of. The affectionate mention which succeeding early poets make of him, coupling him with Homer and Virgil, is also to be taken into the account in estimating his character. King James and Dunbar of Scotland speak with more love and reverence of him than any cotemporary poet of his predecessors of the last century. That childlike relation, indeed, does not seem to exist now which was then.¹

Jan. 3. Monday. It is pleasant when one can relieve the grossness of the kitchen and the table by the simple beauty of his repast, so that there may be anything in it to attract the eye of the artist even. I have been popping corn to-night, which is only a more rapid blossoming of the seed under a greater than July heat. The popped corn is a perfect winter flower, hinting of anemones and houstonias. For this little grace man has, mixed in with the vulgarness of his repast, he may well thank his stars. The law by which flowers unfold their petals seems only to have operated more suddenly under the intense heat. It looks like a sympathy in this seed of the corn with its sisters of the vegetable kingdom, as if by preference it assumed the flower form rather than the crystalline. Here has bloomed for my repast such a delicate blossom as will soon spring by the wall-sides. And this is as it should be. Why should not Nature revel sometimes, and

¹ [Week, p. 396; Riv. 489, 490.]

genially relax and make herself familiar at my board? I would have my house a bower fit to entertain her. It is a feast of such innocence as might have snowed down. By my warm hearth sprang these cerealious blossoms; here was the bank where they grew.

Methinks some such visible token of approval would always accompany the simple and healthy repast. There would be such a smiling and blessing upon it. Our appetite should always be so related to our taste, and the board we spread for its gratification be an epitome of the universal table which Nature sets by hill and wood and stream for her dumb pensioners.¹

Jan. 5. Wednesday. I find that whatever hindrances may occur I write just about the same amount of truth in my Journal; for the record is more concentrated, and usually it is some very real and earnest life, after all, that interrupts. All flourishes are omitted. If I saw wood from morning to night, though I grieve that I could not observe the train of my thoughts during that time, yet, in the evening, the few scannel lines which describe my day's occupations will make the creaking of the saw more musical than my freest fancies could have been. I find incessant labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, the best method to remove palaver out of one's style. One will not dance at his work who has wood to cut and cord before the night falls in the short days of winter; but every stroke will be husbanded, and ring soberly through the wood; and so will his lines ring and tell on the ear, when at evening he settles the

¹ [*Week*, pp. 237, 238; *Riv.* 294, 295.]

accounts of the day. I have often been astonished at the force and precision of style to which busy laboring men, unpracticed in writing, easily attain when they are required to make the effort. It seems as if their sincerity and plainness were the main thing to be taught in schools, — and yet not in the schools, but in the fields, in actual service, I should say. The scholar not unfrequently envies the propriety and emphasis with which the farmer calls to his team, and confesses that if that lingo were written it would surpass his labored sentences.

Who is not tired of the weak and flowing periods of the politician and scholar, and resorts not even to the Farmer's Almanac, to read the simple account of the month's labor, to restore his tone again? I want to see a sentence run clear through to the end, as deep and fertile as a well-drawn furrow which shows that the plow was pressed down to the beam. If our scholars would lead more earnest lives, we should not witness those lame conclusions to their ill-sown discourses, but their sentences would pass over the ground like loaded rollers, and not mere hollow and wooden ones, to press in the seed and make it germinate.

A well-built sentence, in the rapidity and force with which it works, may be compared to a modern corn-planter, which furrows out, drops the seed, and covers it up at one movement.¹

The scholar requires hard labor as an impetus to his pen. He will learn to grasp it as firmly and wield it as gracefully and effectually as an axe or a sword. When

¹ [*Week*, pp. 108-110; *Riv.* 134-136.]

I consider the labored periods of some gentleman scholar, who perchance in feet and inches comes up to the standard of his race, and is nowise deficient in girth, I am amazed at the immense sacrifice of thews and sinews. What! these proportions and these bones, and this their work! How these hands hewed this fragile matter, mere filagree or embroidery fit for ladies' fingers! Can this be a stalwart man's work, who has marrow in his backbone and a tendon Achilles in his heel? They who set up Stonehenge did somewhat, — much in comparison, — if it were only their strength was once fairly laid out, and they stretched themselves.¹

I discover in Raleigh's verses the vices of the courtier. They are not equally sustained, as if his noble genius were warped by the frivolous society of the court. He was capable of rising to a remarkable elevation. His poetry has for the most part a heroic tone and vigor as of a knight errant. But again there seems to have been somewhat unkindly in his education, and as if he had by no means grown up to be the man he promised. He was apparently too genial and loyal a soul, or rather he was incapable of resisting temptations from that quarter. If to his genius and culture he could have added the temperament of Fox or Cromwell, the world would have had cause longer to remember him. He was the pattern of nobility. One would have said it was by some lucky fate that he and Shakespeare flourished at the same time in England, and yet what do we know of their acquaintanceship?

¹ [Week, p. 110; Riv. 136, 137.]

Jan. 7. Friday. I am singularly refreshed in winter when I hear tell of service-berries, pokeweed, juniper. Is not heaven made up of these cheap summer glories?¹

The great God is very calm withal. How superfluous is any excitement in his creatures! He listens equally to the prayers of the believer and the unbeliever. The moods of man should unfold and alternate as gradually and placidly as those of nature. The sun shines for aye! The sudden revolutions of these times and this generation have acquired a very exaggerated importance. They do not interest me much, for they are not in harmony with the longer periods of nature. The present, in any aspect in which it can be presented to the smallest audience, is always mean. God does not sympathize with the popular movements.

Jan. 8. Saturday. When, as now, in January a south wind melts the snow, and the bare ground appears, covered with scree grass and occasionally wilted green leaves which seem in doubt whether to let go their greenness quite or absorb new juices against the coming year, — in such a season a perfume seems to exhale from the earth itself and the south wind melts my integuments also. Then is she my mother earth. I derive a real vigor from the scent of the gale wafted over the naked ground, as from strong meats, and realize again how man is the pensioner of Nature. We are always conciliated and cheered when we are fed by [such] an influence, and our needs are felt to be part of the domestic economy of Nature.

¹ [Excursions, p. 104; Riv. 128.]

What offends me most in my compositions is the moral element in them. The repentant say never a brave word. Their resolves should be mumbled in silence. Strictly speaking, morality is not healthy. Those undeserved joys which come uncalled and make us more pleased than grateful are they that sing.

One music seems to differ from another chiefly in its more perfect time, to use this word in a true sense. In the steadiness and equanimity of music lies its divinity. It is the only assured tone.¹ When men attain to speak with as settled a faith and as firm assurance, their voices will sing and their feet march as do the feet of the soldier. The very dogs howl if time is disregarded. Because of the perfect time of this music-box — its harmony with itself — is its greater dignity and stateliness. This music is more nobly related for its more exact measure. So simple a difference as this more even pace raises it to the higher dignity.

Man's progress through nature should have an accompaniment of music. It relieves the scenery, which is seen through it as a subtler element, like a very clear morning air in autumn. Music wafts me through the clear, sultry valleys, with only a slight gray vapor against the hills.

Of what manner of stuff is the web of time wove, when these consecutive sounds called a strain of music can be wafted down through the centuries from Homer to me, and Homer have been conversant with that same unfathomable mystery and charm which so newly

¹ [Week, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

tingles my ears? ¹ These single strains, these melodious cadences which plainly proceed out of a very deep meaning and a sustained soul, are the interjections of God. They are perhaps the expression of the perfect knowledge which the righteous at length attain to. Am I so like thee, my brother, that the cadence of two notes affects us alike? Shall I not some time have an opportunity to thank him who made music? I feel a sad cheer when I hear these lofty strains,² because there must be something in me as lofty that hears. But ah, I hear them but rarely! Does it not rather hear me? If my blood were clogged in my veins, I am sure it would run more freely. God must be very rich, who, for the turning of a pivot, can pour out such melody on me. It is a little prophet; it tells me the secrets of futurity. Where are its secrets wound up but in this box?³ So much hope had slumbered. There are in music such strains as far surpass any faith in the loftiness of man's destiny.⁴ He must be very sad before he can comprehend them. The clear, liquid notes from the morning fields beyond seem to come through a vale of sadness to man, which gives all music a plaintive air. It hath caught a higher pace than any virtue I know. It is the arch-reformer. It hastens the sun to his setting. It invites him to his rising. It is the sweetest reproach, a measured satire.

¹ [Week, p. 182; Riv. 226.]

² [Week, p. 183; Riv. 227.]

³ [It was about a year after the date of this entry that Richard F. Fuller made Thoreau a present of a music-box (see *Familiar Letters*, March 2, 1842, and Jan. 16 and 24, 1843), which a few months later, on departing for Staten Island, he lent to Hawthorne (*American Note-Books*, Riv. pp. 333, 338).]

[Week, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

I know there is a people somewhere [where] this heroism has place. Or else things are to be learned which it will be sweet to learn.¹ This cannot be all rumor. When I hear this, I think of that everlasting and stable something which is not sound, but to be a thrilling reality, and can consent to go about the meanest work for as many years of time as it pleases even the Hindoo penance, for a year of the gods were as nothing to that which shall come after. What, then, can I do to hasten that other time, or that space where there shall be no time, and these things be a more living part of my life, — where there will be no discords in my life?

Jan. 9. Sunday. One cannot too soon forget his errors and misdemeanors; for [to] dwell long upon them is to add to the offense, and repentance and sorrow can only be displaced by somewhat better, and which is as free and original as if they had not been. Not to grieve long for any action, but to go immediately and do freshly and otherwise, subtracts so much from the wrong. Else we may make the delay of repentance the punishment of the sin. But a great nature will not consider its sins as its own, but be more absorbed in the prospect of that valor and virtue for the future which is more properly it, than in those improper actions which, by being sins, discover themselves to be not it.

Sir W. Raleigh's faults are those of a courtier and a soldier. In his counsels and aphorisms we see not

¹ [*Week*, p. 184; Riv. 228.]

unfrequently the haste and rashness of a boy. His philosophy was not wide nor deep, but continually giving way to the generosity of his nature. What he touches he adorns by his greater humanity and native nobleness, but he touches not the true nor original. He thus embellishes the old, but does not unfold the new. He seems to have been fitted by his genius for short flights of impulsive poetry, but not for the sustained loftiness of Shakespeare or Milton. He was not wise nor a seer in any sense, but rather one of nature's nobility; the most generous nature which can be spared to linger in the purlicus of the court.

His was a singularly perverted genius, with such an inclination to originality and freedom, and yet who never steered his own course. Of so fair and susceptible a nature, rather than broad or deep, that he delayed to slake his thirst at the nearest and even more turbid wells of truth and beauty. Whose homage to the least fair or noble left no space for homage to the all fair. The misfortune of his circumstances, or rather of the man, appears in the fact that he was the author of "Maxims of State" and "The Cabinet Council" and "The Soul's Errand."

Feb. 19. Saturday. I never yet saw two men sufficiently great to meet as two. In proportion as they are great the differences are fatal, because they are felt not to be partial but total. Frankness to him who is unlike me will lead to the utter denial of him. I begin to see how that the preparation for all issues is to do virtuously. When two approach to meet, they incur no petty dan-

gers, but they run terrible risks. Between the sincere there will be no civilities. No greatness seems prepared for the little decorum, even savage unmannerliness, it meets from equal greatness.

Feb. 20. Sunday. "Examine animal forms geometrically, from man, who represents the perpendicular, to the reptile which forms the horizontal line, and then applying to those forms the rules of the exact sciences, which God himself cannot change, we shall see that visible nature contains them all; that the combinations of the seven primitive forms are entirely exhausted, and that, therefore, they can represent all possible varieties of morality." — From "The True Messiah; or the Old and New Testaments, examined according to the Principles of the Language of Nature. By G. Segger," translated from French by Grater.

I am amused to see from my window here how busily man has divided and staked off his domain. God must smile at his puny fences running hither and thither everywhere over the land.

My path hitherto has been like a road through a diversified country, now climbing high mountains, then descending into the lowest vales. From the summits I saw the heavens; from the vales I looked up to the heights again. In prosperity I remember God, or memory is one with consciousness; in adversity I remember my own elevations, and only hope to see God again.

It is vain to talk. What do you want? To bandy words, or deliver some grains of truth which stir within you? Will you make a pleasant rumbling sound after feasting, for digestion's sake, or such music as the birds in springtime?

The death of friends should inspire us as much as their lives. If they are great and rich enough, they will leave consolation to the mourners before the expenses of their funerals.¹ It will not be hard to part with any worth, because it is worthy. How can any good depart? It does not go and come, but we. Shall we wait for it? Is it slower than we?

Feb. 21. I must confess there is nothing so strange to me as my own body. I love any other piece of nature, almost, better.

I was always conscious of sounds in nature which my ears could never hear, — that I caught but the prelude to a strain. She always retreats as I advance. Away behind and behind is she and her meaning. Will not this faith and expectation make to itself ears at length? I never saw to the end, nor heard to the end; but the best part was unseen and unheard.

I am like a feather floating in the atmosphere; on every side is depth unfathomable.

I feel as if years had been crowded into the last month,² and yet the regularity of what we call time has been so far preserved as that I³ . . . will be

¹ [*Week*, p. 303; *Riv.* 377.]

² [Thoreau's brother John died Jan. 11, 1842.]

³ [Two lines missing from the manuscript here.]

welcome in the present. I have lived ill for the most part because too near myself. I have tripped myself up, so that there was no progress for my own narrowness. I cannot walk conveniently and pleasantly but when I hold myself far off in the horizon. And the soul dilutes the body and makes it passable. My soul and body have tottered along together of late, tripping and hindering one another like unpracticed Siamese twins. They two should walk as one, that no obstacle may be nearer than the firmament.

There must be some narrowness in the soul that compels one to have secrets.

Feb. 23. Wednesday. Every poet's muse is circumscribed in her wanderings, and may be well said to haunt some favorite spring or mountain. Chaucer seems to have been the poet of gardens. He has hardly left a poem in which some retired and luxurious retreat of the kind is not described, to which he gains access by some secret port, and there, by some fount or grove, is found his hero and the scene of his tale. It seems as if, by letting his imagination riot in the matchless beauty of an ideal garden, he thus fed [*sic*] his fancy on to the invention of a tale which would fit the scene. The muse of the most universal poet retires into some familiar nook, whence it spies out the land as the eagle from his eyrie, for he who sees so far over plain and forest is perched in a narrow cleft of the crag. Such pure child-like love of Nature is nowhere to be matched.¹ And it is

¹ [*Week*, p. 398; Riv. 492.]

not strange that the poetry of so rude an age should contain such polished praise of Nature; for the charms of Nature are not enhanced by civilization, as society is, but she possesses a permanent refinement, which at last subdues and educates men.

The reader has great confidence in Chaucer. He tells no lies. You read his story with a smile, as if it were the circumlocution of a child, and yet you find that he has spoke with more directness and economy of words than a sage. He is never heartless. So new was all his theme in those days, that [he] had not to invent, but only to tell.¹

The language of poetry is *infantile*. It cannot talk.

It is the charm and greatness of all society, from friendship to the drawing-room, that it takes place on a level slightly higher than the actual characters of the parties would warrant;² it is an expression of faith. True politeness is only hope and trust in men. It never addresses a fallen or falling man, but salutes a rising generation. It does not flatter, but only congratulates. The rays of light come to us in such a curve that every fellow in the street appears higher than he really is. It is the innate civility of nature.³

I am glad that it was so because it could be.

March 1. Whatever I learn from any circumstances, that especially I needed to know. Events come out of

¹ [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490.] ² [*Week*, p. 288; Riv. 357.]

³ [*Week*, p. 288; Riv. 358.]

God, and our characters determine them and constrain fate, as much as they determine the words and tone of a friend to us. Hence are they always acceptable as experience, and we do not see how we could have done without them.

March 2. The greatest impression of character is made by that person who consents to have no character. He who sympathizes with and runs through the whole circle of attributes cannot afford to be an individual. Most men stand pledged to themselves, so that their narrow and confined virtue has no suppleness. They are like children who cannot walk in bad company and learn the lesson which even it teaches, without their guardians, for fear of contamination. He is a fortunate man who gets through the world without being burdened by a name and reputation, for they are at any rate but his past history and no prophecy, and as such concern him no more than another. Character is Genius settled. It can maintain itself against the world, and if it relapses it repents. It is as a dog set to watch the property of Genius. Genius, strictly speaking, is not responsible, for it is not moral.

March 8. I live in the perpetual verdure of the globe. I die in the annual decay of nature.

We can understand the phenomenon of death in the animal better if we first consider it in the order next below us, the vegetable.

The death of the flea and the elephant are but phenomena of the life of nature.

Most lecturers preface their discourses on music with a history of music, but as well introduce an essay on virtue with a history of virtue.¹ As if the possible combinations of sound, the last wind that sighed, or melody that waked the wood, had any history other than a perceptive ear might hear in the least and latest sound of nature! A history of music would be like the history of the future; for so little past is it, and capable of record, that it is but the hint of a prophecy. It is the history of gravitation. It has no history more than God. It circulates and resounds forever, and only flows like the sea or air. There might be a history of men or of hearing, but not of the unheard. Why, if I should sit down to write its story, the west wind would rise to refute me. Properly speaking, there can be no history but natural history, for there is no past in the soul but in nature. So that the history of anything is only the true account of it, which will be always the same. I might as well write the history of my aspirations. Does not the last and highest contain them all? Do the lives of the great composers contain the facts which interested them? What is this music? Why, thinner and more evanescent than ether; subtler than sound, for it is only a disposition of sound. It is to sound what color is to matter. It is the color of a flame, or of the rainbow, or of water. Only one sense has known it. The least profitable, the least tangible fact, which cannot be

¹ [At the head of this paragraph appears the following in pencil:] What has music to do with the lives of the Great Composers? It is the great composer who is not yet dead whose life should be written. Shall we presume to write such a history as the former while the winds blow?

bought or cultivated but by virtuous methods, and yet our ears ring with it like shells left on the shore.

March 11. Friday. Chaucer's familiar, but innocent, way of speaking of God is of a piece with his character. He comes readily to his thoughts without any false reverence. If Nature is our mother, is not God much more? God should come into our thoughts with no more parade than the zephyr into our ears. Only strangers approach him with ceremony. How rarely in our English tongue do we find expressed any affection for God! No sentiment is so rare as love of God, — universal love. Herbert is almost the only exception. "Ah, my dear God," etc. Chaucer's was a remarkably affectionate genius. There is less love and simple trust in Shakespeare. When he sees a beautiful person or object, he almost takes a pride in the "maistry" of his God.¹ The Protestant Church seems to have nothing to supply the place of the Saints of the Catholic calendar, who were at least channels for the affections. Its God has perhaps too many of the attributes of a Scandinavian deity.

We can only live healthily the life the gods assign us. I must receive my life as passively as the willow leaf that flutters over the brook. I must not be for myself, but God's work, and that is always good. I will wait the breezes patiently, and grow as Nature shall determine. My fate cannot but be grand so. We may live the life of a plant or an animal, without living an animal life. This constant and universal content of the

¹ [*Week.* pp. 398, 399; Riv. 492.]

animal comes of resting quietly in God's palm. I feel as if [I] could at any time resign my life and the responsibility of living into God's hands, and become as innocent, free from care, as a plant or stone.

My life, my life! why will you linger? Are the years short and the months of no account? How often has long delay quenched my aspirations! Can God afford that I should forget him? Is he so indifferent to my career? Can heaven be postponed with no more ado? Why were my ears given to hear those everlasting strains which haunt my life, and yet to be prophaned much more by these perpetual dull sounds?

Our doubts are so musical that they persuade themselves.

Why, God, did you include me in your great scheme? Will you not make me a partner at last? Did it need there should be a conscious material?

My friend, my friend, I'd speak so frank to thee that thou wouldst pray me to keep back some part, for fear I robbed myself. To address thee delights me, there is such cleanness in the delivery. I am delivered of my tale, which, told to strangers, still would linger on my lips as if untold, or doubtful how it ran.

March 12. Consider what a difference there is between living and dying. To die is not to *begin* to die, and *continue*; it is not a state of continuance, but of transientness; but to live is a condition of continuance, and does not mean to be born merely. There is no

continuance of death. It is a transient phenomenon. Nature presents nothing in a state of death.

March 13. Sunday. The sad memory of departed friends is soon incrustated over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as their monuments are overgrown with moss.¹ Nature doth thus kindly heal every wound. By the mediation of a thousand little mosses and fungi, the most unsightly objects become radiant of beauty. There seem to be two sides to this world, presented us at different times, as we see things in growth or dissolution, in life or death. For seen with the eye of a poet, as God sees them, all are alive and beautiful; but seen with the historical eye, or the eye of the memory, they are dead and offensive. If we see Nature as pausing, immediately all mortifies and decays; but seen as progressing, she is beautiful.

I am startled that God can make me so rich even with my own cheap stores. It needs but a few wisps of straw in the sun, or some small word dropped, or that has long lain silent in some book. When heaven begins and the dead arise, no trumpet is blown; perhaps the south wind will blow. What if you or I be dead! God is alive still.

March 14. Chaucer's genius does not soar like Milton's, but is genial and familiar. It is only a greater portion of humanity, with all its weakness. It is not heroic, as Raleigh, or pious, as Herbert, or philosophical,

¹ [*Week*, p. 303; Riv. 377.]

as Shakespeare, but the child of the English nation, but that child that is "father of the man." His genius is only for the most part an exceeding naturalness. It is perfect sincerity, though with the behavior of a child rather than of a man.¹ He can complain, as in the "Testament of Love," but yet so truly and unfeignedly that his complaint does not fail to interest. All England has his case at heart.

He shows great tenderness and delicacy, but not the heroic sentiment. His genius was feminine, not masculine, — not but such is rarest to find in woman (though the appreciation of it is not), — but less manly than the manliest.²

It is not easy to find one brave enough to play the game of love quite alone with you, but they must get some third person, or world, to countenance them. They thrust others between. Love is so delicate and fastidious that I see not how [it] can ever begin. Do you expect me to love with you, unless you make my love secondary to nothing else? Your words come tainted, if the thought of the world darted between thee and the thought of me. You are not venturesome enough for love. It goes alone unscared through wildernesses.

As soon as I see people loving what they see merely, and not their own high hopes that they form of others, I pity, and do not want their love. Such love delays me. Did I ask thee to love me who hate myself? No! Love that I love, and I will love thee that lovest it.

¹ [*Week*, pp. 397, 398; Riv. 491.]

² [*Week*, pp. 397, 398; Riv. 491, 492.]

The love is faint-hearted and short-lived that is contented with the past history of its object. It does not prepare the soil to bear new crops lustier than the old.

"I would I had leisure for these things," sighs the world. "When I have done my quilting and baking, then I will not be backward."

Love never stands still, nor does its object. It is the revolving sun and the swelling bud. If I know what I love, it is because I *remember* it.

Life is grand, and so are its environments of Past and Future. Would the face of nature be so serene and beautiful if man's destiny were not equally so? What am I good for now, who am still marching after high things, but to hear and tell the news, to bring wood and water, and count how many eggs the hens lay? In the meanwhile, I expect my life will begin. I will not aspire longer. I will see what it is I would be after. I will be unanimous.

March 15. Tuesday. It is a new day; the sun shines. The poor have come out to employ themselves in the sunshine, the old and feeble to scent the air once more. I hear the bluebird and the song sparrow and the robin, and the note of the lark leaks up through the meadows, as if its bill had been thawed by the warm sun.

As I am going to the woods I think to take some small book in my pocket whose author has been there already, whose pages will be as good as my thoughts, and will eke them out or show me human life still gleaming in the horizon when the woods have shut out the town. But I

can find none. None will sail as far forward into the bay of nature as my thought. They stay at home. I would go home. When I get to the wood their thin leaves rustle in my fingers. They are bare and obvious, and there is no halo or haze about them. Nature lies far and fair behind them all.¹ I should like to meet the great and serene sentence, which does not reveal itself, — only that it is great, — which I may never with my utmost intelligence pierce through and beyond (more than the earth itself), which no intelligence can understand. There should be a kind of life and palpitation to it; under its rind a kind of blood should circulate forever, communicating freshness to its countenance.²

Cold Spring. — I hear nothing but a phœbe, and the wind, and the rattling of a chaise in the wood. For a few years I stay here, not knowing, taking my own life by degrees, and then I go. I hear a spring bubbling near, where I drank out of a can in my earliest youth. The birds, the squirrels, the alders, the pines, they seem serene and in their places. I wonder if my life looks as serene to them too. Does no creature, then, see with the eyes of its own narrow destiny, but with God's? When God made man, he reserved some parts and some rights to himself. The eye has many qualities which belong to God more than man. It is his lightning which flashes in it. When I look into my companion's eye, I think it is God's private mine. It is a noble feature; it cannot be degraded; for God can look on all things undefiled.

¹ [*Week*, p. 156; *Riv.* 195.]

² [*Week*, p. 157; *Riv.* 196.]

Pond. — Nature is constantly original and inventing new patterns, like a mechanic in his shop. When the overhanging pine drops into the water, by the action of the sun, and the wind rubbing it on the shore, its boughs are worn white and smooth and assume fantastic forms, as if turned by a lathe.¹ All things, indeed, are subjected to a rotary motion, either gradual and partial or rapid and complete, from the planet and system to the simplest shellfish and pebbles on the beach; as if all beauty resulted from an object turning on its own axis, or others turning about it. It establishes a new centre in the universe. As all curves have reference to their centres or foci, so all beauty of character has reference to the soul, and is a graceful gesture of recognition or waving of the body toward it.

The great and solitary heart will love alone, without the knowledge of its object. It cannot have society in its love. It will expend its love as the cloud drops rain upon the fields over which [it] floats.

The only way to speak the truth is to speak lovingly; only the lover's words are heard. The intellect should never speak; it is not a natural sound. How trivial the best actions are! I am led about from sunrise to sunset by an ignoble routine, and yet can find no better road. I must make a part of the planet. I must obey the law of nature.

March 16. Wednesday. Raleigh's Maxims are not true and impartial, but yet are expressed with a certain mag-

¹ [*Week*, pp. 330, 340; *Riv.* 420.]

nanimity, which was natural to the man, as if this selfish policy could easily afford to give place in him to a more human and generous. He gives such advice that we have more faith in his conduct than his principles.

He seems to have carried the courtier's life to the highest pitch of magnanimity and grace it was capable of. He is liberal and generous as a prince, — that is, within bounds; brave, chivalrous, heroic, as the knight in armor and not as a defenseless man. His was not the heroism of Luther, but of Bayard. There was more of grace than of truth in it. He had more taste than character. There may be something petty in a refined taste; it easily degenerates into effeminacy; it does not consider the broadest use. It is not content with simple good and bad, and so is fastidious and curious, or nice only.

The most attractive sentences are not perhaps the wisest, but the surest and soundest. He who uttered them had a right to speak. He did not stand on a rolling stone, but was well assured of his footing, and naturally breathed them without effort. They were spoken in the nick of time. With rare fullness were they spoken, as a flower expands in the field; and if you dispute their doctrine, you will say, "But there is truth in their assurance." Raleigh's are of this nature, spoken with entire satisfaction and heartiness. They are not philosophy, but poetry.

With him it was always well done and nobly said.

That is very true which Raleigh says about the equal necessity of war and law, — that "the necessity of war,

which among human actions is most lawless, hath some kind of affinity and near resemblance with the necessity of law;" for both equally rest on force as their basis, and war is only the resource of law, either on a smaller or larger scale, — its authority asserted. In war, in some sense, lies the very genius of law. It is law creative and active; it is the first principle of the law. What is human warfare but just this, — an effort to make the laws of God and nature take sides with one party. Men make an arbitrary code, and, because it is not right, they try to make it prevail by might. The moral law does not want any champion. Its asserters do not go to war. It was never infringed with impunity. It is inconsistent to decry war and maintain law, for if there were no need of war there would be no need of law.

I must confess I see no resource but to conclude that conscience was not given us to no purpose, or for a hindrance, but that, however flattering order and expediency may look, it is but the repose of a lethargy; and we will choose rather to be awake, though it be stormy, and maintain ourselves on this earth and in this life as we may, without signing our death-warrant in the outset. What does the law protect? My rights? or any rights? My right, or the right? If I avail myself of it, it may help my sin; it cannot help my virtue. Let us see if we cannot stay here, where God has put us, on his own conditions. Does not his law reach to the earth? While the law holds fast the thief and murderer for my protection (I should say its own), it lets itself go loose. Expediencies differ. They may clash. English law may go to war with Amer-

ican law, that is English interest with American interest, but what is expedient for the whole world will be absolute right, and synonymous with the law of God. So the law is only partial right. It is selfish, and consults for the interest of the few.¹

Somehow, strangely, the vice of men gets well represented and protected, but their virtue has none to plead its cause, nor any charter of immunities and rights. The Magna Charta is not chartered rights, but chartered wrongs.

March 17. Thursday. I have been making pencils all day, and then at evening walked to see an old schoolmate who is going to help make the Welland Canal navigable for ships round Niagara. He cannot see any such motives and modes of living as I; professes not to look beyond the securing of certain "creature comforts." And so we go silently different ways, with all serenity, I in the still moonlight through the village this fair evening to write these thoughts in my journal, and he, forsooth, to mature his schemes to ends as good, maybe, but different. So are we two made, while the same stars shine quietly over us. If I or he be wrong, Nature yet consents placidly. She bites her lip and smiles to see how her children will agree. So does the Welland Canal get built, and other conveniences, while I live. Well and good, I must confess. Fast sailing ships are hence not detained.

What means this changing sky, that now I freeze and contract and go within myself to warm me, and now I

¹ [*Week*, p. 138; *Riv.* 172, 173.]

say it is a south wind, and go all soft and warm along the way? I sometimes wonder if I do not breathe the south wind.

March 18. Friday. Whatever book or sentence will bear to be read twice, we may be sure was thought twice. I say this thinking of Carlyle, who writes pictures or first impressions merely, which consequently will only bear a first reading. As if any transient, any *new*, mood of the best man deserved to detain the world long. I should call Carlyle's writing essentially dramatic, excellent acting, entertaining especially to those who see rather than those who hear, not to be repeated more than a joke. If he did not think who made the joke, how shall we think who hear it? He never consults the oracle, but thinks to utter oracles himself. There is nothing in his books for which he is not, and does not feel, responsible. He does not retire behind the truth he utters, but stands in the foreground. I wish he would just think, and tell me what he thinks, appear to me in the attitude of a man with his ear inclined, who comes as silently and meekly as the morning star, which is unconscious of the dawn it heralds, leading the way up the steep as though alone and unobserved in its observing, without looking behind. He is essentially a humorist. But humors will not feed a man; they are the least satisfactory morsel to the healthy appetite. They circulate; I want rather to meet that about which they circulate. The heart is not a humor, nor do they go to the heart, as the blood does.¹

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 336; *Misc.*, Riv. 106, 107.]

March 19. Saturday. When I walk in the fields of Concord and meditate on the destiny of this prosperous slip of the Saxon family, the unexhausted energies of this new country, I forget that this which is now Concord was once Musketaquid, and that the *American race* has had its destiny also. Everywhere in the fields, in the corn and grain land, the earth is strewn with the relics of a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth. I find it good to remember the eternity behind me as well as the eternity before. Wherever I go, I tread in the tracks of the Indian. I pick up the bolt which he has but just dropped at my feet. And if I consider destiny I am on his trail. I scatter his hearthstones with my feet, and pick out of the embers of his fire the simple but enduring implements of the wigwam and the chase. In planting my corn in the same furrow which yielded its increase to his support so long, I displace some memorial of him.

I have been walking this afternoon over a pleasant field planted with winter rye, near the house, where this strange people once had their dwelling-place. Another species of mortal men, but little less wild to me than the musquash they hunted. Strange spirits, dæmons, whose eyes could never meet mine; with another nature and another fate than mine. The crows flew over the edge of the woods, and, wheeling over my head, seemed to rebuke, as dark-winged spirits more akin to the Indian than I. Perhaps only the present disguise of the Indian. If the new has a meaning, so has the old.¹

Nature has her russet hues as well as green. Indeed,

¹ [See pp. 443, 444.]

our eye splits on every object, and we can as well take one path as the other. If I consider its history, it is old; if its destiny, it is new. I may see a part of an object, or the whole. I will not be imposed on and think Nature is old because the season is advanced. I will study the botany of the mosses and fungi on the decayed [wood], and remember that decayed wood is not old, but has just begun to be what it is. I need not think of the pine almond¹ or the acorn and sapling when I meet the fallen pine or oak, more than of the generations of pines and oaks which have fed the young tree. The new blade of the corn, the third leaf of the melon, these are not green but gray with time, but sere in respect of time.

The pines and the crows are not changed, but instead that Philip and Paugus stand on the plain, here are Webster and Crockett. Instead of the council-house is the legislature. What a new aspect have new eyes given to the land! Where is this country but in the hearts of its inhabitants? Why, there is only so much of Indian America left as there is of the American Indian in the character of this generation.

A blithe west wind is blowing over all. In the fine flowing haze, men at a distance seem shadowy and gigantic, as ill-defined and great as men should always be. I do not know if yonder be a man or a ghost.

What a consolation are the stars to man!—so high and out of his reach, as is his own destiny. I do not know

¹ [See *Journal*, vol. ii, p. 128.]

but my life is fated to be thus low and grovelling always. I cannot discover its use even to myself. But it is permitted to see those stars in the sky equally useless, yet highest of all and deserving of a fair destiny. My fate is in some sense linked with that of the stars, and if they are to persevere to a great end, shall I die who could conjecture it? It surely is some encouragement to know that the stars are my fellow-creatures, for I do not suspect but they are reserved for a high destiny. Has not he who discovers and names a planet in the heavens as long a year as it? I do not fear that any misadventure will befall *them*. Shall I not be content to disappear with the missing stars? Do I mourn their fate?

Man's moral nature is a riddle which only eternity can solve.

I see laws which never fail, of whose failure I never conceived. Indeed I cannot detect failure anywhere but in my fear. I do not fear that right is not right, that good is not good, but only the annihilation of the present existence. But only that can make me incapable of fear. My fears are as good prophets as my hopes.

March 20. Sunday. My friend is cold and reserved because his love for me is waxing and not waning. These are the early processes; the particles are just beginning to shoot in crystals. If the mountains came to me, I should no longer go to the mountains. So soon as that consummation takes place which I wish, it will be past. Shall I not have a friend in reserve? Heaven is to come. I hope this is not it.

Words should pass between friends as the lightning passes from cloud to cloud. I don't know how much I assist in the economy of nature when I declare a fact. Is it not an important part in the history of the flower that I tell my friend where I found it? We do [not] wish friends to feed and clothe our bodies, — neighbors are kind enough for that, — but to do the like offices to ourselves.¹ We wish to spread and publish ourselves, as the sun spreads its rays; and we toss the new thought to the friend, and thus it is dispersed. Friends are those twain who feel their interests to be one. Each knows that the other might as well have said what he said. All beauty, all music, all delight springs from apparent dualism but real unity. My friend is my real brother. I see his nature groping yonder like my own. Does there go one whom I know? then I go there.

The field where friends have met is consecrated forever. Man seeks friendship out of the desire to realize a home here. As the Indian thinks he receives into himself the courage and strength of his conquered enemy, so we add to ourselves all the character and heart of our friends. He is my creation. I can do what I will with him. There is no possibility of being thwarted; the friend is like wax in the rays that fall from our own hearts.

The friend does not take my word for anything, but he takes me. He trusts me as I trust myself. We only need be as true to others as we are to ourselves, that there may be ground enough for friendship. In the beginnings of friendship, — for it does not grow, — we realize such love and justice as are attributed to God.

¹ [Week, p. 283; Riv. 351.]

Very few are they from whom we derive any information. The most only announce and tell tales, but the friend *in-forms*.

What is all nature and human life at this moment, what the scenery and vicinity of a human soul, but the song of an early sparrow from yonder fences, and the cackling hens in the barn? So for one while my destiny loiters within ear-shot of these sounds. The great busy Dame Nature is concerned to know how many eggs her hens lay. The Soul, the proprietor of the world, has an interest in the stacking of hay, the foddering of cattle, and the draining of peat meadows. Away in Scythia, away in India, they make butter and cheese for its larder.¹ I wish that in some page of the Testament there were something like Charlemagne's egg account. Was not Christ interested in the setting hens of Palestine?

Nature is very ample and roomy. She has left us plenty of space to move in. As far as I can see from this window, how little life in the landscape! The few birds that flit past do not crowd; they do not fill the valley. The traveller on the highway has no fellow-traveller for miles before or behind him. Nature was generous and not niggardly, certainly.

How simple is the natural connection of events. We complain greatly of the want of flow and sequence in books, but if the journalist only move himself from Boston to New York, and speak as before, there is link enough. And so there would be, if he were as careless of connection and order when he stayed at home, and

¹ [Week, pp. 130, 131; Riv. 163.]

let the incessant progress which his life makes be the apology for abruptness. Do I not travel as far away from my old resorts, though I stay here at home, as though I were on board the steamboat? Is not my life riveted together? Has not its sequence? Do not my breathings follow each other naturally?

*March 21.*¹ Who is old enough to have learned from experience?

March 22. Tuesday. Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried.

I have not succeeded if I have an antagonist who fails. It must be humanity's success.

I cannot think nor utter my thought unless I have infinite room. The cope of heaven is not too high, the sea is not too deep, for him who would unfold a great thought. It must feed me and warm and clothe me. It must be an entertainment to which my whole nature is invited. I must know that the gods are to be my fellow-guests.

We cannot well do without our sins; they are the highway of our virtue.

March 23. Wednesday. Plain speech is always a desideratum. Men write in a florid style only because they

¹ Set the red hen, Sunday, March 21st [=20th]. [This memorandum is written in the margin. It is pretty good proof that by now we have come to the original Journal. Just where the transcripts end, however, it seems to be impossible to determine.]

would match the simple beauties of the plainest speech. They prefer to be misunderstood, rather than come short of its exuberance. Hussein Effendi praises the epistolary style of Ibrahim Pasha to the French traveller Botta, because of "the difficulty of understanding it: there was, he said, but one person at Jidda who was capable of understanding and explaining the Pasha's correspondence." A plain sentence, where every word is rooted in the soil, is indeed flowery and verdurous. It has the beauty and variety of mosaic with the strength and compactness of masonry. All fullness looks like exuberance. We are not rich without superfluous wealth; but the imitator only copies the superfluity. If the words were sufficiently simple and answering to the thing to be expressed, our sentences would be as blooming as wreaths of evergreen and flowers.¹ You cannot fill a wine-glass quite to the brim without heaping it. Simplicity is exuberant.

When I look back eastward over the world, it seems to be all in repose. Arabia, Persia, Hindostan are the land of contemplation. Those Eastern nations have perfected the luxury of idleness. Mount Sabér, according to the French traveller and naturalist Botta, is celebrated for producing the Kát tree. "The soft tops of the twigs and tender leaves are eaten," says his reviewer, "and produce an agreeable soothing excitement, restoring from fatigue, banishing sleep, and disposing to the enjoyment of conversation." What could be more dignified than to browse the tree-tops with the camelpard? Who would not be a rabbit or partridge some-

¹ [Week, p. 107; Riv. 133.]

times, to chew mallows and pick the apple tree buds? It is not hard to discover an instinct for the opium and betel and tobacco chewers.¹

After all, I believe it is the style of thought entirely, and not the style of expression, which makes the difference in books. For if I find any thought worth extracting, I do not wish to alter the language. Then the author seems to have had all the graces of eloquence and poetry given him.

I am pleased to discover myself as much a pensioner in Nature as moles and fitmice. In some very direct and simple uses to which man puts Nature he stands in this relation to her. Oriental life does not want this grandeur. It is in Sadi and the Arabian Nights and the Fables of Pilpay. In the New England noontide I have discovered more materials of Oriental history than the Sanskrit contains or Sir W. Jones has unlocked. I see why it is necessary there should be such history at all. Was not Asia mapped in my brain before it was in any geography? In my brain is the Sanskrit which contains the history of the primitive times. The Vedas and their Angas are not so ancient as my serenest contemplations.² My mind contemplates them, as Brahma his scribe.

I occasionally find myself to be nothing at all, because the gods give me nothing to do. I cannot brag; I can only congratulate my masters.

In idleness I am of no thickness, I am thinnest wafer. I never compass my own ends. God schemes for me.

¹ [Week, p. 130; Riv. 162.]

² [Week, p. 160; Riv. 199.]

We have our times of action and our times of reflection. The one mood caters for the other. Now I am Alexander, and then I am Homer. One while my hand is impatient to handle an axe or hoe, and at another to [*sic*] pen. I am sure I write the tougher truth for these calluses on my palms. They give firmness to the sentence. The sentences of a laboring man are like hardened thongs, or the sinews of the deer, or the roots of the pine.¹

March 24. Thursday. Those authors are successful who do not *write down* to others, but make their own taste and judgment their audience. By some strange infatuation we forget that we do not approve what yet we recommend to others. It is enough if I please myself with writing; I am then sure of an audience.

If hoarded treasures can make me rich, have I not the wealth of the planet in my mines and at the bottom of the sea?

It is always singular to meet common sense in very old books, as the Veeshnoo Sarma, — as if they could have dispensed with the experience of later times.² We had not given space enough to *their* antiquity for the accumulation of wisdom. We meet even a trivial wisdom in them, as if truth were already hackneyed. The present is always younger than antiquity. A playful wisdom, which has eyes behind as well as before and oversees itself. This pledge of sanity cannot be spared

¹ [Week, p. 109; Riv. 135, 136.] ² [Week, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

in a book, that it sometimes reflect upon itself, that it pleasantly behold itself, that it hold the scales over itself.¹ The wise can afford to doubt in his wisest moment. The easiness of doubt is the ground of his assurance. Faith keeps many doubts in her pay. If I could not doubt, I should not believe.

It is seen in this old scripture how wisdom is older than the talent of composition. It is a simple and not a compound rock. The story is as slender as the thread on which pearls are strung; it is a spiral line, growing more and more perplexed till it winds itself up and dies like the silkworm in its cocoon. It is an interminable labyrinth. It seems as if the old philosopher could not talk without moving, and each motion were made the apology or occasion for a sentence, but, this being found inconvenient, the fictitious progress of the tale was invented. The story which winds between and around these sentences, these barrows in the desert, these oases, is as indistinct as a camel track between Mourzuk and Darfur, between the Pyramids and the Nile, from Gaza to Jaffa.²

The great thoughts of a wise man seem to the vulgar who do not generalize to stand far apart like isolated mounts; but science knows that the mountains which rise so solitary in our midst are parts of a great mountain-chain, dividing the earth, and the eye that looks into the horizon toward the blue Sierra melting away in the distance may detect their flow of thought. These sentences which take up your common life so easily are not seen to run into ridges, because they are the table-land on

¹ [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

² [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

which the spectator stands.¹ I do not require that the mountain-peaks be chained together, but by the common basis on which they stand, nor that the path of the muleteer be kept open at so much pains, when they may be bridged by the Milky Way. That they stand frowning upon one another, or mutually reflecting the sun's rays, is proof enough of their common basis.

The book should be found where the sentence is, and its connection be as inartificial. It is the inspiration of a day and not of a moment. The links should be gold also. Better that the good be not united than that a bad man be admitted into their society. When men can select they will. If there be any stone in the quarry better than the rest, they will forsake the rest because of it. Only the good will be quarried.

In these fables the story goes unregarded, while the reader leaps from sentence to sentence, as the traveller leaps from stone to stone while the water rushes unheeded between them.²

March 25. Friday. Great persons are not soon learned, not even their outlines, but they change like the mountains in the horizon as we ride along.

A man's life should be as fresh as a river. It should be the same channel, but a new water every instant.³ Some men have no inclination; they have no rapids nor cascades, but marshes, and alligators, and miasma instead.⁴

¹ [*Week*, p. 105; Riv. 130.]

³ [See pp. 295, 296.]

² [*Week*, p. 153; Riv. 191.]

⁴ [*Week*, p. 137; Riv. 170.]

How insufficient is all wisdom without love! There may be courtesy, there may be good will, there may be even temper, there may be wit, and talent, and sparkling conversation, — and yet the soul pine for life. Just so sacred and rich as my life is to myself will it be to another. Ignorance and bungling with love are better than wisdom and skill without. Our life without love is like coke and ashes, — like the cocoanut in which the milk is dried up. I want to see the sweet sap of living wood in it. Men may be pure as alabaster and Parian marble, elegant as a Tuscan villa, sublime as Terni, but if they are not in society as retiring and inexperienced as children, we shall go join Alaric and the Goths and Vandals. There is no milk mixed with the wine at the entertainment.¹

Enthusiasm which is the formless material of thought. Comparatively speaking, I care not for the man or his designs who would make the highest use of me short of an all-adventuring friendship. I wish by the behavior of my friend toward me to be led to have such regard for myself as for a box of precious ointment. I shall not be so cheap to myself if I see that another values me.

We talk much about education, and yet none will assume the office of an educator. I never gave any one the whole advantage of myself. I never afforded him the culture of my love. How can I talk of charity, who at last withhold the kindness which alone makes charity desirable? The poor want nothing less than me myself, and I shirk charity by giving rags and meat.

¹ [*Week*, p. 301; Riv. 374, 375.]

Very dangerous is the talent of composition, the striking out the heart of life at a blow, as the Indian takes off a scalp. I feel as if my life had grown more outward since I could express it.¹

What can I give or what deny to another but myself?

The stars are God's dreams, thoughts remembered in the silence of his night.

In company, that person who alone can understand you you cannot get out of your mind.

The artist must work with indifference. Too great interest vitiates his work.

March 26. Saturday. The wise will not be imposed on by wisdom. You can tell, but what do you know?

I thank God that the cheapness which appears in time and the world, the trivialness of the whole scheme of things, is in my own cheap and trivial moment. I am time and the world. I assert no independence. In me are summer and winter, village life and commercial routine, pestilence and famine and refreshing breezes, joy and sadness, life and death. How near is yesterday! How far to-morrow! I have seen nails which were driven before I was born. Why do they look old and rusty? Why does not God make some mistake to show to us that time is a delusion? Why did I invent time but to destroy it?

Did you ever remember the moment when you were not mean?

Is it not a satire to say that life is organic?

¹ [*Week*, p. 351; Riv. 431.]

Where is my heart gone? They say men cannot part with it and live.

Are setting hens troubled with ennui? Nature is very kind; does she let them reflect? These long March days, setting on and on in the crevice of a hayloft, with no active employment!¹ Do setting hens sleep?

A book should be a vein of gold ore, as the sentence is a diamond found in the sand, or a pearl fished out of the sea.

He who does not borrow trouble does not lend it.

I must confess I have felt mean enough when asked how I was to act on society, what errand I had to mankind. Undoubtedly I did not feel mean without a reason, and yet my loitering is not without defense. I would fain communicate the wealth of my life to men, would really give them what is most precious in my gift. I would secrete pearls with the shellfish and lay up honey with the bees for them. I will sift the sunbeams for the public good. I know no riches I would keep back. I have no private good, unless it be my peculiar ability to serve the public. This is the only individual property. Each one may thus be innocently rich. I inclose and foster the pearl till it is grown. I wish to communicate those parts of my life which I would gladly live again myself.

It is hard to be a good citizen of the world in any great sense; but if we do render no interest or increase to mankind out of that talent God gave us, we can at

¹ [*Week*, p. 130; *Riv.* 163.]

least preserve the principle unimpaired. One would like to be making large dividends to society out [of] that deposited capital in us, but he does well for the most part if he proves a secure investment only, without adding to the stock.

In such a letter as I like there will be the most naked and direct speech, the least circumlocution.

March 27. Sunday. The eye must be firmly anchored to this earth which beholds birches and pines waving in the breeze in a certain light, a serene rippling light.

Cliffs. — Two little hawks have just come out to play, like butterflies rising one above the other in endless alternation far below me. They swoop from side to side in the broad basin of the tree-tops, with wider and wider surges, as if swung by an invisible pendulum. They stoop down on this side and scale up on that.

Suddenly I look up and see a new bird, probably an eagle, quite above me, laboring with the wind not more than forty rods off. It was the largest bird of the falcon kind I ever saw. I was never so impressed by any flight. She sailed the air, and fell back from time to time like a ship on her beam ends, holding her talons up as if ready for the arrows. I never allowed before for the grotesque attitudes of our national bird.¹

The eagle must have an educated eye.

See what a life the gods have given us, set round with pain and pleasure. It is too strange for sorrow; it is too

¹ [In *Excursions*, p. 110 (*Riv.* 136), what appears to be the same bird is described, and is called the fish hawk.]

strange for joy. One while it looks as shallow, though as intricate, as a Cretan labyrinth, and again it is a pathless depth. I ask for bread incessantly, — that my life sustain me, as much as meat my body. No man knoweth in what hour his life may come. Say not that Nature is trivial, for to-morrow she will be radiant with beauty. I am as old — as old as the Alleghanies. I was going to say Wachusett, but it excites a youthful feeling, as I were but too happy to be so young.

March 28. Monday. How often must one feel, as he looks back on his past life, that he has gained a talent but lost a character! My life has got down into my fingers. My inspiration at length is only so much breath as I can breathe.

Society affects to estimate men by their talents, but really feels and knows them by their characters. What a man does, compared with what he is, is but a small part. To require that our friend possess a certain skill is not to be satisfied till he is something less than our friend.

Friendship should be a great promise, a perennial springtime.

I can conceive how the life of the gods may be dull and tame, if it is not disappointed and insatiate.

One may well feel chagrined when he finds he can do nearly all he can conceive.

Some books ripple on like a stream, and we feel that the author is in the full tide of discourse. Plato and Jamblichus and Pythagoras and Bacon halt beside

them. Long, stringy, slimy thoughts which flow or run together. They read as if written for military men or men of business, there is such a dispatch in them, and a double-quick time, a Saratoga march with beat of drum. But the grave thinkers and philosophers seem not to have got their swaddling-clothes off; they are slower than a Roman army on its march, the rear encampment to-night where the van camped last night. The wise Jamblichus eddies and gleams like a watery slough.

But the reviewer seizes the pen and shouts, "Forward! Alamo and Fanning!" and after rolls the tide of war. Immediately the author discovers himself launched, and if the slope was easy and the grease good, does not go to the bottom.

They flow as glibly as mill-streams sucking under a race-way. The flow is oftentimes in the poor reader who makes such haste over their pages, as to the traveller the walls and fences seem to travel. But the most rapid trot is no flow after all.¹

If I cannot chop wood in the yard, can I not chop wood in my journal? Can I not give vent to that appetite so? I wish to relieve myself of superfluous energy. How poor is the life of the best and wisest! The petty side will appear at last. Understand once how the best in society live, — with what routine, with what tedium and insipidity, with what grimness and defiance, with what chuckling over an exaggeration of the sunshine. Altogether, are not the actions of your great man poor, even pitiful and ludicrous?

¹ [*Week*, pp. 105, 106; *Riv.* 131, 132.]

I am astonished, I must confess, that man looks so respectable in nature, considering the littlenesses Socrates must descend to in the twenty-four hours, that he yet wears a serene countenance and even adorns nature.

March 29. Tuesday.

March 30. Wednesday. Though Nature's laws are more immutable than any despot's, yet to our daily life they rarely seem rigid, but we relax with license in summer weather. We are not often nor harshly reminded of the things we may not do. I am often astonished to see how long, and with what manifold infringements of the natural laws, some men I meet in the highway maintain life. She does not deny them quarter; they do not die without priest. All the while she rejoices, for if they are not one part of her they are another. I am convinced that consistency is the secret of health. How many a poor man, striving to live a pure life, pines and dies after a life of sickness, and his successors doubt if Nature is not pitiless; while the confirmed and consistent sot, who is content with his rank life like mushrooms, a mass of corruption, still dozes comfortably under a hedge. He has made his peace with himself; there is no strife. Nature is really very kind and liberal to all persons of vicious habits. They take great licenses with her. She does not exhaust them with many excesses.¹

How hard it is to be greatly related to mankind! They are only my uncles and aunts and cousins. I hear

¹ [*Week*, pp. 34, 35; *Riv.* 42, 43.]

of some persons greatly related, but only he is so who has all mankind for his friend. Our intercourse with the best grows soon shallow and trivial. They no longer inspire us. After enthusiasm comes insipidity and blankness. The sap of all noble schemes drieth up, and the schemers return again and again in despair to "common sense and labor." If I could help infuse some life and heart into society, should I not do a service? Why will not the gods mix a little of the wine of nobleness with the air we drink? Let virtue have some firm foothold in the earth. Where does she dwell? Who are the salt of the earth? May not Love have some resting-place on the earth as sure [as] the sunshine on the rock? The crystals imbedded in the cliff sparkle and gleam from afar, as if they did certainly enrich our planet; but where does any virtue permanently sparkle and gleam? She was sent forth over the waste too soon, before the earth was prepared for her.

Rightfully we are to each other the gate of heaven and redeemers from sin, but now we overlook these lowly and narrow ways. We will go over the bald mountain-tops without going through the valleys.

Men do not after all meet on the ground of their real acquaintance and actual understanding of one another, but degrade themselves immediately into the puppets of convention. They do as if, in given circumstances, they had agreed to know each other only so well. They rarely get to that [point] that they inform one another gratuitously, and use each other like the sea and woods for what is new and inspiring there.

The best intercourse and communion they have is in silence above and behind their speech. We should be very simple to rely on words. As it is, what we knew before always interprets a man's words. I cannot easily remember what any man has said, but how can I forget what he is to me? We know each other better than we are aware; we are admitted to startling privacies with every person we meet, and in some emergency we shall find how well we knew him. To my solitary and distant thought my neighbor is shorn of his halo, and is seen as privately and barely as a star through a glass.

March 31. Thursday. I cannot forget the majesty of that bird at the Cliff. It was no sloop or smaller craft hove in sight, but a ship of the line, worthy to struggle with the elements. It was a great presence, as of the master of river and forest. His eye would not have quailed before the owner of the soil; none could challenge his rights. And then his retreat, sailing so steadily away, was a kind of advance. How is it that man always feels like an interloper in nature, as if he had intruded on the domains of bird and beast? ¹

The really efficient laborer will be found not to crowd his day with work, but will saunter to his task surrounded by a wide halo of ease and leisure. There will be a wide margin for relaxation to his day. He is only earnest to secure the kernels of time, and does not exaggerate the value of the husk. Why should the hen set all day? She can lay but one egg, and besides she will

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 110; Riv. 136.]

not have picked up materials for a new one. Those who work much do not work hard.¹

Nothing is so rare as sense. Very uncommon sense is poetry, and has a heroic or sweet music. But in verse, for the most part, the music now runs before and then behind the sense, but is never coincident with it. Given the metre, and one will make music while another makes sense. But good verse, like a good soldier, will make its own music, and it will march to the same with one consent. In most verse there is no inherent music. The man should not march, but walk like a citizen. It is not time of war but peace. Boys study the metres to write Latin verses, but it does not help them to write English.

Lydgate's "Story of Thebes," intended for a Canterbury Tale, is a specimen of most unprogressive, unmusical verse. Each line rings the knell of its brother, as if it were introduced but to dispose of him. No mortal man could have breathed to that cadence without long intervals of relaxation; the repetition would have been fatal to the lungs. No doubt there was much healthy exercise taken in the meanwhile. He should forget his rhyme and tell his story, or forget his story and breathe himself.

In Shakespeare and elsewhere the climax may be somewhere along the line, which runs as varied and meandering as a country road, but in Lydgate it is nowhere but in the rhyme. The couplets slope headlong to their confluence.

¹ [*Week*, p. 110; Riv. 137.]

*April 2. Saturday.*¹ The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is full of good sense and humanity, but is not transcendent poetry. It is so good that it seems like faultfinding to esteem it second to any other. For picturesque description of persons it is without a parallel. It did not need inspiration, but a cheerful and easy wit. It is essentially humorous, as no inspired poetry is. Genius is so serious as to be grave and sublime rather. Humor takes a narrower vision — however broad and genial it may be — than enthusiasm. Humor delays and looks back.²

April 3. Sunday. I can remember when I was more enriched by a few cheap rays of light falling on the pond-side than by this broad sunny day. Riches have wings, indeed. The weight of present woe will express the sweetness of past experience. When sorrow comes, how easy it is to remember pleasure! When, in winter, the bees cannot make new honey, they consume the old.

Experience is in the fingers and head. The heart is inexperienced.

Sorrow singeth the sweetest strain: "The Daughters of Zion," "The Last Sigh of the Moor."

Joy is the nectar of flowers, sorrow the honey of bees.

I thank God for sorrow. It is hard to be abused. Is not He kind still, who lets this south wind blow, this warm sun shine on me?

¹ [On the margin of this page appears the memorandum: "Set the gray hen April 1st."]

² [*Week*, p. 397; Riv. 490, 491.]

I have just heard the flicker among the oaks on the hillside ushering in a new dynasty. It is the age and youth of time. Why did Nature set this lure for sickly mortals? Eternity could not begin with more security and momentousness than the spring. The summer's eternity is reestablished by this note.¹ All sights and sounds are seen and heard both in time and eternity. And when the eternity of any sight or sound strikes the eye or ear, they are intoxicated with delight.

Sometimes, as through a dim haze, we see objects in their eternal relations; and they stand like Stonehenge and the Pyramids, and we wonder who set them up and what for.

The destiny of the soul can never be studied by the reason, for its modes are not ecstatic. In the wisest calculation or demonstration I but play a game with myself. I am not to be taken captive by myself.

I cannot convince myself. God must convince. I can calculate a problem in arithmetic, but not any morality.

Virtue is incalculable, as it is inestimable. Well, man's destiny is but virtue, or manhood. It is wholly moral, to be learned only by the life of the soul. God cannot calculate it. He has no moral philosophy, no ethics. The reason, before it can be applied to such a subject, will have to fetter and restrict it. How can he, step by step, perform that long journey who has not conceived whither he is bound? How can he expect to perform an arduous journey without interruption who has no passport to the end?

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 111; Riv. 137.]

On one side of man is the actual, and on the other the ideal. The former is the province of the reason; it is even a divine light when directed upon it, but it cannot reach forward into the ideal without blindness. The moon was made to rule by night, but the sun to rule by day. Reason will be but a pale cloud, like the moon, when one ray of divine light comes to illumine the soul.

How rich and lavish must be the system which can afford to let so many moons burn all the day as well as the night, though no man stands in need of their light! There is none of that kind of economy in Nature that husbands its stock, but she supplies inexhaustible means to the most frugal methods. The poor may learn of her frugality, and the rich generosity. Having carefully determined the extent of her charity, she establishes it forever; her almsgiving is an annuity. She supplies to the bee only so much wax as is necessary for its cell, so that no poverty could stint it more; but the little economist which fed the Evangelist in the desert still keeps in advance of the immigrant, and fills the cavities of the forest for his repast.