

VII

1845-1846

(ÆT. 27-29)

July 5. Saturday. Walden. — Yesterday I came here to live. My house makes me think of some mountain houses I have seen, which seemed to have a fresher auroral atmosphere about them, as I fancy of the halls of Olympus. I lodged at the house of a saw-miller last summer, on the Caatskill Mountains, high up as Pine Orchard, in the blueberry and raspberry region, where the quiet and cleanliness and coolness seemed to be all one, — which had their ambrosial character. He was the miller of the Kaaterskill Falls. They were a clean and wholesome family, inside and out, like their house. The latter was not plastered, only lathed, and the inner doors were not hung. The house seemed high-placed, airy, and perfumed, fit to entertain a travelling god. It was so high, indeed, that all the music, the broken strains, the waifs and accompaniments of tunes, that swept over the ridge of the Caatskills, passed through its aisles. Could not man be man in such an abode? And would he ever find out this grovelling life?¹ It was the very light and atmosphere in which the works of Grecian art were composed, and in which they rest. They have appropriated to themselves a loftier hall than mortals ever occupy, at least on a level with the moun-

¹ [*Walden*, p. 94; Riv. 134.]

tain-brows of the world. There was wanting a little of the glare of the lower vales, and in its place a pure twilight as became the precincts of heaven. Yet so equable and calm was the season there that you could not tell whether it was morning or noon or evening. Always there was the sound of the morning cricket.

- *July 6.* I wish to meet the facts of life — the vital facts, which are the phenomena or actuality the gods meant to show us — face to face, and so I came down here. Life! who knows what it is, what it does? If I am not quite right here, I am less wrong than before; and now let us see what they will have. The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest, at the end of the week, — for Sunday always seemed to me like a fit conclusion of an ill-spent week and not the fresh and brave beginning of a new one, — with this one other draggletail and postponed affair of a sermon, from thirdly to fifteenthly, should teach them with a thundering voice pause and simplicity. “Stop! Avast! Why so fast?”¹ In all studies we go not forward but rather backward with redoubled pauses. We always study *antiques* with silence and reflection. Even time has a depth, and below its surface the waves do not lapse and roar. I wonder men can be so frivolous almost as to attend to the gross form of negro slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters who subject us both. Self-emanicipation in the West Indies of a man’s thinking and imagining provinces, which should be more than his island territory, — one emancipated heart

¹ [Walden, p. 106; Riv. 150.]

and intellect! It would knock off the fetters from a million slaves.

July 7. I am glad to remember to-night, as I sit by my door, that I too am at least a remote descendant of that heroic race of men of whom there is tradition. I too sit here on the shore of my Ithaca, a fellow-wanderer and survivor of Ulysses. How symbolical, significant of I know not what, the pitch pine stands here before my door! Unlike any glyph I have seen sculptured or painted yet, one of Nature’s later designs, yet perfect as her Grecian art. There it is, a done tree. Who can mend it? And now where is the generation of heroes whose lives are to pass amid these our northern pines, whose exploits shall appear to posterity pictured amid these strong and shaggy forms? Shall there be only arrows and bows to go with these pines on some pipe-stone quarry at length? There is something more respectable than railroads in these simple relics of the Indian race. What hieroglyphs shall we add to the pipe-stone quarry?

If we can forget, we have done somewhat; if we can remember, we have done somewhat. Let us remember this.

The Great Spirit makes indifferent all times and places. The place where he is seen is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. We had allowed only neighboring and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They were, in fact, the causes of our distractions. But nearest to all things is that power

which fashions their being. Next to us the grandest laws are being enacted and administered. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, but ever the workman whose work we are. He is at work, not in my backyard, but inconceivably nearer than that. We are the subjects of an experiment how singular! Can we not dispense with the society of our gossips a little while under these circumstances?

My auxiliaries are the dews and rains, — to water this dry soil, — and genial fatness in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. They have nibbled for me an eighth of an acre clean. I plant in faith, and they reap. This is the tax I pay for ousting johnswort and the rest. But soon the surviving beans will be too tough for woodchucks, and then they will go forward to meet new foes.¹

July 14. What sweet and tender, the most innocent and divinely encouraging society there is in every natural object, and so in universal nature, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man! There can be no really black melan-choly to him who lives in the midst of nature and has still his senses. There never was yet such a storm but it was Æolian music to the innocent ear. Nothing can compel to a vulgar sadness a simple and brave man. While I enjoy the sweet friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. This rain which is now watering my

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 171, 172; Riv. 242.]

beans and keeping me in the house waters me too. I needed it as much. And what if most are not hoed! Those who send the rain, whom I chiefly respect, will pardon me.¹

Sometimes, when I compare myself with other men, methinks I am favored by the gods. They seem to whisper joy to me beyond my deserts, and that I do have a solid warrant and surety at their hands, which my fellows do not. I do not flatter myself, but if it were possible *they* flatter me. I am especially guided and guarded.²

What was seen true once, and sanctioned by the flash of Jove, will always be true, and nothing can hinder it. I have the warrant that no fair dream I have had need fail of its fulfillment.

Here I know I am in good company; here is the world, its centre and metropolis, and all the palms of Asia and the laurels of Greece and the firs of the Arctic Zone incline thither. Here I can read Homer, if I would have books, as well as in Ionia, and not wish myself in Boston, or New York, or London, or Rome, or Greece. In such place as this he wrote or sang. Who should come to my lodge just now but a true Homeric boor, one of those Paphlagonian men? Alek Therien, he called himself; a Canadian now, a woodchopper, a post-maker; makes fifty posts — holes them, *i. e.* — in a day; and who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. And he too has heard of Homer, and *if it were not for books, would not know what to do* rainy days. Some priest once, who could read glibly

¹ [*Walden*, p. 145; Riv. 205.]

² [*Walden*, pp. 145, 146; Riv. 206.]

from the Greek itself, taught him reading in a measure — his verse, at least, in his turn — away by the Trois Rivières, at Nicolet. And now I must read to him, while he holds the book, Achilles' reproof of Patroclus on his sad countenance.

“Why are you in tears, Patroclus, like a young child (girl)?” etc., etc.

“Or have you only heard some news from Phthia?
They say that Menœlius lives yet, son of Actor,
And Peleus lives, son of Æacus, among the Myrmidons,
Both of whom having died, we should greatly grieve.”

He has a neat ¹ bundle of white oak bark under his arm for a sick man, gathered this Sunday morning. “I suppose there's no harm in going after such a thing to-day.” ² The simple man. May the gods send him many woodchucks.

And earlier to-day came five Lestrigones, railroad men who take care of the road, some of them at least. They still represent the bodies of men, transmitting arms and legs and bowels downward from those remote days to more remote. They have some got a rude wisdom withal, thanks to their dear experience. And one with them, a handsome younger man, a sailor-like, Greek-like man, says: “Sir, I like your notions. I think I shall live so myself. Only I should like a wilder country, where there is more game. I have been among the Indians near Appalachicola. I have lived with them. I like your kind of life. Good day. I wish you success and happiness.”

¹ [Plainly “neat” in Journal, though *Walden* has “great.”]

² [*Walden*, pp. 159, 160; Riv. 224, 225.]

Therien said this morning (July 16th, Wednesday), “If those beans were mine, I should n't like to hoc them till the dew was off.” He was going to his woodchopping. “Ah!” said I, “that is one of the notions the farmers have got, but I don't believe it.” “How thick the pigeons are!” said he. “If working every day were not my trade, I could get all the meat I should want by hunting, — pigeons, woodchucks, rabbits, partridges, — by George! I could get all I should want for a week in one day.” ¹

I imagine it to be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization. Of course all the improvements of the ages do not carry a man backward nor forward in relation to the great facts of his existence.²

Our furniture should be as simple as the Arab's or the Indian's.³ At first the thoughtful, wondering man plucked in haste the fruits which the boughs extended to him, and found in the sticks and stones around him his implements ready to crack the nut, to wound the beast, and build his house with. And he still remembered that he was a sojourner in nature. When he was refreshed with food and sleep he contemplated his journey again. He dwelt in a tent in this world. He was either threading the valleys, or crossing the plains, or climbing the mountain-tops.⁴

Now the best works of art serve comparatively but

¹ [*Walden*, p. 161; Riv. 227.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 39; Riv. 59.]

² [*Walden*, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 21.]

⁴ [*Walden*, p. 41; Riv. 61.]

to dissipate the mind, for they themselves represent transitional and paroxysmal, not free and absolute, thoughts.

Men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer.¹

There are scores of pitch pines in my field, from one to three inches in diameter, girdled by the mice last winter. A Norwegian winter it was for them, for the snow lay long and deep, and they had to mix much pine meal with their usual diet. Yet these trees have not many of them died, even in midsummer, and laid bare for a foot, but have grown a foot. They seem to do all their gnawing beneath the snow. There is not much danger of the mouse tribe becoming extinct in hard winters, for their granary is a cheap and extensive one.²

Here is one has had her nest under my house, and came when I took my luncheon to pick the crumbs at my feet. It had never seen the race of man before, and so the sooner became familiar. It ran over my shoes and up my pantaloons inside, clinging to my flesh with its sharp claws. It would run up the side of the room by short impulses like a squirrel, which [it] resembles, coming between the house mouse and the former. Its belly is a little reddish, and its ears a little longer. At length, as I leaned my elbow on the bench, it ran over my arm and round the paper which contained my dinner. And when I held it a piece of cheese, it came and

¹ [*Walden*, p. 41; Riv. 61.]

² [*Walden*, p. 309; Riv. 433.]

nibbled between my fingers, and then cleaned its face and paws like a fly.¹

There is a memorable interval between the written and the spoken language, the language read and the language heard. The one is transient, a sound, a tongue, a dialect, and all men learn it of their mothers. It is loquacious, fragmentary, — raw material. The other is a reserved, select, matured expression, a deliberate word addressed to the ear of nations and generations. The one is natural and convenient, the other divine and instructive. The clouds flit here below, genial, refreshing with their showers and gratifying with their tints, — alternate sun and shade, a grosser heaven adapted to our trivial wants; but above them repose the blue firmament and the stars. The stars are written words and stereotyped on the blue parchment of the skies; the fickle clouds that hide them from our view, which we on this side need, though heaven does not, these are our daily colloquies, our vaporous, garrulous breath.

Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. The herd of men, the generations who speak the Greek and Latin, are not entitled by the accident of birth to read the works of genius, whose mother tongue speaks everywhere, and is learned by every child who hears. The army of the Greeks and Latins are not coæternary, though contemporary, with Homer and Plato, Virgil and Cicero. In the transition ages, nations who loudest spoke the Greek and Latin tongues, whose mother's milk they were, learned not

¹ [*Walden*, p. 250; Riv. 351.]

their nobler dialects, but a base and vulgar speech. The men of the Middle Ages who spoke so glibly the language of the Roman and, in the Eastern Empire, of the Athenian mob, prized only a cheap contemporary learning. The classics of both languages were virtually lost and forgotten. When, after the several nations of Europe had acquired in some degree rude and original languages of their own, sufficient for the arts of life and conversation, then the few scholars beheld with advantage from this more distant standpoint the treasures of antiquity, and a new Latin age commenced, the era of reading. Those works of genius were then first classical. All those millions who had spoken Latin and Greek had not read Latin and Greek. The time had at length arrived for the written word, the *scripture*, to be heard. What the multitude could not *hear*, after the lapse of centuries a few scholars *read*. This is the matured thought which was not spoken in the market-place, unless it be in a market-place where the free genius of mankind resorts to-day. There is something very choice and select in a written word. No wonder Alexander carried his Homer in a precious casket on his expeditions. A word which may be translated into every dialect, and suggests a truth to every mind, is the most perfect work of human art; and as it may be breathed and taken on our lips, and, as it were, become the product of our physical organs, as its sense is of our intellectual, it is the nearest to life itself.¹ It is the simplest and purest channel by which a revelation may be transmitted from age to age. How it subsists itself whole and undiminished till the

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 112-114; Riv. 159-161.]

intelligent reader is born to decipher it! There are the tracks of Zoroaster, of Confucius and Moses, indelible in the sands of the remotest times.

There are no monuments of antiquity comparable to the classics for interest and importance. It does not need that the scholar should be an antiquarian, for these works of art have such an immortality as the works of nature, and are modern at the same time that they are ancient, like the sun and stars, and occupy by right no small share of the present. This palpable beauty is the treasured wealth of the world and the proper inheritance of each generation. Books, the oldest and the best, stand rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They have not to plead their cause, but they enlighten their readers and it is gained. When the illiterate and scornful rustic earns his imagined leisure and wealth, he turns inevitably at last — he or his children — to these still higher and yet inaccessible circles; and even when his descendant has attained to move in the highest rank of the wise men of his own age and country, he will still be sensible only of the imperfection of his culture and the vanity and inefficiency of his intellectual wealth, if his genius will not permit him to listen with somewhat of the equanimity of an equal to the fames of godlike men, which yet, as it were, form an invisible upper class in every society.¹

I have carried an apple in my pocket to-night — a sopsivine, they call it — till, now that I take my hand-

¹ [*Walden*, p. 114; Riv. 162.]

kerchief out, it has got so fine a fragrance that it really seems like a friendly trick of some pleasant dæmon to entertain me with.¹ It is redolent of sweet-scented orchards, of innocent, teeming harvests. I realize the existence of a goddess Pomona, and that the gods have really intended that men should feed divinely, like themselves, on their own nectar and ambrosia. They have so painted this fruit, and freighted it with such a fragrance, that it satisfies much more than an animal appetite. Grapes, peaches, berries, nuts, etc., are likewise provided for those who will sit at their sideboard. I have felt, when partaking of this inspiring diet, that my appetite was an indifferent consideration; that eating became a sacrament, a method of communion, an ecstatic exercise, a mingling of bloods, and [a] sitting at the communion table of the world; and so have not only quenched my thirst at the spring but the health of the universe.

The indecent haste and grossness with which our food is swallowed have cast a disgrace on the very act of eating itself. But I do believe that, if this process were rightly conducted, its aspect and effects would be wholly changed, and we should receive our daily life and health, Antæus-like, with an ecstatic delight, and, with upright front, an innocent and graceful behavior, take our strength from day to day. This fragrance of the apple in my pocket has, I confess, deterred me from eating of it. I am more effectually fed by it another way.

It is, indeed, the common notion that this fragrance

¹ [See *Excursions*, p. 295; Riv. 362.]

is the only food of the gods, and inasmuch as we are partially divine we are compelled to respect it.

Tell me, ye wise ones, if ye can,
Whither and whence the race of man.
For I have seen his slender clan
Clinging to hoar hills with their feet,
Threading the forest for their meat.
Moss and lichens, bark and grain
They rake together with might and main,
And they digest them with anxiety and pain.
I meet them in their rags and unwashed hair,
Instructed to eke out their scanty fare —
Brave race — with a yet humbler prayer.
Beggars they are, aye, on the largest scale.
They beg their daily bread at heaven's door,
And if their this year's crop alone should fail,
They neither bread nor begging would know more.
They are the titmen of their race,
And hug the vales with mincing pace
Like Troglodytes, and fight with cranes.
We walk 'mid great relations' feet.
What they let fall alone we eat.
We are only able
To catch the fragments from their table.
These elder brothers of our race,
By us unseen, with larger pace
Walk o'er our heads, and live our lives,
Embody our desires and dreams,
Anticipate our hoped-for gleams.
We grub the earth for our food.

We know not what is good.
 Where does the fragrance of our orchards go,
 Our vineyards, while we toil below?
 A finer race and finer fed
 Feast and revel above our head.
 The tints and fragrance of the flowers and fruits
 Are but the crumbs from off their table,
 While we consume the pulp and roots.
 Sometimes we do assert our kin,
 And stand a moment where once they have been.
 We hear their sounds and see their sights,
 And we experience their delights.
 But for the moment that we stand
 Astonished on the Olympian land,
 We do discern no traveller's face,
 No elder brother of our race,
 To lead us to the monarch's court
 And represent our case;
 But straightway we must journey back,
 Retracing slow the arduous track,
 Without the privilege to tell,
 Even, the sight we know so well.¹

In my father's house are many mansions.

Who ever explored the mansions of the air? Who knows who his neighbors are? We seem to lead our human lives amid a concentric system of worlds, of realm on realm, close bordering on each other, where dwell the unknown and the imagined races, as various in degree as our own thoughts are,—a system of in-

¹ [Eight lines, somewhat altered, *Week*, pp. 407, 408; *Riv.* 503.]

visible partitions more infinite in number and more inconceivable in intricacy than the starry one which science has penetrated.

When I play my flute to-night, earnest as if to leap the bounds [of] the narrow fold where human life is penned, and range the surrounding plain, I hear echo from a neighboring wood, a stolen pleasure, occasionally not rightfully heard, much more for other ears than ours, for 't is the reverse of sound. It is not our own melody that comes back to us, but an amended strain. And I would only hear myself as I would hear my echo, corrected and repronounced for me. It is as when my friend reads my verse.

The borders of our plot are set with flowers, whose seeds were blown from more Elysian fields adjacent. They are the pot-herbs of the gods, which our laborious feet have never reached, and fairer fruits and unaccustomed fragrance betray another realm's vicinity. There, too, is Echo found, with which we play at evening. There is the abutment of the rainbow's arch.¹

Aug. 6. Walden.—I have just been reading a book called "The Crescent and the Cross,"² till now I am somewhat ashamed of myself. Am I sick, or idle, that I can sacrifice my energy, America, and to-day to this man's ill-remembered and indolent story? Carnac and Luxor are but names, and still more desert sand and at length a wave of the great ocean itself are needed to wash away the filth that attaches to their grandeur.

¹ [*Week*, p. 407; *Riv.* 503.]

² [By Eliot Warburton, London, 1844, and New York, 1845.]

Carnac! Carnac! this is Carnac for me, and I behold the columns of a larger and a purer temple.¹ May our childish and fickle aspirations be divine, while we descend to this mean intercourse. Our reading should be heroic, in an unknown tongue, a dialect always but imperfectly learned, through which we stammer line by line, catching but a glimmering of the sense, and still afterward admiring its unexhausted hieroglyphics, its untranslated columns. Here grow around me nameless trees and shrubs, each morning freshly sculptured, rising new stories day by day, instead of hideous ruins, — their myriad-handed worker uncompelled as un compelling. This is my Carnac; that its unmeasured dome. The measuring art man has invented flourishes and dies upon this temple's floor, nor ever dreams to reach that ceiling's height. Carnac and Luxor crumble underneath. Their shadowy roofs let in the light once more reflected from the ceiling of the sky.

Behold these flowers! Let us be up with Time, not dreaming of three thousand years ago. Erect ourselves and let those columns lie, not stoop to raise a foil against the sky. Where is the *spirit* of that time but in this present day, this present line? Three thousand years ago are not gone; they are still lingering here this summer morn.

And Memnon's mother sprightly greets us now;
Wears still her youthful blushes on her brow.
And Carnac's columns, why stand they on the plain?
T' enjoy our opportunities they would fain remain.

¹ [*Week*, pp. 266, 267; Riv. 331.]

This is my Carnac, whose unmeasured dome
Shelters the measuring art and measurer's home,
Whose propylæum is the system high [?]
And sculptured façade the visible sky.

Where there is memory which compelleth Time, the Muses' mother, and the Muses nine, there are all ages, past and future time, — unweared memory that does not forget the actions of the past, that does not forego to stamp them freshly, that Old Mortality, industrious to retouch the monuments of time, in the world's cemetery throughout every clime.¹

The student may read Homer or Æschylus in the original Greek; for to do so implies to emulate their heroes, — the consecration of morning hours to their pages.

The heroic books, though printed in the character of our mother tongue, are always written in a foreign language, dead to idle and degenerate times, and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than the text renders us, at last, out of our own valor and generosity.²

A man must find his own occasion in himself. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove our indolence. If there is no elevation in our spirits, the pond will not seem elevated like a mountain tarn, but a low pool, a silent muddy water, a place for fishermen.

I sit here at my window like a priest of Isis, and ob-

¹ [*Week*, pp. 266, 267; Riv. 330-332.]

² [*Walden*, p. 111; Riv. 157. 158.]

serve the phenomena of three thousand years ago, yet unimpaired. The tantivy of wild pigeons, an ancient race of birds, gives a voice to the air, flying by twos and threes athwart my view or perching restless on the white pine boughs occasionally; a fish hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; and for the last half-hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars conveying travellers from Boston to the country.¹

After the evening train has gone by and left the world to silence and to me, the whip-poor-will chants her vespers for half an hour. And when all is still at night, the owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient ululu. Their most dismal scream is truly Ben-Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, — but the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. And yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the woodside, reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds, as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs, that would fain be sung. The spirits, the *low* spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen spirits who once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating with their wailing hymns, threnodiai, their sins in the very scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the vastness and mystery of that nature which is the common dwelling of us both.

¹ [*Walden*, p. 127; Riv. 179, 180.]

“Oh-o-o-o-o that I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn!” sighs one on this side of the pond, and circles in the restlessness of despair to some new perch in the gray oaks. Then, “That I never had been bor-or-or-or-orn!” echoes one on the further side, with a tremulous sincerity, and “Bor-or-or-or-orn” comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods.¹

And then the frogs, bullfrogs; they are the more sturdy spirits of ancient wine-bibbers and wassailers, still unrepentant, trying to sing a catch in their Stygian lakes. They would fain keep up the hilarious good fellowship and all the rules of their old round tables, but they have waxed hoarse and solemnly grave and serious their voices, mocking at mirth, and their wine has lost its flavor and is only liquor to distend their paunches, and never comes sweet intoxication to drown the memory of the past, but mere saturation and water-logged dullness and distension. Still the most aldermanic, with his chin upon a pad, which answers for a napkin to his drooling chaps, under the eastern shore quaffs a deep draught of the once scorned water, and passes round the cup with the ejaculation *tr-r-r-r-oonk*, *tr-r-r-r-oonk*, *tr-r-r-r-oonk!* and straightway comes over the water from some distant cove the selfsame password, where the next in seniority and girth has gulped down to his mark; and when the strain has made the circuit of the shores, then ejaculates the master of ceremonies with satisfaction *tr-r-r-r-oonk!* and each in turn repeats the sound, down to the least distended, leakiest, flabbiest

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 137, 138; Riv. 194–196.]

paunched, that there be no mistake; and the bowl goes round again, until the sun dispels the morning mist, and only the patriarch is not under the pond, but vainly bellowing *troonk* from time to time, pausing for a reply.¹

All nature is classic and akin to art. The sumach and pine and hickory which surround my house remind me of the most graceful sculpture. Sometimes their tops, or a single limb or leaf, seems to have grown to a distinct expression as if it were a symbol for me to interpret. Poetry, painting, and sculpture claim at once and associate with themselves those perfect specimens of the art of nature, — leaves, vines, acorns, pine cones, etc. The critic must at last stand as mute though contented before a true poem as before an acorn or a vine leaf. The perfect work of art is received again into the bosom of nature whence its material proceeded, and that criticism which can only detect its unnaturalness has no longer any office to fulfill. The choicest maxims that have come down to us are more beautiful or integrally wise than they are wise to our understandings. This wisdom which we are inclined to pluck from their stalk is the point only of a single association. Every natural form — palm leaves and acorns, oak leaves and sumach and dodder — are [*sic*] untranslatable aphorisms.

Twenty-three years since, when I was five years old, I was brought from Boston to this pond, away in the country. — which was then but another name for the extended world for me, — one of the most ancient scenes

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 139, 140; Riv. 197, 198.]

stamped on the tablets of my memory, the oriental Asiatic valley of my world, whence so many races and inventions have gone forth in recent times. That woodland vision for a long time made the drapery of my dreams. That sweet solitude my spirit seemed so early to require that I might have room to entertain my thronging guests, and that speaking silence that my ears might distinguish the significant sounds. Somehow or other it at once gave the preference to this recess among the pines, where almost sunshine and shadow were the only inhabitants that varied the scene, over that tumultuous and varied city, as if it had found its proper nursery.

Well, now, to-night my flute awakes the echoes over this very water, but one generation of pines has fallen, and with their stumps I have cooked my supper, and a lusty growth of oaks and pines is rising all around its brim and preparing its wilder aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture. Even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my imagination, and one result of my presence and influence is seen in these bean leaves and corn blades and potato vines.¹

As difficult to preserve is the tenderness of your nature as the bloom upon a peach.

Most men are so taken up with the cares and rude practice of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Literally, the laboring man has not leisure for

¹ [*Walden*, p. 242, where he makes his age four instead of five at the time of this early visit.]

a strict and lofty integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the fairest and noblest relations. His labor will depreciate in the market.

How can he remember well his ignorance who has so often to use his knowledge.

Aug. 15. The sounds heard at this hour, 8.30, are the distant rumbling of wagons over bridges, — a sound farthest heard of any human at night, — the baying of dogs, the lowing of cattle in distant yards.¹

What if we were to obey these fine dictates, these divine suggestions, which are addressed to the mind and not to the body, which are certainly true, — not to eat meat, not to buy, or sell, or barter, etc., etc., etc.?

I will not plant beans another summer, but sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, trust, innocence, and see if they will not grow in this soil with such manure as I have, and sustain me.² When a man meets a man, it should not be some uncertain appearance and falsehood, but the personification of great qualities. Here comes truth, perchance, personified, along the road.³ Let me see how Truth behaves. I have not seen enough of her. He shall utter no foreign word, no doubtful sentence, and I shall not make haste to part with him.

I would not forget that I deal with infinite and divine qualities in my fellow. All men, indeed, are divine in their core of light, but that is indistinct and distant to me, like the stars of the least magnitude, or the galaxy

¹ [*Walden*, p. 139; Riv. 197.] ² [*Walden*, p. 181; Riv. 255.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 182; Riv. 256.]

itself, but my kindred planets show their round disks and even their attendant moons to my eye.

Even the tired laborers I meet on the road, I really meet as travelling gods, but it is as yet, and must be for a long season, without speech.

Aug. 23. Saturday. I set out this afternoon to go a-fishing for pickerel to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables. From Walden I went through the woods to Fair Haven, but by the way the rain came on again, and my fates compelled me to stand a half-hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head, and wearing my pocket handkerchief for an umbrella; and when at length I had made one cast over the pickerel-weed, the thunder gan romblen in the heven with that grisly steven that Chaucer tells of.¹ (The gods must be proud, with such forked flashes and such artillery to rout a poor unarmed fisherman.) I made haste to the nearest hut for a shelter. This stood a half a mile off the road, and so much the nearer to the pond. There dwelt a shiftless Irishman, John Field, and his wife, and many children, from the broad-faced boy that ran by his father's side to escape the rain to the wrinkled and sibyl-like, crone-like infant, not knowing whether to take the part of age or infancy, that sat upon its father's knee as in the palaces of nobles, and looked out from its home in the midst of wet and hunger inquisitively upon the stranger, with the privilege of infancy; the young creature not knowing but it might be the last of a line of kings instead of John Field's poor starveling brat, or, I should rather say, still

¹ [*The Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1218, 1219.]

knowing that it was the last of a noble line and the hope and cynosure of the world. An honest, hard-working, but shiftless man plainly was John Field; and his wife, she too was brave to cook so many succeeding dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove; with round, greasy face and bare breast, still thinking to improve her condition one day; with the never absent mop in hand, and yet no effects of it visible anywhere. The chickens, like members of the family, stalked about the room, too much humanized to roast well. They stood and looked in my eye or pecked at my shoe. He told me his story, how hard he worked bogging for a neighbor, at ten dollars an acre and the use of the land with manure for one year, and the little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father's side the while, not knowing, alas! how poor a bargain he had made. Living, John Field, alas! without arithmetic; failing to live.

"Do you ever fish?" said I. "Oh yes, I catch a mess when I am lying by; good perch I catch." "What's your bait?" "I catch shiners with fishworms, and bait the perch with them." "You'd better go now, John," said his wife, with glistening, hopeful face. But poor John Field disturbed but a couple of fins, while I was catching a fair string, and he said it was his luck; and when he changed seats luck changed seats too. Thinking to live by some derivative old-country mode in this primitive new country, *e. g.* to catch perch with shiners.¹

I find an instinct in me conducting to a mystic spiritual life, and also another to a primitive savage life.

¹ [Walden, pp. 225-227, 229, 231; Riv. 317-320, 322, 325, 326.]

Toward evening, as the world waxes darker, I am permitted to see the woodchuck stealing across my path, and tempted to seize and devour it. The wildest, most desolate scenes are strangely familiar to me.¹

Why not live a hard and emphatic life, not to be avoided, full of adventures and work, learn much in it, travel much, though it be only in these woods? I sometimes walk across a field with unexpected expansion and long-missed content, as if there were a field worthy of me. The usual daily boundaries of life are dispersed, and I see in what field I stand.

When on my way this afternoon, Shall I go down this long hill in the rain to fish in the pond? I ask myself. And I say to myself: Yes, roam far, grasp life and conquer it, learn much and live. Your fetters are knocked off; you are really free. Stay till late in the night; be unwise and daring. See many men far and near, in their fields and cottages before the sun sets, though as if many more were to be seen. And yet each *rencontre* shall be so satisfactory and simple that no other shall seem possible. Do not repose every night as villagers do. The noble life is continuous and unintermitting. At least, live with a longer radius. Men come home at night only from the next field or street, where their household echoes haunt, and their life pines and is sickly because it breathes its own breath. Their shadows morning and evening reach farther than their daily steps. But come home from far, from ventures and perils, from enterprise and discovery and crusading, with faith

¹ [Walden, p. 232; Riv. 327.]

and experience and character.¹ Do not rest much. Dismiss prudence, fear, conformity. Remember only what is promised. Make the day light you, and the night hold a candle, though you be falling from heaven to earth "from morn to dewy eve a summer's day."

For Vulcan's fall occupied a day, but our highest aspirations and performances fill but the interstices of time.

Are we not reminded in our better moments that we have been needlessly husbanding somewhat, perchance our little God-derived capital, or title to capital, guarding it by methods we know? But the most diffuse prodigality a better wisdom teaches, — that we *hold* nothing. We are not what we were. By usurers' craft, by Jewish methods, we strive to retain and increase the divinity in us, when infinitely the greater part of divinity is out of us.

Most men have forgotten that it was ever morning; but a few serene memories, healthy and wakeful natures, there are who assure us that the sun rose clear, heralded by the singing of birds, — this very day's sun, which rose before Memnon was ready to greet it.

In all the dissertations on language, men forget the language that is, that is really universal, the inexpressible meaning that is in all things and everywhere, with which the morning and evening teem. As if language were especially of the tongue of course. With a more

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 230, 231; Riv. 323-325.]

copious learning or understanding of what is published, the present *languages*, and all that they express, will be forgotten.

The rays which streamed through the crevices will be no more remembered when the shadow is wholly removed.

Left house on account of plastering, Wednesday, November 12th, at night; returned Saturday, December 6th.¹

Though the race is not so degenerated but a man might possibly live in a cave to-day and keep himself warm by furs, yet, as caves and wild beasts are not plenty enough to accommodate all at the present day, it were certainly better to accept the advantages which the invention and industry of mankind offer. In thickly settled civilized communities, boards and shingles, lime and brick, are cheaper and more easily come by than suitable caves, or the whole logs, or bark in sufficient quantity, or even well-tempered clay or flat stones.² A tolerable house for a rude and hardy race that lived much out of doors was once made here without any of these last materials. According to the testimony of the first settlers of Boston, an Indian wigwam was as comfortable in winter as an English house with all its wainscotting, and they had advanced so far as to regulate the effect of the wind by a mat suspended over the hole

¹ [See *Walden*, pp. 271, 272; Riv. 380, 381.]

² [*Walden*, p. 44; Riv. 65, 66.]

in the roof, which was moved by a string. Such a lodge was, in the first instance, constructed in a day or two and taken down and put up again in a few hours, and every family had one.¹

Thus, to try our civilization by a fair test, in the ruder states of society every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its ruder and simpler wants; but in modern civilized society, though the birds of the air have their nests, and woodchucks and foxes their holes, though each one is commonly the owner of his coat and hat though never so poor, yet not more than one man in a thousand owns a shelter, but the nine hundred and ninety-nine pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams and contributes to keep them poor as long as they live. But, answers one, by simply paying this annual tax the poorest man secures an abode which is a palace compared to the Indian's. An annual rent of from twenty to sixty or seventy dollars entitles him to the benefit of all the improvements of centuries, — Rumford fireplace, back plastering, Venetian blinds, copper pump, spring lock, etc., etc.² But while civilization has been improving our houses, she has not equally improved the men who should occupy them. She has created palaces, but it was not so easy to create noblemen and kings. The mason who finishes the cornice of the palace returns at night, perchance, to a hut no better than a

¹ [Walden, pp. 32, 33; Riv. 48, 49.]

² [Walden, pp. 33, 34; Riv. 50, 51.]

wigwam.¹ If she claims to have made a real advance in the welfare of man, she must show how she has produced better dwellings without making them more costly. And the cost of a thing, it will be remembered, is the amount of life it requires to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run. An average house costs perhaps from one thousand to fifteen hundred dollars, and to earn this sum will require from fifteen to twenty years of the day laborer's life, even if he is not incumbered with a family; so that he must spend more than half his life before a wigwam can be earned; and if we suppose he pays a rent instead, this is but a doubtful choice of evils. Would the savage have been wise to exchange his wigwam for a palace on these terms?²

When I consider my neighbors, the farmers of Concord, for instance, who are at least as well off as the other classes, what are they about? For the most part I find that they have been toiling ten, twenty, or thirty years to pay for their farms, and we may set down one half of that toil to the cost of their houses; and commonly they have not yet paid for them.³ This is the reason they are poor; and for similar reasons we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries.⁴

But most men do not know what a house is, and the mass are actually poor all their days because they think they must have such an one as their neighbor's. As if one were to wear any sort of coat the tailor might cut

¹ [Walden, pp. 37, 38; Riv. 56.]

³ [Walden, p. 35; Riv. 53.]

² [Walden, p. 34; Riv. 51, 52.]

⁴ [Walden, p. 36; Riv. 55.]

out for him, or, gradually leaving off palm-leaf hat and cap of woodchuck-skin, should complain of hard times because he could not buy him a crown!¹

It reflects no little dignity on Nature, the fact that the Romans once inhabited her, — that from this same unaltered hill, forsooth, the Roman once looked out upon the sea, as from a signal station. The vestiges of military roads, of houses and tessellated courts and baths, — Nature need not be ashamed of these relics of her children. The hero's cairn, — one doubts at length whether his relations or Nature herself raised the hill. The whole earth is but a hero's cairn. How often are the Romans flattered by the historian and antiquary! Their vessels penetrated into this frith and up that river of some remote isle. Their military monuments still remain on the hills and under the sod of the valleys. The oft-repeated Roman story is written in still legible characters in every quarter of the old world, and but to-day a new coin is dug up whose inscription repeats and confirms their fame. Some "Judæa Capta," with a woman mourning under a palm tree, with silent argument and demonstration puts at rest whole pages of history.²

The Earth

Which seems so barren once gave birth
To heroes, who o'ererran her plains,
Who plowed her seas and reaped her grains.

Some make the mythology of the Greeks to have

¹ [*Walden*, p. 39; Riv. 58.] ² [*Week*, p. 264; Riv. 328.]

been borrowed from that of the Hebrews, which however is not to be proved by analogies, — the story of Jupiter dethroning his father Saturn, for instance, from the conduct of Cham towards his father Noah, and the division of the world among the three brothers. But the Hebrew fable will not bear to be compared with the Grecian. The latter is infinitely more sublime and divine. The one is a history of mortals, the other a history of gods and heroes, therefore not so ancient. The one god of the Hebrews is not so much of a gentleman, not so gracious and divine, not so flexible and catholic, does not exert so intimate an influence on nature as many a one of the Greeks. He is not less human, though more absolute and unapproachable. The Grecian were youthful and living gods, but still of godlike or divine race, and had the virtues of gods. The Hebrew had not all of the divinity that is in man, no real love for man, but an inflexible justice. The attribute of the one god has been infinite power, not grace, not humanity, nor love even, — wholly masculine, with no sister Juno, no Apollo, no Venus in him. I might say that the one god was not yet apotheosized, not yet become the current material of poetry.¹

The wisdom of some of those Greek fables is remarkable. The god Apollo (Wisdom, Wit, Poetry) condemned to serve, keep the sheep of *King* Admetus. So is poetry allied to the state.

To Æacus, Minos, Rhadamanthus, judges in hell,

¹ [*Week*, p. 65; Riv. 81.]

only naked men came to be judged. As Alexander Ross comments, "In this world we must not look for Justice; when we are stript of all, then shall we have it. For here something will be found about us that shall corrupt the Judge." When the island of Ægina was depopulated by sickness at the instance of Æacus, Jupiter turned the ants into men, *i. e.* made men of the inhabitants who lived meanly like ants.¹

The hidden significance of these fables which has been detected, the ethics running parallel to the poetry and history, is not so remarkable as the readiness with which they may be made to express any truth. They are the skeletons of still older and more universal truths than any whose flesh and blood they are for the time made to wear. It is like striving to make the sun and the wind and the sea signify. What signifies it? ²

Piety, that carries its father on its shoulders.³

Music was of three kinds, — mournful, martial, and effeminate, — Lydian, Doric, and Phrygian. Its inventors Amphion, Thamyris, and Marsyas. Amphion was bred by shepherds. He caused the stones to follow him and built the walls of Thebes by his music. All orderly and harmonious or beautiful structures may be said to be raised to a slow music.

Harmony was begotten of Mars and Venus.

¹ [Week, p. 58; Riv. 72.] ² [Week, p. 61; Riv. 76.]

³ [Week, p. 136; Riv. 169.]

Antæus was the son of Neptune and the Earth. All physical bulk and strength is of the earth and mortal. When it loses this *point d'appui* it is weakness; it cannot soar. And so, *vice versa*, you can interpret this fable to the credit of the earth.

They all provoked or challenged the gods, — Amphion, Apollo and Diana, and was killed by them; Thamyris, the Muses, who conquered him in music, took away his eyesight and melodious voice, and broke his lyre. Marsyas took up the flute which Minerva threw away, challenged Apollo, was flayed alive by him, and his death mourned by Fauns, Satyrs, and Dryads, whose tears produced the river which bears his name.

The fable which is truly and naturally composed, so as to please the imagination of a child, harmonious though strange like a wild-flower, is to the wise man an apothegm and admits his wisest interpretation.

When we read that Bacchus made the Tyrrhenian mariners mad, so that they leaped into the sea, mistaking it for "a meadow full of flowers," and so became dolphins, we are not concerned about the historical truth of this, but rather a higher, poetical truth. We seem to hear the music of a thought, and care not if our intellect be not gratified.¹

The mythologies, those vestiges of ancient poems, the world's inheritance, still reflecting some of their original hues, like the fragments of clouds tinted by the

¹ [Week, p. 58; Riv. 72, 73.]

departed sun, the wreck of poems, a retrospect as [of] the loftiest fames, — what survives of oldest fame, — some fragment will still float into the latest summer day and ally this hour to the morning of creation. These are the materials and hints for a history of the rise and progress of the race. How from the condition of ants it arrived at the condition of men, how arts were invented gradually, — let a thousand surmises shed some light on this story. We will not be confined by historical, even geological, periods, which would allow us to doubt of a progress in human events. If we rise above this wisdom for the day, we shall expect that this morning of the race, in which they have been supplied with the simplest necessaries, — with corn and wine and honey and oil and fire and articulate speech and agricultural and other arts, — reared up by degrees from the condition of ants to men, will be succeeded by a day of equally progressive splendor; that, in the lapse of the divine periods, other divine agents and godlike men will assist to elevate the race as much above its present condition.

Aristæus “found out honey and oil.” “He obtained of Jupiter and Neptune, that the pestilential heat of the dog-days, wherein was great mortality, should be mitigated with wind.”¹

Dec. 12. Friday. The pond skimmed over on the night of this day, excepting a strip from the bar to the northwest shore. Flint’s Pond has been frozen for some time.²

¹ [*Week*, p. 57; *Riv.* 72.] ² [*Walden*, p. 275; *Riv.* 386.]

Dec. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Pond quite free from ice, not yet having been frozen quite over.

Dec. 23. Tuesday. The pond froze over last night entirely for the first time, yet so as not to be safe to walk upon.¹

I wish to say something to-night not of and concerning the Chinese and Sandwich-Islanders, but *to* and concerning you who hear me, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town; what it is, whether it is necessarily as bad as it is, whether it can’t be improved as well as not.²

It is generally admitted that some of you are poor, find it hard to get a living, have n’t always something in your pockets, have n’t paid for all the dinners you’ve actually eaten, or all your coats and shoes, some of which are already worn out. All this is very well known to all by hearsay and by experience. It is very evident what a mean and sneaking life you live, always in the hampers, always on the limits, trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt, a very ancient slough, called by the Latins *aes alienum*, another’s brass, — some of their coins being made of brass, — and still so many living and dying and buried to-day by another’s brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, with interest, to-morrow perhaps, and die to-day, insolvent; seeking to curry favor, to get custom, lying, flattering,

¹ [*Walden*, p. 275; *Riv.* 386.]

² [*Walden*, p. 4; *Riv.* 9.]

voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility or dilating into a world of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his [shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, etc.].¹

There is a civilization going on among brutes as well as men. Foxes are forest dogs. I hear one barking raggedly, wildly, demoniacally in the darkness to-night, seeking expression, laboring with some anxiety, striving to be a dog outright that he may carelessly run in the street, struggling for light. He is but a faint man, before pygmies; an imperfect, burrowing man. He has come up near to my window, attracted by the light, and barked a vulpine curse at me, then retreated.²

Reading suggested by Hallam's History of Literature.

1. "Abelard and Heloise."
2. Look at Luigi Pulci. His "Morgante Maggiore," published in 1481, "was to the poetical romances of chivalry what Don Quixote was to their brethren in prose."
3. Leonardo da Vinci. The most remarkable of his writings still in manuscript. For his universality of genius, "the first name of the fifteenth century."
4. Read Boiardo's "Orlando Innamorato," published between 1491 and 1500, for its influence on Ariosto and its intrinsic merits. Its sounding names repeated by Milton in "Paradise Regained."

¹ [Walden, p. 7; Riv. 12, 13.] ² [Walden, p. 301; Riv. 422.]

Landor's works are:—

A small volume of poems, 1793, out of print.

Poems of "Gebir," "Chrysaor," the "Phoceans," etc. The "Gebir" eulogized by Southey and Coleridge.

Wrote verses in Italian and Latin.

The dramas "Andrea of Hungary," "Giovanna of Naples," and "Fra Rupert."

"Pericles and Aspasia."

"Poems from the Arabic and Persian," 1800, pretending to be translations.

"A Satire upon Satirists, and Admonition to Detractors," printed 1836, not published.

Letters called "High and Low Life in Italy."

"Imaginary Conversations."

"Pentameron and Pentalogia."

"Examination of William Shakspeare before Sir Thomas Lucy, Knt., touching Deer-stealing."

Vide again Richard's sail in "Richard First and the Abbot."¹

Phocion's remarks in conclusion of "Eschines and Phocion."

"Demosthenes and Eubulides."

In Milton and Marvel, speaking of the Greek poets, he says, "There is a sort of refreshing odor flying off it perpetually; not enough to oppress or to satiate; nothing is beaten or bruised; nothing smells of the stalk; the flower itself is half-concealed by the Genius of it hovering round."

Pericles and Sophocles.

¹ [See *Journal*, vol. vii, Feb. 1, 1855.]

Marcus Tullius Cicero and his brother Quintus. In this a sentence on Sleep and Death.

Johnson and Tooke, for a criticism on words.

It is worth the while to have lived a primitive wilderness life at some time, to know what are, after all, the necessities of life and what methods society has taken to supply them. I have looked over the old day-books of the merchants with the same view, — to see what it was shopmen bought. They are the grossest groceries.¹ Salt is perhaps the most important article in such a list, and most commonly bought at the stores, of articles commonly thought to be necessities, — salt, sugar, molasses, cloth, etc., — by the farmer. You will see why stores or shops exist, not to furnish tea and coffee, but salt, etc. Here's the rub, then.

I see how I could supply myself with every other article which I need, without using the shops, and to obtain this might be the fit occasion for a visit to the seashore. Yet even salt cannot strictly speaking be called a necessary of human life, since many tribes do not use it.

"Have you seen my hound, sir? I want to know! — what! a lawyer's office? law books? — if you've seen anything of a hound about here. Why, what do you do here?" "I live here. No, I have n't." "Have n't you heard one in the woods anywhere?" "Oh, yes, I heard one this evening." "What do you do here?" "But he was some way off." "Which side did he seem to be?"

¹ [Walden, pp. 12, 13; Riv. 21.]

"Well, I should think he [was] the other side of the pond." "This is a large dog; makes a large track. He's been out hunting from Lexington for a week. How long have you lived here?" "Oh, about a year." "Somebody said there was a man up here had a camp in the woods somewhere, and he'd got him." "Well, I don't know of anybody. There's Britton's camp over on the other road. It may be there." "Is n't there anybody in these woods?" "Yes, they are chopping right up here behind me." "How far is it?" "Only a few steps. Hark a moment. There, don't you hear the sound of their axes?"¹

Therien, the woodchopper, was here yesterday, and while I was cutting wood, some chickadees hopped near pecking the bark and chips and the potato-skins I had thrown out. "What do you call them," he asked. I told him.

"What do *you* call them," asked I. "*Mezezeence* [?]," I think he said. "When I eat my dinner in the woods," said he, "sitting very still, having kindled a fire to warm my coffee, they come and light on my arm and peck at the potato in my fingers. I like to have the little fellers about me."² Just then one flew up from the snow and perched on the wood I was holding in my arms, and pecked it, and looked me familiarly in the face. *Chicadee-dee-dee-dee-dee*, while others were whistling phebe, — *phe-bee*, — in the woods behind the house.³

¹ [Walden, p. 306; Riv. 429.] ² [Walden, p. 162; Riv. 228.]

³ [Walden, p. 304; Riv. 426.]

March 26, 1846. The change from foul weather to fair, from dark, sluggish hours to serene, elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. The change from foulness to serenity is instantaneous. Suddenly an influx of light, though it was late, filled my room. I looked out and saw that the pond was already calm and full of hope as on a summer evening, though the ice was dissolved but yesterday. There seemed to be some intelligence in the pond which responded to the unseen serenity in a distant horizon. I heard a robin in the distance, — the first I had heard this spring, — repeating the assurance. The green pitch [pine] suddenly looked brighter and more erect, as if now entirely washed and cleansed by the rain. I knew it would not rain any more. A serene summer-evening sky seemed darkly reflected in the pond, though the clear sky was nowhere visible overhead. It was no longer the end of a season, but the beginning. The pines and shrub oaks, which had before drooped and cowered the winter through with myself, now recovered their several characters and in the landscape revived the expression of an immortal beauty. Trees seemed all at once to be fitly grouped, to sustain new relations to men and to one another. There was somewhat cosmical in the arrangement of nature. O the evening robin, at the close of a New England day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! Where does the minstrel really roost? We perceive it is not the bird of the ornithologist that is heard, — the *Turdus migratorius*.

The signs of fair weather are seen in the bosom of ponds before they are recognized in the heavens. It

is easy to tell by looking at any twig of the forest whether its winter is past or not.¹

We forget how the sun looks on our fields, as on the forests and the prairies, as they reflect or absorb his rays. It matters not whether we stand in Italy or on the prairies of the West, in the eye of the sun the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden, and yields to the wave of an irresistible civilization.

This broad field, which I have looked on so long, looks not to me as the farmer, looks away from me to the sun, and attends to the harmony of nature. These beans have results which are not harvested in the autumn of the year. They do not mind, if I harvest them, who waters and makes them grow? Our grain-fields make part of a beautiful picture which the sun beholds in his daily course, and it matters little comparatively whether they fill the barns of the husbandman. The true husbandman will cease from anxiety and labor with every day, and relinquish all claim to the produce of his fields.²

The avaricious man would fain plant by himself.

A flock of geese has just got in late, now in the dark flying low over the pond. They came on, indulging at last like weary travellers in complaint and consolation, or like some creaking evening mail late lumbering in with regular anserine clangor. I stood at my door and could hear their wings when they suddenly spied my light and, ceasing their noise, wheeled to the east and apparently settled in the pond.³

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 344, 345; Riv. 481, 482.]

² [*Walden*, pp. 183, 184; Riv. 258, 259.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 482.]

March 27. This morning I saw the geese from the door through the mist sailing about in the middle of the pond, but when I went to the shore they rose and circled round like ducks over my head, so that I counted them, — twenty-nine. I after saw thirteen ducks.¹

¹ [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 482, 483.]