

VIII

1845-1847

(ÆT. 27-30)

[THE small and much mutilated journal which begins here appears to belong to the Walden period (1845-47), but the entries are undated.]

THE HERO¹

What doth he ask ?
Some worthy task,
Never to run
Till that be done,
That never done
Under the sun.
Here to begin
All things to win
By his endeavor
Forever and ever.
Happy and well
On this ground to dwell,
This soil subdued,
Plant, and renew.
By might and main
Health and strength gain,
So to give nerve

¹ [Twenty-six lines of this, somewhat revised, appear under the title of "Pilgrims" in *Excursions, and Poems*, p. 413.]

To his slenderness;
 Yet some mighty pain
 He would sustain,
 So to preserve
 His tenderness.
 Not be deceived,
 Of suff'ring bereaved,
 Not lose his life
 By living too well,
 Nor escape strife
 In his lonely cell,
 And so find out heaven
 By not knowing hell.
 Strength like the rock
 To withstand any shock,
 Yet some Aaron's rod,
 Some smiting by God,
 Occasion to gain
 To shed human tears
 And to entertain
 Still demonic fears.
 Not once for all, forever, blest,
 Still to be cheered out of the west;
 Not from his heart to banish all sighs;
 Still be encouraged by the sunrise;
 Forever to love and to love and to love,
 Within him, around him, beneath him, above.
 To love is to know, is to feel, is to be;
 At once 't is his birth and his destiny.
 Having sold all,
 Something would get,

Furnish his stall
 With better yet, —
 For earthly pleasures
 Celestial pains,
 Heavenly losses
 For earthly gains.
 Still to begin — unheard-of sin
 A fallen angel — a risen man
 Never returns to where he began.
 Some childlike labor
 Here to perform,
 Some baby-house
 To keep out the storm,
 And make the sun laugh
 While he doth warm,
 And the moon cry
 To think of her youth,
 The months gone by,
 And wintering truth.

How long to morning?
 Can any tell?
 How long since the warning
 On our ears fell?
 The bridegroom cometh
 Know we not well?
 Are we not ready,
 Our packet made,
 Our hearts steady,
 Last words said?
 Must we still eat

The bread we have spurned?
 Must we rekindle
 The faggots we've burned?
 Must we go out
 By the poor man's gate?
 Die by degrees,
 Not by new fate?
 Is there no road
 This way, my friend?
 Is there no road
 Without any end?
 Have you not seen
 In ancient times
 Pilgrims go by here
 Toward other climes,
 With shining faces
 Youthful and strong
 Mounting this hill
 With speech and with song?
 Oh, my good sir,
 I know not the ways;
 Little my knowledge,
 Though many my days.
 When I have slumbered,
 I have heard sounds
 As travellers passing
 Over my grounds.
 'T was a sweet music
 Wafted them by;
 I could not tell
 If far off or nigh.

Unless I dreamed it,
 This was of yore,
 But I never told it
 To mortal before;
 Never remembered
 But in my dreams
 What to me waking
 A miracle seems.
 If you will give of your pulse or your grain,
 We will rekindle those flames again.
 Here will we tarry, still without doubt,
 Till a miracle putteth that fire out.

At midnight's hour I raised my head.
 The owls were seeking for their bread;
 The foxes barked, impatient still
 At their wan [?] fate they bear so ill.
 I thought me of eternities delayed
 And of commands but half obeyed.
 The night wind rustled through the glade,
 As if a force of men there staid;
 The word was whispered through the ranks,
 And every hero seized his lance.
 The word was whispered through the ranks,
 Advance!

To live to a good old age such as the ancients reached,
 serene and contented, dignifying the life of man, lead-
 ing a simple, epic country life in these days of confusion
 and turmoil, — that is what Wordsworth has done.

Retaining the tastes and the innocence of his youth. There is more wonderful talent, but nothing so cheering and world-famous as this.

The life of man would seem to be going all to wrack and pieces, and no instance of permanence and the ancient natural health, notwithstanding Burns, and Coleridge, and Carlyle. It will not do for men to die young; the greatest genius does not die young. Whom the gods love most do indeed die young, but not till their life is matured, and their years are like those of the oak, for they are the products half of nature and half of God. What should nature do without old men, not children but men?

The life of men, not to become a mockery and a jest, should last a respectable term of years. We cannot spare the age of those old Greek Philosophers. They live long who do not live for a near end, who still forever look to the immeasurable future for their manhood.

All dramas have but one scene. There is but one stage for the peasant and for the actor, and both on the farm and in the theatre the curtain rises to reveal the same majestic scenery. The globe of earth is poised in space for his stage under the foundations of the theatre, and the cope of heaven, out of reach of the scene-shifter, overarches it. It is always to be remembered by the critic that all actions are to be regarded at last as performed from a distance upon some rood of earth and amid the operations of nature.

Rabelais, too, inhabited the soil of France in sunshine and shade in those years; and his life was no "farce" after all.

I seek the present time,
 No other clime,
 Life in to-day, —
 Not to sail another way, —
 To Paris or to Rome,
 Or farther still from home.
 That man, whoe'er he is,
 Lives but a moral death
 Whose life is not coeval
 With his breath.
 My feet forever stand
 On Concord fields,
 And I must live the life
 Which their soil yields.
 What are deeds done
 Away from home?
 What the best essay
 On the Ruins of Rome?
 The love of the new,
 The unfathomed blue,
 The wind in the wood,
 All future good,
 The sunlit tree,
 The small chickadee,
 The dusty highways,
 What Scripture says,
 This pleasant weather,
 And all else together,
 The river's meander,
 All things, in short,
 Forbid me to wander

In deed or in thought,
 In cold or in drouth,
 Not seek the sunny South,
 But make my whole tour
 In the sunny present hour.

For here if thou fail,
 Where can'st thou prevail?
 If you love not
 Your own land most,
 You'll find nothing lovely
 On a distant coast.
 If you love not
 The latest sunset,
 What is there in pictures
 Or old gems set?
 If no man should travel
 Till he had the means,
 There'd be little travelling
 For kings or for queens.
 The means, what are they?
 They are the wherewithal
 Great expenses to pay,
 Life got, and some to spare,
 Great works on hand,
 And freedom from care,
 Plenty of time well spent
 To use,
 Clothes paid for and no rent
 In your shoes,
 Something to eat

And something to burn,
 And above all no need to return.
 Then they who come back,
 Say, have they not failed,
 Wherever they've ridden,
 Or steamed it, or sailed?

All your grass hay'd,
 All your debts paid,
 All your wills made;
 Then you might as well have stay'd,
 For are you not dead,
 Only not buried?

The way unto "to-day,"
 The railroad to "here,"
 They never'll grade that way
 Nor shorten it, I fear.
 There are plenty of depots
 All the world o'er,
 But not a single station
 At a man's door.
 If he would get near
 To the secret of things,
 He'll not have to hear
 When the engine bell rings.

Exaggeration! was ever any virtue attributed to a man without exaggeration? was ever any vice, without infinite exaggeration? Do we not exaggerate ourselves to ourselves, or do we often recognize ourselves for the

actual men we are? The lightning is an exaggeration of light. We live by exaggeration. Exaggerated history is poetry, and is truth referred to a new standard. To a small man every greater one is an exaggeration. No truth was ever expressed but with this sort of emphasis, so that for the time there was no other truth. The value of what is really valuable can never be exaggerated. You must speak loud to those who are hard of hearing; so you acquire a habit of speaking loud to those who are not. In order to appreciate any, even the humblest, man, you must not only understand, but you must first love him; and there never was such an exaggerator as love. Who are we? Are we not all of us great men? And yet what [are] we actually? Nothing, certainly, to speak of. By an immense exaggeration we appreciate our Greek poetry and philosophy, Egyptian ruins, our Shakespeares and Miltons, our liberty and Christianity. We give importance to this hour over all other hours. We do not live by justice, but [by grace.]¹

Love never perjures itself, nor is it mistaken.

He is not the great writer, who is afraid to let the world know that he ever committed an impropriety. Does it not know that all men are mortal?

Carlyle told R. W. E. that he first discovered that he was not a jackass on reading "Tristram Shandy" and Rousseau's "Confessions," especially the last. His first essay is an article in *Fraser's Magazine* on two boys quarrelling.

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 352, 353; *Misc.*, Riv. 127, 128.]

Youth wants something to look up to, to look forward to; as the little boy who inquired of me the other day, "How long do those old-agers live?" and expressed the intention of compassing two hundred summers at least. The old man who cobbles shoes without glasses at a hundred, and cuts a handsome swath at a hundred and five, is indispensable to give dignity and respectability to our life.

From all points of the compass, from the earth beneath and the heavens above, have come these inspirations and been entered duly in the order of their arrival in the journal. Thereafter, when the time arrived, they were winnowed into lectures, and again, in due time, from lectures into essays. And at last they stand, like the cubes of Pythagoras, firmly on either basis; like statues on their pedestals, but the statues rarely take hold of hands. There is only such connection and series as is attainable in the galleries. And this affects their immediate practical and popular influence.

Carlyle, we should say, more conspicuously than any other, though with little enough expressed or even conscious sympathy, represents the Reformer class. In him the universal plaint is most settled and serious. Until the thousand named and nameless grievances are righted, there will be no repose for him in the lap of Nature or the seclusion of science and literature. And all the more for not being the visible acknowledged leader of any class.¹

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 344; *Misc.*, Riv. 116, 117.]

All places, all positions — all things in short — are a medium happy or unhappy. Every realm has its centre, and the nearer to that the better while you are in it. Even health is only the happiest of all mediums. There may be excess, or there may be deficiency; in either case there is disease. A man must only be *virtuous* enough.

I had one neighbor within half a mile for a short time when I first went to the woods, Hugh Quoil, an Irishman who had been a soldier at Waterloo, Colonel Quoil, as he was called, — I believe that he had killed a colonel and ridden off his horse, — who lived from hand — sometimes to mouth, — though it was commonly a glass of rum that the hand carried. He and his wife awaited their fate together in an old ruin in Walden woods. What life he got — or what means of death — he got by ditching.

I never was much acquainted with Hugh Quoil, though sometimes I met him in the path, and now do believe that a solid shank-bone, and skull which no longer aches, lie somewhere, and can still be produced, which once with garment of flesh and broadcloth were called and hired to do work as Hugh Quoil. He was a man of manners and gentlemanlike, as one who had seen the world, and was capable of more civil speech than you could well attend to. At a distance he had seemingly a ruddy face as of biting January, but nearer at hand it was bright carmine. It would have burnt your finger to touch his cheek. He wore a straight-bodied snuff-colored coat which had long been familiar with him, and carried a turf-knife in his hand — in-

stead of a sword. He had fought on the English side before, but he fought on the Napoleon side now. Napoleon went to St. Helena; Hugh Quoil came to Walden Pond. I heard that he used to tell travellers who inquired about myself that — and Thoreau owned the *farm* together, but Thoreau lived on the *place* and carried it on.¹

He was thirstier than I, and drank more, probably, but not out of the pond. That was never the lower for him. Perhaps I ate more than he. The last time I met him, the only time I spoke with him, was at the foot of the hill on the highway as I was crossing to the spring one summer afternoon, the pond water being too warm for me. I was crossing the road with a pail in my hand, when Quoil came down the hill, wearing his snuff-colored coat, as if it were winter, and shaking with delirium tremens. I hailed him and told him that my errand was to get water at a spring close by, only at the foot of the hill over the fence. He answered, with stuttering and parched lips, bloodshot eye, and staggering gesture, he'd like to see it. "Follow me there, then." But I had got my pail full and back before he scaled the fence. And he, drawing his coat about him, to warm him, or to cool him, answered in delirium-tremens, hydrophobia dialect, which is not easy to be written here, he'd heard of it, but had never seen it; and so shivered his way along to town, — to liquor and to oblivion.

On Sundays, brother Irishmen and others, who had gone far astray from steady habits and the village, crossed my bean-field with empty jugs toward Quoil's.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 288, 289; Riv. 405.]

But what for? Did they sell rum there? I asked. "Respectable people they," "Know no harm of them," "Never heard that they drank too much," was the answer of all wayfarers. They went by sober, stealthy, silent, skulking (no harm to get elm bark Sundays); returned loquacious, sociable, having long intended to call on you.

At length one afternoon Hugh Quoil, feeling better, perchance, with snuff-colored coat, as usual, paced solitary and soldier-like, thinking [of] Waterloo, along the woodland road to the foot of the hill by the spring; and there the Fates met him, and threw him down in his snuff-colored coat on the gravel, and got ready to cut his thread; but not till travellers passed, who would raise him up, get him perpendicular, then settle, settle quick; but legs, what are they? "Lay me down," says Hugh hoarsely. "House locked up — key — in pocket — wife in town." And the Fates cut, and there he lay by the wayside, five feet ten, and looking taller than in life.

He has gone away; his house here "all tore to pieces." What kind of fighting or ditching work he finds to do now, how it fares with him, whether his thirst is quenched, whether there is still some semblance of that carmine cheek, struggles still with some liquid demon — perchance on more equal terms — till he swallow him completely, I cannot by any means learn. What his salutation is now, what his January-morning face, what he thinks of Waterloo, what start he has gained or lost, what work still for the ditcher and forester and soldier now, there is no evidence. He was here, the likes of him,

for a season, standing light in his shoes like a faded gentleman, with gesture almost learned in drawing-rooms; wore clothes, hat, shoes, cut ditches, felled wood, did farm work for various people, kindled fires, worked enough, ate enough, drank too much. He was one of those unnamed, countless sects of philosophers who founded no school.

Now that he was gone, and his wife was gone too, — for she could not support the solitude, — before it was too late and the house was torn down, I went over to make a call. Now that Irishmen with jugs avoided the old house, I visited it, — an "unlucky castle now," said they. There lay his old clothes curled up by habit, as if it were himself, upon his raised plank bed. His pipe lay broken on the hearth; and scattered about were soiled cards — king of diamonds, hearts, spades — on the floor. One black chicken, which they could not catch, still went to roost in the next apartment, stepping silent over the floor, frightened by the sound of its own wings, black as night and as silent, too, not even croaking; awaiting Reynard, its god actually dead. There was the dim outline of a garden which had been planted, but had never received its first hoeing, now overrun with weeds, with burs and cockles, which stick to your clothes; as if in the spring he had contemplated a harvest of corn and beans before that strange trembling of the limbs overtook him. Skin of woodchuck fresh-stretched, never to be cured, met once in bean-field by the Waterloo man with uplifted hoe; no cap, no mittens wanted. Pipe on hearth no more to be lighted, best buried with him.¹

¹ [Walden, p. 289; Riv. 405, 406.]

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¹ [Walden, p. 289; Riv. 405, 406.]

No thirst for glory, only for strong drink.

Only the convalescent are conscious of the health of nature.

In case of an embargo there will be found to be old clothes enough in everybody's garret to last till the millennium. We are fond of news, novelties, new things. The bank-bill that is torn in two will pass if you save the pieces, if you have only got the essential piece with the signatures. Lowell and Manchester and Fall River think you will let go their broadcloth currency when it is torn; but hold on, have an eye to the signature about the back of it, and endorse the man's name from whom you received it, and they will be the first to fail and find nothing at all in their garrets. Every day our garments become more assimilated to the man that wears them, more near and dear to us, and not finally to be laid aside but with such delay and medical appliance and solemnity as our other mortal coil.¹ We know, after all, but few men, a great many coats and breeches. Dress a scarecrow with your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest address the scarecrow and salute it?²

King James loved his old shoes best. Who does not? Indeed these new clothes are often won and worn only after a most painful birth. At first movable prisons, oyster-shells which the tide only raises, opens, and shuts, washing in what scanty nutriment may be afloat. How many men walk over the limits, carrying their

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 24, 26; Riv. 36, 40.]

² [*Walden*, p. 24; Riv. 37.]

limits with them? In the stocks they stand, not without gaze of multitudes, only without rotten eggs, in torturing boots, the last wedge but one driven. Why should we be startled at death? Life is constant putting off of the mortal coil, — coat, cuticle, flesh and bones, all old clothes.

Not till the prisoner has got some rents in his prison walls, possibility of egress without lock and key some day, — result of steel watch-spring rubbing on iron grate, or whatever friction and wear and tear, — will he rest contented in his prison.

Clothes brought in sewing, a kind of work you may call endless.¹

A man who has at length found out something important to do will not have to get a new suit to do it in. For him the old will do, lying dusty in the garret for an indefinite period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet. Bare feet are the oldest of shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to legislature and soirées, — they must have new coats, coats to turn as often as the man turns in them. Who ever saw his old shoes, his old coat, actually worn out, returned to their original elements, so that it was not [a] deed [of] charity to bestow them on some poorer boy, and by him to be bestowed on some poorer still, or shall we say on some richer who can do with less?²

Over eastward of my bean-field lived Cato Ingraham, slave, born slave, perhaps, of Duncan Ingraham, Esquire, gentleman, of Concord village, who built him a house

¹ [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38.]

² [*Walden*, p. 25; Riv. 38, 39.]

and gave him permission to live in Walden Woods, for which no doubt he was thanked; and then, on the northeast corner, Zilpha, colored woman of fame; and down the road, on the right hand, Brister, colored man, on Brister's Hill, where grow still those little wild apples he tended, now large trees, but still wild and ciderish to my taste; and farther still you come to Breed's location, and again on the left, by well and roadside, Nutting lived. Farther up the road, at the pond's end, Wyman, the potter, who furnished his townsmen with earthenware, — the squatter.¹

Now only a dent in the earth marks the site of most of these human dwellings; sometimes the well-dent where a spring oozed, now dry and tearless grass, or covered deep, — not to be discovered till late days by accident, — with a flat stone under the sod. These dents, like deserted fox-burrows, old holes, where once was the stir and bustle of human life overhead, and man's destiny, "fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute," were all by turns discussed.

Still grows the vivacious lilac for a generation after the last vestige else is gone, unfolding still its early sweet-scented blossoms in the spring, to be plucked only by the musing traveller; planted, tended, weeded [?], watered by children's hands in front-yard plot, — now by wall-side in retired pasture, or giving place to a new rising forest. The last of that stirp, sole survivor of that family. Little did the dark children think that that weak slip with its two eyes which they watered would root itself so, and outlive them, and house in the rear that shaded

¹ [Walden, pp. 283, 284, 287, 288; Riv. 397-400, 404.]

it, and grown man's garden and field, and tell their story to the retired wanderer a half-century after they were no more, — blossoming as fair, smelling as sweet, as in that first spring. Its still cheerful, tender, civil lilac colors.¹

The woodland road, though once more dark and shut in by the forest, resounded with the laugh and gossip of inhabitants, and was notched and dotted here and there with their little dwellings. Though now but a humble rapid passage to neighboring villages or for the woodman's team, it once delayed the traveller longer, and was a lesser village in itself.²

You still hear from time to time the whinnering of the raccoon, still living as of old in hollow trees, washing its food before it eats it. The red fox barks at night. The loon comes in the fall to sail and bathe in the pond, making the woods ring with its wild laughter in the early morning, at rumor of whose arrival all Concord sportsmen are on the alert, in gigs, on foot, two by two, three [by three], with patent rifles, patches, conical balls, spy-glass or open hole over the barrel. They seem already to hear the loon laugh; come rustling through the woods like October leaves, these on this side, those on that, for the poor loon cannot be omnipresent; if he dive here, must come up somewhere. The October wind rises, rustling the leaves, ruffling the pond water, so that no loon can be seen rippling the surface. Our sportsmen scour, sweep the pond with spy-glass in vain, making the woods ring with rude [?] charges of powder, for the

¹ [Walden, pp. 289-291; Riv. 406-408.]

² [Walden, pp. 282, 283; Riv. 396, 397.]

loon went off in that morning rain with one loud, long, hearty laugh, and our sportsmen must beat a retreat to town and stable and daily routine, shop work, unfinished jobs again.¹

Or in the gray dawn the sleeper hears the long ducking gun explode over toward Goose Pond, and, hastening to the door, sees the remnant of a flock, black duck or teal, go whistling by with outstretched neck, with broken ranks, but in ranger order. And the silent hunter emerges into the carriage road with ruffled feathers at his belt, from the dark pond-side where he has lain in his bower since the stars went out.

And for a week you hear the circling clamor, clangor, of some solitary goose through the fog, seeking its mate, peopling the woods with a larger life than they can hold.²

For hours in fall days you shall watch the ducks cunningly tack and veer and hold the middle of the pond, far from the sportsman on the shore, — tricks they have learned and practiced in far Canada lakes or in Louisiana bayous.³

The waves rise and dash, taking sides with all water-fowl.⁴

Then in dark winter mornings, in short winter afternoons, the pack of hounds, threading all woods with hounding cry and yelp, unable to resist the instinct of

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 258, 259; Riv. 363, 364.]

² [*Walden*, p. 345; Riv. 483.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 262; Riv. 368.]

⁴ [*Walden*, p. 259; Riv. 364.]

the chase, and note of hunting-horn at intervals, showing that man too is in the rear. And the woods ring again, and yet no fox bursts forth on to the open level of the pond, and no following pack after their Actæon.¹

But this small village, germ of something more, why did it fail while Concord grows apace? No natural advantages, no water privilege, only the deep Walden Pond and cool Brister's Spring, — privileges to drink long, healthy, pure draughts, alas, all unimproved by those men but to dilute their glass. Might not the basket-making, stable-broom, mat-making, corn-parching, potters' business have thrived here, making the wilderness to blossom as the rose? Now, all too late for commerce, this waste, depopulated district has its railroad too. And transmitted the names of unborn Bristers, Catos, Hildas,² Zilphas to a remote and grateful posterity.

Again Nature will try, with me for a first settler, and my house raised last spring to be the oldest in the settlement.

The sterile soil would have been proof against any lowland degeneracy.³

Farmers far and near call it the paradise of beans.

And here, too, on winter days, while yet is cold January, and snow and ice lie thick, comes the prudent, foreseeing landlord or housekeeper (anticipating thirst) from the village, to get ice to cool his summer drink, —

¹ [*Walden*, p. 305; Riv. 428.]

² ["Hilda" was originally written where "Nutting" appears on p. 420.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 292; Riv. 408, 409.]

a grateful beverage if he should live, if time should endure so long. How few so wise, so industrious, to lay up treasures which neither rust nor melt, "to cool their summer drink" one day!

And cut off the solid pond, the element and air of fishes, held fast with chain and stake like corded wood, all through favoring, willing, kind, permitting winter air to wintery cellar, to underlie the summer there. And cut and saw the cream of the pond, unroof the house of fishes.¹

And in early mornings come men with fishing-reels and slender lunch, men of real faith, and let down their fine lines and live minnows through the snowy field to hook the pickerel and perch.²

With buried well-stones, and strawberries, raspberries, thimble-berries growing on the sunny sward there; some pitchy pine or gnarled oak in the chimney-nook, or the sweet-scented black birch where the doorstone was.³

Breed's, — history must not yet tell the tragedies enacted there. Let time intervene to assuage and lend an azure atmospheric tint to them.⁴

There is something pathetic in the sedentary life of men who have travelled. They must naturally die when they leave the road.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 323, 324; Riv. 452, 453.]

² [*Walden*, p. 313; Riv. 438.]

³ [*Walden*, pp. 289, 290; Riv. 406, 407.]

⁴ [*Walden*, p. 285; Riv. 400.]

What seems so fair and poetic in antiquity — almost fabulous — is realized, too, in Concord life. As poets and historians brought their work to the Grecian games, and genius wrestled there as well as strength of body, so have we seen works of kindred genius read at our Concord games, by their author, in their own Concord amphitheatre. It is virtually repeated by all ages and nations.¹

Moles nesting in your cellar and nibbling every third potato.² A whole rabbit-warren only separated from you by the flooring. To be saluted when you stir in the dawn by the hasty departure of Monsieur, — thump, thump, thump, striking his head against the floor-timbers.³ Squirrels and field mice that hold to a community of property in your stock of chestnuts.

The blue jays suffered few chestnuts to reach the ground, resorting to your single tree in flocks in the early morning, and picking them out of the burs at a great advantage.

The crop of blackberries small; berries not yet grown. Ground-nuts not dug.

One wonders how so much, after all, was expressed in the old way, so much here depends upon the emphasis, tone, pronunciation, style, and spirit of the reading. No writer uses so profusely all the aids to intelligibility which the printer's art affords. You wonder

¹ [See *Week*, p. 102; Riv. 127.]

² [*Walden*, p. 280; Riv. 392, 393.]

³ [*Walden*, p. 309; Riv. 434.]

how others had contrived to write so many pages without emphatic, italicized words, they are so expressive, so natural and indispensable, here. As if none had ever used the demonstrative pronoun demonstratively. In another's sentences the thought, though immortal, is, as it were, embalmed and does not *strike* you, but here it is so freshly living, not purified by the ordeal of death, that it stirs in the very extremities, the smallest particles and pronouns are all alive with it. — You must not say it, but *it*. It is not simple it, your it or mine, but *it*. His books are solid, workmanlike, like all that England does. They tell of endless labor done, well done, and all the rubbish swept away, like this bright cutlery which glitters in the windows, while the coke and ashes, turnings, filings, borings, dust lie far away at Birmingham, unheard of. The words did not come at the command of grammar but of a tyrannous, inexorable meaning; not like the standing soldiers, by vote of Parliament, but any able-bodied countryman pressed into the service. It is no China war, but a revolution. This style is worth attending to as one of the most important features of the man that we at this distance know.¹

What are the men of New England about? I have travelled some in New England, especially in Concord, and I found that no enterprise was on foot which it would not disgrace a man to take part in. They seemed to be employed everywhere in shops and offices and fields. They seemed, like the Brahmins of the East, to

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 325-327; *Misc.*, Riv. 93-95 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

be doing penance in a thousand curious, unheard-of ways, their endurance surpassing anything I had ever seen or heard of, — Simeon Stylites, Brahmins looking in the face of the sun, standing on one leg, dwelling at the roots of trees, nothing to it; any of the twelve labors of Hercules to be matched, — the Nemean lion, Lernean hydra, Cenean stag, Erymanthian boar, Augean stables, Stymphalian birds, Cretan bull, Diomedes' mares, Amazonian girdle, monster Geryon, Hesperian apples, three-headed Cerberus, nothing at all in comparison, being only twelve and having an end. For I could never see that these men ever slew or captured any of their monsters, or finished any of their labors. They have no "friend Iolaus to burn, with a hot iron, the root" of the hydra's head; for as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.¹

Men labor under a mistake; they are laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. Northern Slavery, or the slavery which includes the Southern, Eastern, Western, and all others.²

It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a Northern one; but worst of all when you are yourself the slave-driver. Look at the lonely teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night; is he a son of the morning, with somewhat of divinity in him, fearless because immortal, going to receive his birthright, greeting the sun as his fellow, bounding with youthful, gigantic strength over his mother earth? See

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 4, 5; Riv. 9, 10.]

² [*Walden*, pp. 6, 8; Riv. 11, 14.]

how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely, indefinitely all the day he fears, not being immortal, not divine, the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, fame which he has earned by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with private opinion. What I think of myself, that determines my fate.¹

I see young men, my equals, who have inherited from their spiritual father a soul, — broad, fertile, uncultivated, — from their earthly father a farm, — with cattle and barns and farming tools, the implements of the picklock and the counterfeiter. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, or perhaps cradled in a manger, that they might have seen with clear eye what was the field they were called to labor in. The young man has got to live a man's life, then, in this world, pushing all these things before him, and get on as well as he can. How many a poor immortal soul I have met, well-nigh crushed and smothered, creeping slowly down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five by forty feet and one hundred acres of land, — tillage, pasture, wood-lot! This dull, opaque garment of the flesh is load enough for the strongest spirit, but with such an earthly garment superadded the spiritual life is soon plowed into the soil for compost. It's a fool's life, as they will all find when they get to the end of it. The man that goes on accumulating property when the bare necessities of life are cared for is a fool and knows better.²

There is a stronger desire to be respectable to one's neighbors than to one's self.

¹ [*Walden*, p. 8; Riv. 14, 15.] ² [*Walden*, pp. 5, 6; Riv. 10, 11.]

However, such distinctions as poet, philosopher, literary man, etc., do not much assist our final estimate. We do not lay much stress on them; "a man's a man for a' that." Any writer who interests us much is all and more than these.

It is not simple dictionary it.¹

Talent at making books solid, workmanlike, graceful, which may be read.²

Some idyllic chapter or chapters are needed.

In the French Revolution are Mirabeau, king of men; Danton, Titan of the Revolution; Camille Desmoulins, poetic editor; Roland, heroic woman; Dumouriez, first efficient general: on the other side, Marat, friend of the people; Robespierre; Tinville, infernal judge; St. Just; etc., etc.

Nutting and Le Gros by the wall-side. The Stratten house and barn where the orchard covered all the slope of Brister's Hill, — now killed out by the pines.

Brister Freeman, a handy negro, slave once of Squire Cummings (?), and Fenda, his hospitable, pleasant wife, large, round, black, who told fortunes, blacker than all the children of night, such a dusky orb as had never risen on Concord before.

Zilpha's little house where "she was spinning linen," making the Walden woods ring with her shrill singing, — a loud, shrill, remarkable voice, — when once she

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 327; *Misc.*, Riv. 95 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

² [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 325; *Misc.*, Riv. 93 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

was away to town, set on fire by English soldiers on parole, in the last war, and cat and dog and hens all burned up. Boiling her witch's dinner, and heard muttering to herself over the gurgling pot by silent traveller, "Ye are all bones, bones."

And Cato, the Guinea negro, — his house and little patch among the walnuts, — who let the trees grow up till he should be old, and Richardson got them.

Where Breed's house stood tradition says a tavern once stood, the well the same, and all a swamp between the woods and town, and road made on logs.¹

Bread I made pretty well for awhile, while I remembered the rules; for I studied this out methodically, going clear back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, and coming gradually down through that lucky accidental souring of the dough which taught men the leavening process, and all the various fermentations thereafter, till you get to "good, sweet, wholesome bread," the staff of life. I went on very well, mixing rye and flour and Indian and potato with success, till one morning I had forgotten the rules, and thereafter scalded the yeast, — killed it out, — and so, after the lapse of a month, was glad after all to learn that such palatable staff of life could be made out of the dead and scalt creature and risings that lay flat.

I have hardly met with the housewife who has gone so far with this mystery. For all the farmers' wives pause at yeast. Given this and they can make bread.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 283-285, 287, 288; Riv. 397-400, 404.]

It is the axiom of the argument. What it is, where it came from, in what era bestowed on man, is wrapped in mystery. It is preserved religiously, like the vestal fire, and its virtue is not yet run out. Some precious bottleful, first brought over in the *Mayflower*, did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading like Atlantic billows over the land, — the soul of bread, the spiritus, occupying its cellular tissue.¹

The way to compare men is to compare their respective ideals. The actual man is too complex to deal with.

Carlyle is an earnest, honest, heroic worker as literary man and sympathizing brother of his race.

Idealize a man, and your notion takes distinctness at once.

Carlyle's talent is perhaps quite equal to his genius.²

Striving [?] to live in reality, — not a general critic, philosopher, or poet.

Wordsworth, with very feeble talent, has not so great and admirable as unquestionable and persevering genius.

Heroism, heroism is his word, — his thing.

He would realize a brave and adequate human life, and die hopefully at last.

Emerson again is a critic, poet, philosopher, with talent not so conspicuous, not so adequate to his task; but his field is still higher, his task more arduous. Lives

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 68, 69; Riv. 99, 100.]

² [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 348; *Misc.*, Riv. 121 ("Thomas Carlyle and his Works").]

a far more intense life; seeks to realize a divine life; his affections and intellect equally developed. Has advanced farther, and a new heaven opens to him. Love and Friendship, Religion, Poetry, the Holy are familiar to him. The life of an Artist; more variegated, more observing, finer perception; not so robust, elastic; practical enough in his own field; faithful, a judge of men. There is no such general critic of men and things, no such trustworthy and faithful man. More of the divine realized in him than in any. A poetic critic, reserving the unqualified nouns for the gods.

Alcott is a geometer, a visionary, the Laplace of ethics, more intellect, less of the affections, sight beyond talents, a substratum of practical skill and knowledge unquestionable, but overlaid and concealed by a faith in the unseen and impracticable. Seeks to realize an entire life; a catholic observer; habitually takes in the farthest star and nebula into his scheme. Will be the last man to be disappointed as the ages revolve. His attitude is one of greater faith and expectation than that of any man I know; with little to show; with undue share, for a philosopher, of the weaknesses of humanity. The most hospitable intellect, embracing high and low. For children how much that means, for the insane and vagabond, for the poet and scholar!¹

Emerson has special talents unequalled. The divine in man has had no more easy, methodically distinct expression. His personal influence upon young per-

¹ [*Walden*, p. 296; Riv. 415, 416.]

sons greater than any man's. In his world every man would be a poet, Love would reign, Beauty would take place, Man and Nature would harmonize.

When Alcott's day comes, laws unsuspected by most will take effect,¹ the system will crystallize according to them, all seals and falsehood will slough off, everything will be in its place.

Feb. 22 [no year]. Jean Lapin sat at my door to-day, three paces from me, at first trembling with fear, yet unwilling to move; a poor, wee thing, lean and bony, with ragged ears and sharp nose, scant tail and slender paws. It looked as if nature no longer contained the breed of nobler bloods, the earth stood on its last legs. Is nature, too, unsound at last? I took two steps, and lo, away he scud with elastic spring over the snowy crust into the bushes, a free creature of the forest, still wild and fleet; and such then was his nature, and his motion asserted its vigor and dignity. Its large eye looked at first young and diseased, almost dropsical, unhealthy. But it bound[ed] free, the venison, straightening its body and its limbs into graceful length, and soon put the forest between me and itself.²

Emerson does not consider things in respect to their essential utility, but an important partial and relative one, as works of art perhaps. His probes pass one side of their centre of gravity. His exaggeration is of a part, not of the whole.

¹ [*Walden*, p. 296; Riv. 415.] ² [*Walden*, p. 310; Riv. 434, 435.]

How many an afternoon has been stolen from more profitable, if not more attractive, industry, — afternoons when a good run of custom might have been expected on the main street, such as tempt the ladies out a-shopping, — spent, I say, by me away in the meadows, in the well-nigh hopeless attempt to set the river on fire or be set on fire by it, with such tinder as I had, with such flint as I was. Trying at least to make it flow with milk and honey, as I had heard of, or liquid gold, and drown myself without getting wet, — a laudable enterprise, though I have not much to show for it.

So many autumn days spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear it and carry it express. I well-nigh sunk all my capital in it, and lost my own breath into the bargain, by running in the face of it. Depend upon it, if it had concerned either of the parties, it would have appeared in the yeoman's gazette, the *Freeman*, with other earliest intelligence.

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and did my duty faithfully, though I never received one cent for it.

Surveyor, if not of higher ways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, keeping many open ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to the importance of the same, all not only without charge, but even at considerable risk and inconvenience. Many a mower would have forborne to complain had he been aware of the invisible public good that was in jeopardy.

So I went on, I may say without boasting, I trust, faithfully minding my business without a partner, till

it became more and more evident that my townsmen would not, after all, admit me into the list of town officers, nor make the place a sinecure with moderate allowance.

I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which pastures in common, and every one knows that these cattle give you a good deal of trouble in the way of leaping fences. I have counted and registered all the eggs I could find at least, and have had an eye to all nooks and corners of the farm, though I did n't always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field to-day; that was none of my business. I only knew him for one of the men, and trusted that he was as well employed as I was. I had to make my daily entries in the general farm book, and my duties may sometimes have made me a little stubborn and unyielding.

Many a day spent on the hilltops waiting for the sky to fall, that I might catch something, though I never caught much, only a little, manna-wise, that would dissolve again in the sun.

My accounts, indeed, which I can swear to have been faithfully kept, I have never got audited, still less accepted, still less paid and settled. However, I have n't set my heart upon *that*.

I have watered the red huckleberry and the sand cherry and the hoopwood [?] tree, and the cornel and spoonhunt and yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons. The white grape.

To find the bottom of Walden Pond, and what inlet and outlet it might have.

I found at length that, as they were not likely to offer me any office in the court-house, any curacy or living anywhere else, I must shift for myself, I must furnish myself with the necessaries of life.

Now watching from the observatory of the Cliffs or Annursnack to telegraph any new arrival, to see if Wachusett, Watatic, or Monadnock had got any nearer. Climbing trees for the same purpose. I have been reporter for many years to one of the journals of no very wide circulation, and, as is too common, got only my pains for my labor. Literary contracts are little binding.¹

The unlimited anxiety, strain, and care of some persons is one very incurable form of disease. Simple arithmetic might have corrected it; for the life of every man has, after all, an epic integrity, and Nature adapts herself to our weaknesses and deficiencies as well as talents.

No doubt it is indispensable that we should do *our* work between sun and sun, but only a wise man will know what that is. And yet how much work will be left undone, put off to the next day, and yet the system goes on!

We presume commonly to take care of ourselves, and trust as little as possible. Vigilant more or less all our days, we say our prayers at night and commit ourselves to uncertainties, as if in our very days and most vigilant moments the great part were not a necessary trust still.² How serenity, anxiety, confidence, fear paint the heavens for us.

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 19-21 ; Riv. 30-33.]

² [*Walden*, p. 12 ; Riv. 19, 20.]

All the laws of nature will bend and adapt themselves to the least motion of man.

All change is a miracle to contemplate, but it is a miracle which is taking place unobserved every instant; when all is ready it takes place, and only a miracle could stay it.

We [are] compelled to live so thoroughly and sincerely, reflecting on our steps, reverencing our life, that we never make allowance for the possible changes.

We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we devote of care elsewhere.¹

¹ [*Walden*, p. 12 ; Riv. 20.]