

1884

Sept 20. Go out to Roxbury today. Walk up to Hiram's in the rain. Smith, and Emma there. In the afternoon go out to Homer Lynches.

21 [crossed out: 2] A bright day; find a swarm of bees in an old pine stub. I pull off the outer shell of the stub with my hands and rout a deer mouse whose nest is beneath it, made almost entirely of the feathers of the ruffed grouse. Then a few inches of dry decayed wood which rattles down like red ashes; then sound wood again, through which we cut our way with the ax for 3 or 4 inches when the cavity is reached that contains the bees; we cut

through the nest of a Colony of large black ants also; they have honeycombed the solid wood, and probably sucked the bees honey combs, too, as there is only an ounce or two of honey in a large lot of comb. The bees had unwittingly taken up their abode surrounded by the chambers of these large wolfish ants, and the ants had robbed them.

September 23 [crossed out: 4] Go to Edens today, Homer takes us in the afternoon. Weather mild. Eden not well. Pass nearly a week at Edens, wander about his farm with a curious sad interest; all his fields seem near to me; thoughts of father and mother and of the old house Eden has left, perpetually in mind. How interested, how deeply concerned they would be in all his doing and be-longings!

They were here once, several years ago, and stayed all night with Mr. Odell. I should think even that would be some comfort to Eden - the fact that his father and mother had once slept in the house he now owns and looked out over the fields that are now his. Probably it is; I should like to know if it ever comes to his mind. A good farm, and very and pleasing about the house, especially the little spring brook that murmurs by and has its hidden way beneath his front door yard. Its voice comes through my window in the morning when I wake up. All day Julian courts and woos the little brook and detains it in his little ponds. How a boy likes a brook! how a man, too. He builds tiny wharves and launches tiny ships upon his ponds

26. A day of great beauty; all the forenoon upon the hills bee-hunting; find a swarm in a large maple on the side of the mountain - on their track three days before I follow them home. The day not merely bright but radiant, full of glory. I look down upon Edens house and farm from the highest fields at the head of the valley. How many dairy farms with their groups of painted farm buildings I can see - all comfortable homes. 'Tis a region of overshot barns. Every farmer's ambition seems to be to have a bigger barn than his neighbor; some barns 100 feet long. Many Canada violets in bloom, ~~[crossed out: some of the]~~ all very fragrant, also a blue violet, and a strawberry blossom.

In the afternoon go a fishing ~~[crossed out: Ede]~~ Ed and Julian and I, down

along the winding, loitering river for bass and suckers. Take a fine lot, with a few trout that did not know the law was up on trout. What a day! Still, restful, the very air luminous. I have to pause and regard the day as one presses a rose to his nose; all the maple trees in the valleys burning.

27 Cloudy and windy. Over the mountain with Eden fox hunting. No fox, but wide views of the country. On our return pause a while in his sap-bush and probably both think what we do not speak of the sap bush where we made sugar as boys.

28 A warm day. I have filled the air with bees; they hover about the house and finally gather in swarms in the wood house where a little honey stands.

29 Eden takes me over home to-day. In the afternoon I go up on the old "Clump" and with long long thoughts look the landscape over. The Smith homestead looks especially sad to me - Mrs. S, to whom I bade farewell last spring, is there no more; in her grave since the last day of June.

30 To Olive to-day; pass the night with father North; the old man tries to be brisk yet, but age weighs him down. Still saws and splits his own wood.

Oct 16. Oct. warm and fine so far, slight showers, little or no frost. Wells and springs drying up.

- Muskrats building their houses for some days.

20 - Must write an essay on the value of the Sense of Reality to the literary man. Indeed, only those in whom this sense is strong, whether poets or prose writers, ever achieve any lasting work. A lively and intimate sense of things and to convey this sense in words so that the reader shares it with you, is at the bottom of all literary success. Think of this sense in Dante! To be real - to have real impressions and emotions and not feigned ones! It is closely allied to being sincere.

21st Soft, warm, brooding day. Air full of smoke; a smell of burning peat. Some maples a flaming orange. Grasshoppers still snapping here and there. Domestic skies black and thundery.

Oct 26. Occupied these days in correcting and revising proof of my essay on Carlyle for the new book; also in reading Froude's last volumes. Can't get the essay in shape to suit me. October a fine month with but slight rains.

Nov 3rd A day of great calmness and beauty after a full-orbed moonlight night. A day as Carlyle said like silk, or silk-plush, soft, caressing. The spaces all fleecy with vapor and smoke. A day I hope that leads in the Indian summer.



How Science does break in upon the sort of private and domestic view of the universe that our theologians have held. It fairly turns us out into the cold and to face the eternities and infinities of time and space. We are no longer cosily housed in pretty little anthropomorphic views of things. The universe is no longer a theatre constructed for the drama of mans life and salvation. Man becomes the mere ephemera of an hour, like insects of summer. In an hour of the summer of the earth's geologic history he appears, and in an hour he is gone; a few hours more all is gone and the earth itself is frozen into the everlasting death and night of the winter of the solar system. Science says in just so many words that "there is no reason to deny the final cessation of the sun's activity, and the consequent death of the system." Carlyle said that pretty much all that science had done so far was to enable us

to get rid of Moses" - the Mosaic account of creation. Yet men of great egoism, of strong anthropomorphic tendencies, like Carlyle, and Walt Whitman, must still see the universe as kind of theatre made to bring man out, and have him strut his little hour. "Oh what is man that thou does magnify him, or the son of man that thou are mindful of him!"

[In margin, in pencil: "incorrectly quoted"]

4 Election Day. Rain, rain, To the defeat of Blaine! Vote for Cleveland. Ah, me! a pretty bitter pill. Never before voted for a Democratic candidate for president, but shall do so again if I live, and the Democrats take the stand on a tariff for revenue only. High production has had its day. Let our manufacturies sink of swim now; the people should no longer be taxed to buoy them up.

Nov 6.

- If I can look with complacency upon the eternity past, when I was not here, when I existed only potentially, I can look with complacency upon the eternity to come when I shall not be here, when I shall exist only in the memory of nature. The past concerns me just as much as the future. An immortality that begins is not immortality. How curious and unscientific the notion that the body is a tenement and the soul the tenant, that moves in and out, that sustains only the relation of temporary occupant to it, and may and does exist after the tenement is in ruins. I am compelled to believe that the soul and the body are one, that they are not separable; that the soul is just as dependent upon the body as the flame of the lamp

upon the wick and the oil. It is a flame, more subtle than any fire and requires fuel to feed it. When the lamp goes out, or is extinguished where is the flame? No where. A process has been stopped, a physical or chemical change has been arrested. Neither heat, nor light, nor electricity, nor force can exist apart from material conditions. The soul is not material; neither is the force exerted by a magnet material, but both are absolutely dependent upon material conditions, are in fact the result of material conditions. The principle of Life, that which makes the body and makes the soul too, and which is, as it were, latent in all nature - that is the final and [crossed out: inter?] profound mystery. The correlation of forces explains much.

I look upon all the religions of the world as devices of man to cheer and sustain himself in his journey through time. His [crossed out: notions] hopes of immortality light up the appalling darkness and coldness of the grave; with this lure he nerves himself to face it.

Have we ever thought that we are probably under the same illusion with regard to "future life that we are under with reference to so much in this world - the illusion of distance. Would or could a future life seem any more an end and fulfillment in itself than this life does? Should we not [crossed out: need] still see a more desirable and perfect life in the distance and postpone present joys till a greater morrow?

Nov 9. Sunday - Bright, sharp November days - gilt edged truly, the morning and the evening being remarkably brilliant. Leaves all off the maples, but clinging yet to the oaks, which are a deep russet, and to the apple trees, which are quite green. The time of the husking of the corn. In every cornfield there is a rattling of shucks, and piles of golden ears, or waiting wagons being filled with them.

The days bring but few thoughts to me; my thoughts have not begun to fly yet; probably there are not many to fly. I keep an eye on the horizon there ~~[crossed out: but]~~ and seize my pen on the first indication, but the game is insignificant.

Finished and sent off yesterday the proof of the chapter on Carlyle

in my new book (Fresh Fields) yesterday. Chapter too long and in many ways unsatisfactory.

16. A week of genuine Indian summer just passed, glorious days all of them, a veil of soft vapor and smoke over the faces of each; the last two without a cloud, and without wind, the great sails all but motionless on the river; the nights full of stars.

All the week in P. examining the banks - a steady grind between the upper and nether millstones of bank ledgers. I am not a good bank examiner, and never shall be; I am very slow to see the point in such matters; it is all painful to me and therefore it is not my proper work

18 The halcyon days continue. The halcyon broods upon the land and upon the water. All is peace. To Saugerties today. The mountain dim behind a thick veil of blue haze.

19. The halcyon fled; a blast from the north rattled the windows all night. The veil torn away; the mountains stand out clear and sharp.

20. Snow and cold. The halcyon has laid her egg, and it is white and freezing. Behold what was getting ready there behind these Indian Summer days. A young winter, three inches of snow and hail.



21 I am quite persuaded that my family is Welsh and pure Celtic. Much that Renan, in his recollections of his youth, says of himself comes home to me. Especially his confessions of the family weaknesses. He speaks of his absolute inability to be resentful, or to appear so as an inherited trait. It is a trait of my family and of me. I cannot harbor resentment, and I often think it is one of my cardinal weaknesses. I cannot get mad and keep so. If a person called me a [crossed out: lyer] liar, I probably should not feel half the resentment I ought to feel; and it is the same with the rest of the family. No slight or neglect, or offence, indignity even [crossed out: ?] touched father, [crossed out: he was]

the same with my brothers; we do not know when we have been insulted; and when we feel hurt, it is almost impossible for us openly to resent it. Is it a Celtic trait? Not an Irish one certainly! Renan says if his ancestors engaged in any kind of trade or commerce, they were sure to get cheated. It is so with us. We can never ask enough for [crossed out: f] what we have to sell. The fact that it is ours seems to depreciate it in our eyes; it ought not to bring quite as much as other people's. We have no cheek at all. He says also that his people lacked decision of character. That is a weakness of me and of my family. We are slow to reach a decision and are easily turned.

- I wonder if Renan is not too literary, too entirely under the sway of the literary and artistic spirit. One seems to feel that the underlying master impulse of all should not be literary, but moral or scientific, in other words, should be entirely serious. Renan writes eloquently and suggestively, but after all one feels that the chief thing about him is his literary and artistic faculty - that he is not a great person, a great character - no deep conviction. One would hardly expect to be helped by him or be furthered in any direction. Probably all the characteristically French critics like Renan and St Beuve

seem to lack something to us who have fed on [~~crossed out: the~~] English literature. Is it moral fibre and moral purpose they lack? They lust after fine phrases; they revel in the disinterested; their end and aim is the artistic.

The greatest writer serves life, serves truth and art; art follows him and gathers up and makes much of what he drops. Much as one blames Victor Hugo, he is yet entirely serious and the art impulse in him waits upon something deeper. Rousseau is more serious than Renan, though far less wise, far less Catholic. The way to serve an art is to serve nature. Romanticism [~~crossed out: nourish not~~] may be thy mistress, but not thy wife. Thou

canst not beget good healthy children upon her; she will bring thee no conquerers, but only sickly wide-eyed dreamers. The ideal may be pursued only through the real; in that direction and not in the other the path of the creator lies. The great writer sets out to portray great passions, great characters, great events; love of the real and mastery over it lies at the bottom of all his successes. The French school, now so extensively imitated by our own writers, sets out to display the commonplace artistically - hard and lean, service of mere art, no depth of any kind; not one trait of greatness. Arnold has purposes ulterior to art, ulterior to literature,

he serves a higher master than either, and his work is all the more welcome to literature on that account. How serious was Millet; love of the real thing and not mere love of the picture of the thing, is at the bottom of his success; and so of all the great ones, whether poets, novelists, artists, or historians.

22. Indian summer again in the sky but winter upon the ground. Sold some honey to Dick Atkins and Julian and I put it on a sled this morning and ran across the fields over the crust with it to his house. It was a pretty little idyl, a sled loaded with clover honey and ~~[crossed out:we]~~ us running with it through the soft sunshine, over the hard snow.

- Some English reviewer says that the two British writers of the present day whose works are pre-eminent for the quality of style, are Morley and Newman. Of Newman this is true, but of Morley it is far less true than of Arnold. Arnold has unmistakably the subtle something we call style, and Morley has it not, or has it in far less measure, and far less pervasively. The difference between the two writers [~~crossed out: to use a homely illustration,~~ is just the difference between a shot gun and a rifle.] is very marked. Morley is versatile and discursive, he covers a good deal of ground, and he often does rare execution, but he never plucks the heart of the matter out in just the way Arnold does.

His aim is not so nice; he has not the simplicity and directness of Arnold. His vocabulary is more copious; more matters are touched upon; but he scatters too much for a writer of the first order. His essay on Emerson, for instance has not the proportion, simplicity, ~~and telling~~ the rifle quality that Arnolds has. His thoughts are not so well disciplined and subordinated; the emphasis is not so neatly and surely put through each one of Arnolds essays there runs one main idea, which is indeed like a bullet. And the way, too, he hits the mark with a single phrase and hits it in the center is far beyond the power of Morley. Many of his phrases are so central and so illuminating that they



become permanent acquisitions to criticism. They classify and distribute a vast deal of loose matter. Indeed Arnold has the eye of a great classifier, the type of the thing around which the parts are arranged [~~crossed out: are~~] is seen unfailingly.

One of the most remarkable things about Arnold is just this central and sure-hitting [~~crossed out: power~~] quality. There is no waste of power in him; every bit tells and tells upon the heart of the matter. He is classical, not merely from culture, but from Nature; his joints are supple and firmly knit; his style is strong in the back and loins; in other words strong, as proportion and simplicity are always strong. There is, in my opinion, no other current British writer, who gives

one anything like, the quality of style Arnold does. Ruskin is a brilliant and suggestive writer, but after all as Carlyle said he is a weak man; he is flighty and capricious. Whatever one may think of Arnold [~~crossed out: one~~] he cannot say he is a weak man; he is well knit together and has himself well in hand. He gives one no sense of weakness and disproportion as Ruskin does; and he is not a "trifler in Cadenas" like Landor. Carlyles fiery and consuming mantle has not fallen upon any English writer, but Arnold has scorn and contempt of existing things, with much more tact and urbanity. He is a Carlyle begotten by the great schoolmaster [~~crossed out: to Arnold~~] of Rugby, and cast in the

classic mould, shorn and bleached a good deal, but still full of savage and fearless criticism.

22 A lover of books in a book-store plays around and half nibbles at the books as a wary trout coquettes with the bait. He is perchance not in the mood or temper to bite. He does not quite want the book or books. Some day he comes in again and suddenly strikes the bait. The lure he had kicked at before he eagerly seizes now.

[written in margin: see "Egotistical Chapter." - p.274]

23. One important thing in writing is to divest yourself of any false, or accidental mood, or view or feeling, and get down to your real self and speak as directly and sincerely as you do about your daily business and affairs and with as little affectation. One may write from the outside of his mind, as it were, write and write, learnedly and eloquently, and make no impression; but when he speaks from real insight and conviction of his own, men are always glad to hear him whether they agree with him or not. Get down to your real self - your better real self and let that speak. Ones real self is always vital and gives the

impression of reality. So much writing and speaking is like machine work. The Sunday sermon and the leading editorial - ~~[crossed out: are]~~ generally a piece of machine work, as if you turned a crank and the discourse came out. It is not the mans real mind, his real experience. He does not know how to get at this; all is artificial, factitious; his garden is upon the house top instead of upon the ground; his ideas have no root, no succulency, no flavor. He speaks from art, from culture, from facility, and not from inspiration. How rare are real poems! poems that spring from real feeling, a real throb of emotion, and not from ~~[crossed out: a]~~ the mere ~~[crossed out: itching of]~~ itch of literary vanity.

The great mass of the poetry of any age is purely artificial, a tour-de-force, the sheer result of effort. It dates from the outside; it is in the air, from the friction of much reading, or a superficial knack at rhyme. No wonder the public gets suspicious of poetry and refuses to buy it. It is for the most part counterfeit coin. ~~[crossed out: The poetic forms]~~ It is a kind of masquerading. The poetic forms are masks behind which the writers hide their real ~~[crossed out: want]~~ poverty of thought and of feeling. In prose a man has no such factitious aids; here if he has nothing to say he is quickly found out; he must stand or fall for what he is; he has not the cloak of

Milton or Spenser or Tennyson or Virgil to hide in.

We are so overlaid with culture and literature and conventionalities that it is difficult to get at our real selves. There is as it were an artificial deposit over all our minds, we cannot get at the virgin mould but we must get at it or no work or poem, or picture is of any value. This, for one reason, is why I value Whitman: we touch the native soil here; there is the smell of the mould in the spring woods, something fresh and audacious. Whitman is sincere. He does not speak out of the air, but out of his very loins, his very physiology.

In my own case, in my efforts outside my chosen field of natural history, I often find I have not spoken my real mind, or from any proper basis of insight and conviction, but from a fancy or a love of novelty, or affectation of originality. The strange things, the novel things are seldom valuable or true. Look for truth under your feet - A young writer makes many discoveries, but how stale and worthless they seem him by and by.



Nov 26. To New Haven to-day via Armenia and Dover Plains and NY. Wife and J with me.

27. Went to hear Dr. Newman Smyth to-day. Not a man of genius and eloquence, but of very solid and clear talent

Prof Beers and Prof Lounsbury call upon me; both rather fine fellows. Beers a slight man with a rather big voice, a slight incongruity here. Lounsbury a larger man with a smaller, higher keyed voice, but more in keeping with his look and quality than that of Beers.

29 New book "Fresh Fields" out today.

Dec 3. An all day tramp with Prof Eaton off to Lake Saltinstall. Eaton a large hearty fellow with rather a fine tone

to him; on his knees examining the mosses, sometimes flat on his belly; his eye glasses falling from his nose just as he gets ready to look. These mosses are a world by themselves, a lilliputian world, yet very ancient - the second step probably in the vegetable life of the globe. Eaton knows them all, and brought home many specimens. He said Torrey and Drummond were one day walking in the woods by West Point when Terry said "I have never seen so and so"; "Never seen so and so" said D with scorn, and stooped and plucked the moss [crossed out: free] at their very feet. Glorious days, a steady Indian summer for a week.

4th To [crossed out: leave] Phila. to see Walt Whitman. Found Walt and Dr. Bucke at Greens Hotel Walt looks well as usual, and seems to be so. The grain of him yet seems sound and good; though perhaps a little more inclined to a purpleish tint at times, than I had noticed before. Dr Bucke a large man with a broad long head, of choleric temperament mainly; voice rather hard and harsh, brow with a nervous pucker, whole look rather harsh and intense. Pass the night all of us at Mrs Smiths, a rich quaker family in Germantown; a fine hospitable family; a long drive next morning

in the Park; then to Phila. dine together and part at 4 p.m. Walt says his opinions about our poets fluctuate a good deal. He used to place Emerson first, then Bryant and Longfellow, etc. He puts them [crossed out: th] in this order, Bryant, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow. He has much to say in praise of Bryant - tho did not like his poem on death. But praised the "Winds" and such poems. Walt is writing a long Preface for his poems and has many ups and down about it. One day thinks it a good idea, and the next thinks it too much like a concession that his poems should be taken as they are without any argument

or explanation, like the works of nature. He seemed anxious to hear what I had to say about it. I told him it was a secondary matter; that the poems would have to stand or fall on their own merits; as time went on his preface would be dropped if it had nothing important in it; and if it was necessary to the poems, it would be retained. I said write it, if you feel you have something valuable to say, and let it take its chances; it can neither make nor break. He said as he grew older, he thought less of Burns and more of Tennyson.

7th A very heavy rain last night, with thunder. Warm today, bees out of the hive and working on honey.

9 Gray, quiet, October like days. The thunder scared the frost and the cold away.

- Emerson is full of abstract poetry; not so much the concrete in him, as something abstracted from the concrete. Is there such a thing as abstract religion, abstract friendship? Thoreau cherished a kind of abstract friendship.

- Swinburne's poetry nearly always seems to me like a parody. That disgusting lust for lilt and ripple and alliteration

- it is almost unclean.

- G. at Marion goes teetering about as frivolous as a bird; fails to give one any sense of solidity and seriousness, he lacks under jaw.

- Over and over I say that to put the great personal qualities in poetry, not formulated or didactically stated, but in breath of view, charity, attitude, etc, is the great triumph. So put they are a possession to the race forever. They grow perennially like the grass and the trees. The poems of Whitman, Emerson, Bryant, Longfellow, alone of our poets, breathe great personal qualities.

- A great many of our religious notions and beliefs are like the institution of Sunday - they reach only half way around the Earth.

- "There is a point of perfection in Art" says La Bruyere, "as there is of goodness and ripeness in nature; he who feels and loves it has perfect taste; he who feels it not who loves something beneath or beyond it has faulty taste."

- Science is a capital or fund perpetually re-invested; it accumulates, rolls up, is carried forward by every new man. Every man of science has all the science before him to go upon; to set himself up in business with. What an enormous fund Darwin inherited and re-invested! Not so in literature: to every poet



to every artist it is still the first day of creation. Literature is not so much a fund to be reinvested as it is a crop to be ever new grown. You must sow the seed and reap the harvest yourself

- In poetry science must not be presented as fact to the mind, but as feeling, or symbol to the imagination. In such a poet as W.W. it is flooded and made fluid by his enormous egoism. His human and emotional quality is so strong and penetrating, possesses such power of solubility - that science is melted by it and transmuted into feeling.

- In writing of a man, a poet, or any object, the success is to give a clear, consistent and truthful image or picture of him or of it from your own point of view. I have just read a severe criticism of Carlyle in the Spectator; it is not my view. I do not accept it at all, but the writer has given a good account of himself, and has made a forcible and consistent statement from his point of view. As soon as a writer has a real point of view of his own, definite and tangible ground of his own to stand upon, he commands our respect and attention. Many writers are mere raiders, like flying bands of cavalry, with no proper base, no

proper lines of attack or defense. You never know where to find them. Nearly all newspaper writing is of this kind. The leading editorial carries no conviction because as a rule it is written from no personal and sincere conviction, its point of view is the fluctuation of politics. The born writer always has a point of view, and the more commanding his view, the greater his weight and influence.

- Men and nations at war with each other and seeking to slay each other, pray to the same God for succor. How strange! they are antipodes, their feet are opposed, yet both find that they look up to the sky. One heaven is above all

Dec 20. The fourth anniversary of mothers death. Cold clear day 10 below zero this morning, and below all day; ice forming on the river. How the trains "siss" as if the rails were red hot. The whistle of the engine has a peculiar splayed and cracked effect. The sound seems to come through a sieve. The repeated discharges of a gun across the river - the sound hard, dissonant, suppressed, cracked - no reverberation, no echo, no free explosion, more like the slapping together of hemlock boards.

Homer and Mary Jane came on Wednesday the 17th and went home yesterday. Very glad to see

them. Jane a soft, pulpy kind of woman, very tender hearted and indulgent to her children, gives them a piece of pie on going to bed if they cry for it. How the old days come back as we sit by the fireside at night talking over the past! and thinking more than we say of those whom we can see no more. Ah, father and mother, how much of life was buried with you; what a void in the world your absence makes! Jane said "old folks" looked very good to her. That is my feeling too; I turn and look fondly after every old woman I see on the street.

Dec

25 - Christmas; cold; river nearly covered with floating ice; good sleighing; in my hut writing with indifferent success upon Arnold - find it very hard to encompass him, and state him, define him, without praise or blame. The critic should confine himself to description and elucidation. He shall praise and blame only when his praise and blame throws light on his subject; when ~~it~~ they throw light only on his personal likes and dislikes, ~~it~~ they ~~is~~ are not permissible.

26. Cold windy night; only 10 above this morning, and the loose snow drifting; such a morning as in my youth often kept us home from school. "It is not fit for the boys or for John to go over that hill to-day"

Mother would say, "they will perish with the cold." The naked woods would roar like the sea; the snow like white smoke and flame would sweep across the hills, rising up toward the clouds in long slender tongues and spires. If we went to school we would reach it with ears nipped by the frost, heels frozen, boots frozen stiff, dinner in basket frozen and our faces red and stinging Our path of yesterday would be drifted full, and the creek buried from sight, except here and there where it would manage to keep an eye open. How the old stove would devour the wood and glow, while the corners of the room would be frigid. No playing ball or any other game such days; how it all comes back to me, the school house, the boys and girls, the teacher, and there at home, father and mother in the

prime of their days! Now it is all gone, long gone, and father and mother are gone and we ourselves are getting old. A generation two removes now goes to the old red school house, and its numbers are few, hardly one fifth of that which went to school in my time.

Ice stationery on the river this morning - last winter very nearly repeated.

30. Mild weather again; snow and ice going fast.

- I have had to accomplish in myself the work of several generations. None of my ancestors were men and women of culture, knew nothing of books etc. I have had to begin at the stump, and to rise from rude, crude things. I have felt the disadvantages



I have labored under, as well as the advantages. The advantages are that things were not hackneyed with me, curiosity was not blunted, my faculties were fresh and eager.

- a kind of virgin soil that gives whatever charm and sweetness and spontaneity my books possess, also seriousness and religiousness. The disadvantages are an ineptitude [~~ness~~] for scholarly things [~~learning, for scholarship~~] a want of [~~freeness and~~] steadiness and clearness of the tone of letters, the need of a great deal of experimenting, a certain thickness and indistinctness of accent. The farmer and laborer in me, a great many generations old, is a little embarrassed in the company of scholars; has to make a great effort to remember their learned manners and terms etc.

The unliterary basis is the best to start from, it is the virgin soil of the wilderness, but it is a good ways [crossed out: fro] to the college, the library, and much work must be done. I am near to nature and can write upon these themes with ease and success; this is my proper field as I well know. I am at home amid these things, but bookish themes, how I flounder about amid them, and have to work and delve long to get down to the real truth about them in my mind. In writing upon Emerson, or Arnold, or Carlyle I have to begin as it were and clear the soil, build a log hut and so work up to the point of view that is not provincial, but more ore less metropolitan. My best gift as a writer is

my gift for truth; I have a thoroughly honest mind and know the truth when I see it. I have a keen sensibility for it. My humility, or modesty, or want of self assertion, call it what you please, is also a help in bringing me to the truth. I am not apt to stand in my own light; am not apt to mistake my own wants and whims for decrees of the Eternal. At least, if I make the mistake to day, I will see my error tomorrow. I have no firmness of outline; in this respect I am a soft shelled egg, but this also helps me to come close to nature and take her form.

- Why is there any more chance for the sun to exhaust itself [crossed out: if heat] than for the attraction of gravitation to exhaust itself. All bodies exert this power of attraction in all directions, but is it a waste? When it meets with no object, there is no attraction; no force is exerted. So when the rays of the sun meet with no planet there is no heat developed. Heat is of the earth, earthy, as sound is of the ear, auricular. There is no sound where there is no ear. May be there is no heat on the sun, but the cause of heat. I suggest this in the face of the spectroscope.

Probably the last explanation of physics is something non-physical or transcendental.

Dec 30. Noon - warm and spring like, bees out of the hive. I have never known such a breach as this in winter ever to be entirely closed up again. Winter will not recover from this defeat, and get back the ground lost to-day. He is demoralized. We shall see. Thermometer 50 on the north side of the house. In the afternoon while walking in the edge of some woods, I heard a low grating, or grunting, or squeaking sound, as if some croaking frog was just budding. I followed it up and after much waiting fixed upon the spot when the sound came from beneath the dry leaves. Scraping away the leaves, there was a small wood frog in a little spot just sunk below the surface of the ground. I took him out; he was a

little stiff and sluggish, but the frost was all out of him, and there was the bud of a croak in his throat. I replaced him in his hibernaculum and covered him up, and shall call upon him again. His body was about 1 1/2 inches long. He was very dark colored, like the ground and rotted leaves.

- When a poet adopts the old forms he must use them worthily. He is like a rope dancer, when he slips off the rope we laugh or are displeased.

- A great poet or artist never seeks to embody an abstraction, tho of course something can be abstracted from his work. But it is a feeling before it is an idea, and the poem is a concrete

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and vital thing from the start.

Jan 1st Cloudy with spurts of rain and snow from the north west. Snow all gone, ice broken up on the river. Temperature like November, but a cold wave coming and due to-night. Sat in my study and wrote upon Arnold.

3. Thermometer down to 7 this morning. Ground utterly bare, river partially closed again. Very still, not a breath of air stirring

5 Mild and Indian summery, not a flake of snow on the ground. Ice on the river all adrift again.

- All night I skirted the shore of sleep and vainly essayed to land. But just as I neared the low tranquil beach, some fiend would cry "there, there you sleep", when back my scallop moved with a spring, and the lotus land would mock me in the distance.

(- Ones anxiety to sleep always stands in the way of sleep.) Then I said I will try no more and ceased all effort, when I know not how, I slowly drifted upon the shore and presently found myself, or did not find myself, in the land of dreams. I knew I had been there only because the fragrance of the land was upon me in the morning, and some memory of what I had seen.



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7 Much rain yesterday and last night. Soft, warm to-day like spring or fall. Not even the "heel" of a snowbank to be seen.

Tis a year to-night that father had his stroke. How surely the present and the future become the past, and how surely the past becomes sacred - the cemetery of our days - Every few days, especially in the winter evenings, the feeling comes strongly upon me that I am away from home, that I am only detained here, and that I must go back to the old place and slacken my thirst at the old home fountains once more. While Father and Mother were living the feeling was especially strong at times, but I thought that after they were gone it

would cease. But it does not. It still seems at times as if I must go back there to live; as if I should find shelter there; as if I should find the old content-ment and satisfaction in the circle of those hills. But I know I should not; the soul's thirst can never be slackened. Mine is a hunger of the imagination. Bring all my dead back again and place me amid them in the old home, and a vague longing and regret would still possess me.

8. Still mild - bees-out-of-the-hive weather; no frost in the ground.

11 Colder, mercury down to 20 degrees this morning. Getting ready for snow.

- The stages of an orb's life, say the astronomers, are stages of cooling. So are the stages of a man's life. It is a process of cooling and hardening from youth to age. The gassy, nebular youth out of which the man is gathered together and consolidated! Fiery, strong, vapery, at first; then cold, hard, impoverished at last.

- The amelioration or evolution of the earth from the early geological ages, when it was at most a hot, barren rock, to its present condition of deep fruitful soil, [crossed out: rich] wealth of grass and verdure and animal life etc is no more marvellous than the evolution of man from the lowest forms of life, to his present high position.

Jan 12. Warm copious rains like April and May, coming off fair, by 10 o'clock. Another bee day. Thermometer

- One can drink hot water or cold water, but not luke-warm. Faint praise is luke-warm water; give it to us either hot or cold, my impartial reviewers!

17. I suppose what takes me in Whitman is just what would repel Arnold - namely, the nearness of the man, the close proximity to the reader of a living breathing person, so near that one can almost hear his heartbeat. Whitman has not clothed and veiled himself in his art, as poets generally do. He early said that he would

have no curtains, not the finest, between himself and his reader, and he has kept his promise. The taste of the age finds him too rank, too personal, [~~crossed out: they~~] it cannot make poetry out. of such a near and rankly human presence. Indeed, for personality as such there is little taste or power to judge in current criticism, "But the fact is" as Goethe says "in the great work the great person is always present as the great factor; only to appreciate the presence of a great somebody in any work of genius, the person who would appreciate must himself be a somebody."

- "Without the sublime" says Landor, "there can be no poet of the first order." This is certainly true. The sublime is not possible to Longfellow or to Whittier, or Holmes. Is it possible to Emerson and Bryant? I think it is to Emerson; he often reaches something like the moral sublime, the heroic. If Bryant attains to the sublime, it is the sublime of natural scenery. He probably does in a few poems, like *The Flood of Years*, *Thanatopsis* and so on. To Whitman, of all American poets, the sublime comes the easiest. The sentiment of grandeur is native to him. Whitman is a great personality. Landor further says that a poet of the first order must have formed, or taken to himself and modified some great subject. What American poet, besides Whitman

has found or taken to himself a great subject.

- Of one thing I am fully persuaded, and that is that if a man can live without God in this world, he can live without God in any world, or in any state of being. When our friends die, we say in our grief and bewilderment that they have gone to God, that they are with God, but in no sense can they be with God more intimately than in this life, and in this world. There is no living or being without God in any world or state.

- Julian looks up from, his book and says, "Papa, the men that go to heaven don't have no wings; they are made lighter than the air so they go up."

Jan'y 24. Myron came on the 20th and stayed till to-day. The old old talks again, here in the bark covered study, on the same old knotty subjects. Myron is more of an idealist, of a true Emersonian than I am. He confronts the naturalists like Spencer and Mill, and at a good many points. He will not give up his doctrine, that the soul has or may have have an independent existence.

26. To N.Y. to-day to attend the breakfast given to Edmund Gosse. Gosse is a charming fellow and easily the superior man present. I quite fell in love with him. He spoke so admirably too. The unexpected always happens, and to my dismay the chairman, Col.



Warring, called me up. Of course I had nothing to say, hence my melancholy and dissatisfaction with myself to-day. Yet it is so easy to speak on such occasions after all. So little counts for so much! A farthings worth of wit will carry a man through. But I had not even a farthings worth. I shall have a contempt for myself for at least a week to come.

- Wordsworth's religious belief lay in his mind as something entirely artificial; it had no vital relation to him, but was foisted upon him by his environment. It was entirely apart from his real religious feelings as he gave expression to them through his poetry.

- How much better it is for a writer like me to burn his ships behind him, if he can only get up courage to do it, which generally he cannot. I am constantly beset by the demon to weave in something I have written, when if that something were burned up, [crossed out: be] I should go forward and develop something better.

Feb 2nd Apparently we have struck into a streak of steady level winter weather. From 25 to 30 degrees of frost occurring pretty regularly. Snow about 10 inches now it has settled. The ice harvesting just opening. The broad white plains before my window dotted with moving

horses and men. The broad loose ridges of snow between the fields suggest fences - straggling and ragged hedge-rows of snow. The canal is being opened this morning and runs a straight broad black band directly out from the north end of the ice-house. I see the men whip their hands to warm them up. Sun dazzlingly bright. Mercury about 8 or 10 above.

- Am still writing on Arnold, have my canal fairly opened and am about ready to stow away my [crossed out: ?] scattered leaves in their final shape.

In reading Stedmans critical writings I seem for the most part to be trying to see objects through small chinks or holes in the wall. A good broad glimpse, or anything like a total view he never gives me. I admire this and that, and the other thing he [crossed out: gives] says, but they do not, taken as he gives them, make a picture, or give a total impression. The only thing large about Stedman is his generosity. This saves him from being a small conceited prig. It was his generosity, his manly feeling, that inspired his superb poem on [crossed out: Osawat?] old John Brown.

Feb 7. Clear and cold mercury down to 6 degrees below this morning. Ice-harvest nearly perfect; ice 11 inches thick.

Homer Lynch dropped in suddenly upon us last night on his ret. from N.Y. Very glad to see him again. A strictly honest, earnest, hard working man, very clear headed too on many matters, but with hard limitations on others. Lacks the influence of culture, which sort of distributes and distributes and equalizes a man's powers. He has just left and even now at 2 P.M. I see the train through my window that bears him away.

The thought of Eden is with me day and night. No doubt he is going to die soon, and again I will have to look death in the face. Oh, that I could do something to prolong his days.

- He had a sad wistful look as if he had just been reading old letters.

Feb 10 - I have arrived at that point in life for some years now in which all things are seen as in the light of an afternoon sun. How different from the light of the first half of the day! A little faded or diluted by the vapors and with a pensive tinge. [crossed out: The day? is gone, many flowers are shut up, the birds are less musical] It is perhaps in many ways the most trying condition or period, of life, this transition state from ones prime to old age. The latter really has not yet come, but the former is also clearly on the wane. Let us hope that the

land of old age when

we have once really arrived there, will have its own compensations and and charm. When the sun really begins to shade the hills there is a new charm in nature, more color in the sky, more privacy and illusion on the earth. Let us hope it will be so in life.

11 Severe wind and cold; 6 degrees below this morning, and a driving wind all day. Ice 13 or 14 inches on the river. A heavy rain night before last.

Have finished Arnold and am letting my timber season before putting it in final shape.

Feb 19 Start for Eden's this morning early; all day on the train reach Hobart at 4 1/2 P.M. hungry and head-achey. After dinner walk up to Eden's over the snowbanks and through the deep snow. The little valley his farm occupies, as I came into it, just at sunset, looked bleak and desolate enough. Eden was just coming out of doors as I approached with two pails of feed for his hogs. He looked very pale to me, tho better than I expected to find him, for my fears about his health had been very great. He was the same in manner and talk as of old - shows very little concern about the state of his health. We sat that night by the fire and talked till after 10 o'clock, while the ruggedest of Delaware Co winters raged without. Next day very cold, no sunshine; the air



obscured by a mist of snow.

Helped Hi K. and Charley Grant saw wood a little for exercise. Frank Corbin there rather silent. Poor Frank; Willie not well and nursing his health by the fire most of the time. Mag. as swift and active as usual. Five men to one woman - and her work amounts to nearly as many hours as all theirs. As I gazed through the frost-covered pane, how frigid and desolate the landscape looked! The trees on the mountain all white with hoar frost.

Two nights I stayed, [crossed out: ?] may be the last I shall ever spend with Eden, but I hope for his improvement from the Lithia water I took him. My thoughts were very sad, but as I seemed to be the only sad one, I tried to shake it off. Saturday morning I left at 9 a.m. Saw Eden through the window looking

after me as I rode off with Hi. K.

Feb 21st Stop at Main's station and go up to see Jane and Homer. Ride up behind an ox team, through a whirl of snow; very cold and the roads drifted full. Take dinner with Jane and Homer and then rush back to the train at 1 o'clock. At Roxbury I leave the train and start up the hill to Abigails. She is gone over to Hiram's. I ride over on a bob-sled behind the oxen, Gurt's boy, Channy, driving. How the great oxen wallow and plunge through the drifts, rising and falling like old Neptune's steeds, though rather slower of foot. Indeed, we are at sea on a bob-sled; over fences, through fields we go, the Herculean oxen stopping at nothing.

Hiram and the rest of them well, though Hiram seems rather absent minded, and was much occupied I could see with thoughts of father. It apparently comes home to him more and more, that Father is indeed forever gone, and that he must finish the rest of his days alone. Emma said that every day he went and looked at father's clothes and then at his picture. At night we went together and looked at them, and [crossed out: ?] into his chest, and handled over many of his things, How the unshed tears choked my throat! All the while I was there, it seemed as if presently some one must come out of the rooms, or in from out-doors; that the family were not all at the table, or in the kitchen, and

that the rest of them would appear presently. I looked through the frost covered panes out upon the familiar scenes as I did when a boy, but, oh! with what different emotions. Such a vision of snow and winter as one gets in this country is very impressive. You see the whole landscape at a glance, and see nothing but a snowy desolation. Monday morning again I am off for the train. Smith takes Abigail and I down to her house with the oxen, plunging through the drifts and over the fences, as before.

Feb 23rd Stop off in Olive to see father North; the old man quite chipper and full of talk. Reach home at 7 1/2 at night.

26 - Julian in an argumentative tone this morning when I was dressing him, "Why, Papa, something ought to become of us when our bodies are dead."

28 Last day of winter; mild, still air, full of smoke and vapor; snow deep, deep; ice 18 or 20 inches. Steady severe cold since about the 20th of Jany; as solid a piece of winter as one seldom sees, the mercury fluctuating about zero nearly all the time, often 8 or 10 below, and as often 8 or ten above.

March 1st Still, dim, thawey. Quite a look and feeling of spring in the air. The crows noisy, and at times uttering that liquid musical note.

Mch 2nd Shall I go West this summer? I carry such a burden of home memories and longings and regrets with me when I go abroad, that I should probably not get as close to what I want to see as I ought to make the seeing profitable. If I could only go forth eager and curious, and emancipated from all past ties, it would be worth while to go. But if I am to be mentally bed-ridden in the great free west, better stay at home.

First chipmunk to-day. A good omen for an early spring.

3 First blue-bird to-day, but silent.

4 Fair and mild, much smoke and vapor in the air, promises a

good day for the inauguration of Cleveland; and I hope a good augury for his administration. So far I am well pleased with all he has said and done. I have never witnessed a presidential inauguration, tho present in W when two presidents were inaugurated. Twenty years ago today at the 2nd inauguration of Lincoln I took a walk to the woods. Sixteen years ago, at the first inauguration of Grant (now, alas! in such a precarious condition) I went down town and saw the procession but did not go to the capitol.

In '73 I was in Middletown; in '77 and in '81 I was here.

- This great vital Nature, this life and power of the universe is the cloth out of which we cut to some particular pattern our goods. Each cuts to his own pattern and rejects all that is left. Matthew Arnold cut out that "power not ourselves which makes for righteousness". What is he going to do with [crossed out: that] what is left? with all that which does not make for righteousness? It is like selecting the Gulf Stream and calling that the ocean. What do you call the rest of the water? This is only one of the currents; there are many others. The sea as a whole does not flow to any particular point; it flows to all points, and in all directions; there are currents beneath currents. So in Nature; we cannot say what the end of Nature is



God is nothing less than the whole. If he directs any, he directs all. If he is one power not ourselves, he is every power not ourselves. The sphere bends at every point; every point is at the top, and yet no one point is at the top. When we can grasp the sphere or find the end of the circle, we can grasp this power we call God, and find when he begins and ends. "How can anyone teach concerning Alla! He is neither the Known, nor the unknown." etc.

- When amid those high rugged mountains I go down into a deep valley which has a level, plane-like bottom I seem to have got down to the real surface of the sphere; here, I say, is a bit of the back of the planet. If the space was large enough one could doubtless see the planetary curve as he sees

it upon the surface of the sea.

10. Good weather for the ice-boatmen

Snow still about a foot deep.

- In the ancient temple of Apollo at Delphi lay a stone, the omphalos or navel stone, supposed to mark the center of the Earth. And it did mark the center of the Earth. The ancients supposed the world had one center; they were not aware that every point on the surface of [crossed out: a sphere] the earth may serve as its center, because they did not know that the earth is a sphere. They probably thought it an irregular plane, tho' Thales knew better. Nearly all religious notions, both ancient and modern are thus limited and narrow. We think there is but one center of the world, when there are any number

we think there is but one religion, but there may be any number of true religions. Mathematics [crossed out: are] is always and everywhere the same, but religion is a sentiment, and is as changeable, as various, and as fleeting as a summer cloud. Our navel stone is the center of the world for us, and the Buddhists on the Mohammedims is the center of the world for him, but do not let us make the mistake of supposing that there is but one center to the Infinite. The center of the world the other way, or inward, alas! that is quite another matter. Here the earth has but one center, and the center of all religions is the one and the same, namely [crossed out: a sincere belief in an invisible power greater and better than ourselves] love of God or of the Supreme Good, as we are capable of conceiving it; in other words, a sincere belief in an invisible power greater and better than ourselves.

Mch 13 - Very cold again;several (7) degrees below zero this morning. Clear to-day from the north, with cutting wind.

- Do I believe in the Christian religion? Certainly, I believe in all religions, the Mohammedem religion, the Budda religion, the' religion of ancient Greece, Egypt, China, etc. I believe in the essential truth they containe, that each was best for the people and the time amid which they appeared. Every religion that helps to hold its possessors up to a higher standard of virtue and goodness than they would otherwise be inclined to I believe in. But the machinery of these religions, [crossed out: what] their outward forms and plans, etc, that is another question.

The historical evidences of Christianity are of course fables, myths. The events did not fall out in this

way. That there was such a person as Christ I believe, "a wise prophet and teacher", but all the rest is just as fabulous or imaginary as the signs of the Zodiac, or the constellations of Orion. The stars are there, but not Orion, not the harp, not the chair, these we feign or supply. So all the marvelous history of christ is a pretty fable, etc.

15 First song sparrows to-day, amid rain and snow.

16 First robin to-day.

17 Still rugged winter; thermometer down to 4 degrees above this morning, and down to zero at van Benschotens.

18. Still zero weather, and below zero in most places.

22. Down to or below zero nearly every morning the past week. The longest stretch of cold weather I ever saw as late in the season.

- I shall live in the future, just as I have lived in the past, namely, in the life of humanity, in the lives of other men and women. When the last man perishes from the earth, then I perish - to reappear in other worlds, other systems. No doubt that man has always existed on some of the myriads of worlds of space, and no doubt he will always exist. So far as consciousness or personality is concerned this life is all. We do not know ourselves again, we do not take form again, except in others.

25 Cold weather lasted till this date when it began to abate. Ice men might have worked [crossed out: all this] up to this time, except when it was too cold.

about the kettle, attracted by the savory smell. Blue-birds have selected the woodpeckers cavity in the old apple tree over our heads to nest; very jealous of an English sparrow that peeps in the hole. Meadow lark to-day with her long drawn note. A charming day

29. Four or five inches of snow last night; very wintry this morning, but now at 11 a.m. sun is shining and snow running fast, a sap snow. Bluebirds carrying nest material into the old cavity this morning.

30. Phoebe [~~crossed out: ?~~] last night and again this morning but only uttering her chip, chip. She does not call "phoebe" yet.

27. A spring day at last, warm and sunny. The snow running fast. The old, old story, the old old enticement and charm. The song sparrow has endeared itself to me afresh. Everywhere about the house and grounds, on every bush and fence the sweet spring ditties arise. How touching, how mindful of home! and of the days that are no more! The robins and the blue-birds too, promptly are they here to play their parts and they play them with the same old charm. The red shouldered black birds tool a tree full of them back near the depot all uttering their willow-brook notes. It is the voice of a multitude, but March has no more welcome chorus - a great sheaf of reedy bird notes.

28 Still warm. Julian and I boil sap in the open air near the shed. Bees humming