

1887

June 24 - A right warm day after the heavy rains, day of swarming bees, of dark massive foliage, of high piled indolent summer clouds. Cherries ripe on the trees, raspberries reddening on the bushes, rye fields just turning, timothy grass blooming, roses falling, pond-lilies opening their golden hearts to the sun

26. Sunday. Go home to-day Julian and I. Walk up the hill from the depot, and pick wild strawberries by the way, while in the meadows the bobolinks sing the songs of my

boyhood. Have not heard these bobolinks before for many long years. Entirely a different song from the one I hear on the Hudson, and from the one I heard in the West last summer. Notes much longer and simpler and more resonant

- more of the tintinabulation in it. The old home looks forlorn - all strangers but Hiram. But how sweet and good the country looks - looks its best.

27. Nearly all day on the hills picking wild strawberries, the same as in my youth, Bartram's upper fields. I can hardly spend the time to gaze my fill upon the landscape, but glance up from [crossed out: my leaves] the berries that woo me in the grass, and as it were sip the prospect

slowly. It is 15 or 20 years since I picked berries in those fields. Stay at Hiram's till Saturday the 2nd of July, when
[crossed out: I] we go to Edens. How the bobolinks sang those days down there in the meadow - "the song of long ago."
The only change a peculiar note in the middle of the song - never heard it before, - hear it in several songs in adjoining
meadows. The bobolinks sing till after 8 o'clock in the long warm twilight. I sit up by the new Barn bars and listen to
them and to the sparrows.

29 Go down to Uriah Bartrams and spend most of the day. Glad to see 'Riah again, our old and best neighbor.
Remembered that

the day he was married he went by our house, and saw Hiram, a little boy playing in the road. He was born in CT and came here at the age of 2 with his parents; his father died when he was ten. His mother built the old house where I was born and lived in it two years, when she died. Out in the old garden there used to be a log house, where some one kept a school. He is 79, and keeps up the fight with great vigor yet. When I came he stood leaning on the swathe of his scythe, as I had seen him so often in my youth. Stay at Edens till the 7th when I go down home and on Saturday drive up my horse; reach Mt. Pleasant at 1 P.M. and stay all night at the Centre. Reach home

Sunday at noon. Very heavy rains in Ulster Co, but none in Delaware. Come back to Eden's on Monday the 11th Wife comes on the 12th

Aug 1st Been to Edens thus far. Spending the time trouting, loafing, reading, berrying, or wandering aimlessly about the fields and woods. Time passes pleasantly on the whole, though an occasional touch of ennui. Heavy rains the latter part of July, make a freshet in the streams; much needed.

2nd Powerful shower again this afternoon. Streams all full as in spring.

A remarkably hot summer - never remember one like it. Since June 28, there has been hardly a

let up in the heat. Five weeks of unbroken heat, 84 degrees or 85 degrees here in the shade. Never saw anything like it.

August sights and sounds - The blooming clematis, the screaming, high sailing hawks, thunder heads like huge kernels of popped corn, the flying grass hoppers, the shrill note of the cicada, etc. In the dewy mornings, the webs of the spiders show in the new mown meadows like napkins laid out upon the grass. Thousands of napkins far and near.

3rd Still very hot. Eden and Willie cradling the oats. Powerful shower this P.M.

6. More rain in morning, clearing and cooler in afternoon.

7. Great change in weather. Seems as if the roof had been taken off and the heat allowed to escape. Bright and bracing. Eden, Julian and I go up to see Eva and John and Smith and Emma. Almost cold in the shade.

18 Came to Camden last night and spent this day with Walt Whitman. Reached his house before he was up in the morning. Was lying on his lounge when he came slowly down stairs. Find him pretty well - looking better than last year. With his light gray suit and white hair, and fresh florid face he made a fine picture. Among other things we talked of the Swinburne attack. Walt did

not show the least feeling on the subject, and I clearly saw was absolutely undisturbed by the article. I think he looks upon S. as I do, as a sort of abnormal creature, full of wind and gas, but not worth attending to. I abhor his poetry, and I know that Walt has no stomach for it. He is a mere puff of mephritic gas. I told Walt I had always been more disturbed by Swinburne's admiration for him than I was now disturbed by his condemnation. I was heartily glad that his true character had at last come out. By and by W. had his horse hitched up and we drove down to Glendale to see young Gilchrist, ten miles, a fine drive through a level farming and gardening country; warm but breezy. Walt drives

briskly and salutes every person he meets, little and big, black and white, male and female. Nearly all return his salute cordially. He said he knew but few of the persons he spoke to but as he grew older the old Long Island custom of his people to speak to every one on the road was strong upon him. One drunken man in a buggy, responded, "Why Pop, how d'ye do, pop!" etc. We talked of many things. I recall this remark of W. that it was difficult to see what the feudal world would have come to without Christianity; it would have been the centrifugal force without the centripetal. Those haughty lords and chieftans needed [crossed out: a] the force [crossed out: to] of Christianity to check and curb them etc. Walt knew the history of many houses on the road

here a crazy man lived with two colored men to look after him; there in that fine house among the trees an old maid who had spent a large fortune and her house and lands, and was now destitute, yet she was a woman of good sense etc. The cherry lipped young Englishman was well and brisk and apparently enjoying himself in what to me was a very flat and uninteresting country, and an uninteresting household. We drove back before dark. W. was apparently not fatigued by the drive.

19. Part of the day with Walt and Gilchrist, and then back to N.Y. and to Bay Shore with Johnson.

24 Back to Hobart again. Much rain. The ground as full of water as in Spring. Never saw such rains in Summer.

This time the creeks do not run down in a day or two but keep full. The hills and mountains are at last literally full of water. Oh, if the streams could always be as full as this.

28. Cool but bright. Eden, Julian and I drive over to Jones Burroughs and spend a pleasant 3 hours with him [crossed out he] and his sisters. Jones is decidedly above the average farmer in character and native intelligence.

The vesper sparrows which sang so sweetly at sundown all about us here in the fields, have all ceased to sing some weeks ago.

7 The end of a busy happy week. What glorious days we have had. The bird songs and calls never sounded so sweetly and for many years my life has not worn so fresh and inviting a hue. All from a few acres of land and from giving free reign to the farmer blood of my forefathers in my veins. How this blood, forced so long into other channels, or made to lie dormant, has rejoiced again in its love of the soil and of improving the land. My fathers again live and act in me. First swallow to-day, two of them, either the cliff or white-bellied.

Sept 10. Just finished "Katia" by Tolstoi. A simple pleasant little story, the moral don't try to repeat life, each stage of life has its happiness, and don't expect to be always young, or to be always madly in love with the man or woman you marry. The flower of love, like every other flower is bound to fall, and to be succeeded by something different, but equally good and desirable.

Weather cool and pleasant. Still at Edens.

13 After such an unprecedently wet July and August everybody said as did I, that we will have a dry fall, but so far Sept has been very wet. After so great heat, probably the most severe for 100 years, everybody said as did I, we would probably have an early frost, but thus far no frost.

A lovely drive to-day over the hill into Roses Brook Valley and down to the river again. Such brilliant maples, or parts of maples here and there; the tops and outer branches of some trees a vivid flame color. The soft maples a rich wine color, not common yet; rare enough

to make the eye search for it, and linger upon it when found. So emerald the landscape! As tender and fresh a green as England. Wish I could write up my holiday here in this pastoral country and call it "Out to Grass."

What is style but a characteristic mode of expression that has charm, that gives us pleasure? The page must have the stamp of a fresh original mind, and the stamp must give us pleasure. Most assuredly Emerson had the gift of style, as did Carlyle at his best; Motley has no style. The great mass of the editorial, sermon writing,

review writing of any age, [crossed out: has] have no style, bear no impress of a fresh and original personality. Eloquent and forcible writing is not enough -it must be the eloquence and force of a particular type of mind. If a man has the gift of style, his work needs no signature; every reader knows it is his.

14 Started on my drive back home this day; nooned at Lexington Flat, and stopped for the night at Phoenicia. A hot day.

15 Reached home to-day by way of Olive, Rosendale, Dashvill, etc. A very rough road. Drove through Fongore where I began my career as a young man

man 33 years ago, and where I had not been for 27 or 28 years. How strange and saddening it all was to me. Here I reach the first house in the district, that of Blind Bishop, the miller; house quite unchanged. Here he had 12 children, 11 boys and one girl. I can see him open and shut his sightless eyes now. A remarkable man, large and coarse in structure, but of true stuff. Long since dead, and his children scattered or dead also. I saw two of the boys a mile above, and knew them; perhaps they did not know me. Here old Dr McClelland lived. He and his wife and Luther and Gordon and another boy - killed at Gettysburg as was

one of the Bishop boys - all dead; the girl Mary, alone lives - in N.Y. How well I remember them all. The Dr was Irish, and was rather a crusty old fellow. I remember that he did not put the sugar in his tea, but bit off a piece from time to time from a lump (maple) that lay beside his plate. When he was done eating he would reach up to the timber ceiling over head and take from its place in a crack, his toothpick; when he had used it he would return it to its place. The house is now painted, and unoccupied, and looks much less inviting than it did in those days. Then I come to the Methodist Church in the edge of the woods, where

I spoiled many a beautiful summer Sunday. Dominic Phinney preached, a bald-headed man with a very lugubrious delivery. Here I once went "forward" during a revival excitement, but I was too honest to deceive myself or others; the miraculous change I expected did not come. I did not repeat the experiment. Nearly opposite is the house where I made it my home for one term, and where I made love to one of the girls, she also a teacher of my age (17). She was too fond, and I sickened of her. Long has she been dead, and her sister and her father and mother.

The poorest bread, the worst butter, and the most killing biscuit I ever ate I had [crossed out: sat] set before me in that house. What a cook that woman was! Short, fat and freckled. The little shop where he made and cobbled shoes, poor man, still stands. Here Jim Smith lived a dark, greasy-looking man who spoke through his nose with a pretty daughter, Tammy, who came to school to me (older than I) and who long ago went to the bad. She was ready enough to go then, I suspect, when I knew her. And yonder is the little red school-house itself. With what emotion I gaze upon it. Here I made my beginning in the world

Here I spent my first days away from the paternal roof. Seems as if some beloved son of mine had taught that school so long ago. How green he was, how tender and bashful, how homesick! How my heart yearns toward him. How long the summer days were. From April 11th till Oct. These first children or children of my first school, the faces and ways of many of them are still vivid before me, Jane North, delicate and fine looking, about 12 years, (long dead) Mary McClelland, fat and chubby and a little saucy, Ella Terwilliger, large head and eyes, and small body, etc. Why do these scenes make

me so sad? Then father and mother were in their prime as I am now, and all went well on the farm. It was really the morning of life with me, now it is long past the meridian. Oh, the past! the past! Slowly I drive through the place finding this house smaller than I remember it, or that barn in a different place, or a new house or other building here or there. I saw no person but a boy of 11 or 12, the very image of a boy that came to my school, Alonzo Davis. Doubtless his son; the same pronounced blue eyes and short nose, and the same mischievous air and way.

How the sight of him carried me back! Here Sands Beach lived who told me spook stories, there Bloom Shoot, who kept me up at night till 11 o'clock talking theology. Here a road turned off toward the creek under the hill where a poor family lived, where I occasionally passed a night. One night as I rolled over in bed, the bedstead gave a lurch and came down with a crash to the floor, but I stuck to it till morning. Ah how well I slept those nights; how sweet and fresh existence tasted! I taught the school for \$11 per

month and "boarded round." The next year in Aug. I returned there on a visit, and they had had such bad luck with teachers that they hired me again, giving me \$20 per month. I taught from Sept. till March or April, but remember less about this second term, except that some big girls came to me, attracted more I found by me personally, than by desire to learn. Two of them had taught school. During this second term I became acquainted with the girl who later became my wife. Bad luck for her, and for me too. A woman of excellent stuff, soured or vitiated by a drop or two of something else, a character un-

adjustable to the events of life, inflexible, revengeful, narrow.

Intensely feminine - all the female traits exaggerated, except tenderness, yet the most tearful of women. But she weeps over no wrongs but her own.

Sept 29 From the point of view of science or reason, the old theology is of a piece with Indian medicine, or the medicine of the 15th or 16th centuries "Folk-medicines."

- takes as little cognizance of the laws of cause and effect. But persons who believe in the virtues of tigers claws, charred serpents skins, dried toads, frog-spawn, spiders, etc, were very often benefitted by faith alone; so believers in the "plan of salvation," are undoubtedly often saved from sin, by their religion.

29 Think I have never seen the asters and the golden rod so fine as this fall. The abundant rains have brought them to perfection. Never before noted how much the golden rod is like a golden snow caught upon the extended arms and twigs of the plant. Never before saw the bees so active at this season - they are evidently reaping a harvest from the fall flowers, especially golden rod. - [crossed out: But] The summer has been a very poor one for honey.

Oct 1st Damp, misty, rainy, warm - the May weather of autumn. Spend the day in P. Bring home the new life of Emerson.

- No mans argument is invulnerable; it is just as strong as he is and no stronger. A skilled man in dialectics like a skilled man with a sword, or lance is sure in time to be met by a man more skilled, or to be caught off his guard, and his argument overthrown.

- Great men are not much more apt to be right in their opinions, than little men. What absurd beliefs and views of things truly great men have at times held! Their greatness is not so much in this as in their power their grasp, their capacity to master and absorb a multitude of things. Of course I mean opinions upon abstruse, or theological questions. In practical verifiable matters the great man is nearer the truth.

Oct 6. Bright day, after nearly a week of fog and light rain. Am reading the New Life of Emerson. In his earliest letters and journal jottings one sees the leading ideas of Emerson's life cropping out; - not so much ideas as the foundation stones of his moral and intellectual nature. These ideas are the sufficiency of man to himself, or self-reliance; the indifference of time or place; the supremacy of the moral law; the fragmentary character of all great men (but Shakespeare) Out of these ideas his teachings grow as out of a fertile soil. Are not first class men always committed to a few leading thoughts? Is not this one sign of their greatness?

The majority of talented and brilliant writers of an age, do not stand for anything in particular. The chief thing about them is their talent their literary gift. This is true of Whipple, Lowell, Higginson, Taylor, and many others in this country, and of an army of fine writers in England. But such men as Carlyle, Mill, Spencer, Coleridge, Arnold, and Emerson are the spokesmen of certain definite principles; they were born to utter certain truths Hence their superior earnestness and effectiveness. As a prose writer Lowell will leave no mark, no, nor Morley nor Harrison, nor Gosse, nor Stevens etc. They use well the weapons in the armory of letters but they add no new ones, no new principle blooms and fruits

in them. What is new in all great modern teachers is not the bare idea for which they speak, but the embodiment of it in a new personality; the application of it on a new and enlarged scale. We were familiar with the idea in general terms, now we have it in particular and precise terms. We have the map drawn to a large scale and all the details put in. See how Arnold has enforced and illustrated the idea of the value of the Academy, or a central standard of taste in letters. See how Carlyle enforces the value of the hero, or strong man; see how Emerson reads the lesson of life anew with his doctrine of self-reliance etc. Aside

from Arnold I do not see ~~as~~ that there is a man of letters in England who ~~has any special~~ stands for anything in particular. Nor is there one in this country, aside from Whitman. Is there one in France now that Hugo is gone? It may be objected that this bent, this marked preference for certain ideas, is incompatible with the disinterestedness of the true spirit of letters. The literary man must be hospitable to all ideas. True enough in a sense. But the men of which I speak ~~did not merely elect the idea of which~~ are not merely the spokesmen of certain ideas to the exclusion of others, they are the illustrations of them. They unconsciously speak for them. A certain germ has developed

and come to full fruition in them. They furnish new types in literature; they enlarge its sphere. In the modern world literature must be thoroughly serious and earnest to hold its own. It must have something to say. It is a diversion and an amusement no longer. It is [???] no longer. It must do its share of the worlds work. The man who does not stand for some definite thought or quality more freely than any man before him, has a poor chance to be long heeded. St Beuve had an admirable talent, but had he any moral lift? Did he in and of himself illustrate any new thing? Thou shalt be disinterested! Truly; but [crossed out: they current] thou shalt also be in earnest and speak with more than thy tongue. Did DeQuincey stand for any

thing in particular? Did he have any message? And I fear he is already being left behind. Tolstoi?

Oct 8. A delicious day, such as we often have in October - a day like a beautiful dream or like a sumptuous and mellow poem.

A blue-bird again this year with [~~crossed out: the~~] a note that suggests a thrush - probably the same bird of last year. No doubt the recent ancestor of the blue bird was a thrush.

Oct 10. Encountered a large wolf spider in the path between the house and my study. He seemed to charge upon me and tried to climb up my leg. Black. 1 1/2 inch long. When I brought him to bay with my led pencil, he reared up and lept spitefully toward my hand, then presently [~~crossed out: ? a~~] sprang upon the pencil and sank his or her fangs into it. Two minute drips of liquid remained on the pencil where her fangs had penetrated it. The longest and most savage spider I ever saw. The wolf spider *Lycopsis fatefera*.

16. Bright and clear. Heavy frost last night and night before last also. Fields very green. The fall does not bring the relish for light and for nature that I hoped it would. Can it be that henceforth I am to have only skimmed milk?

21. More rain, pretty heavy. Where is the dry spell we have all been expecting and predicting? A perfect spendthrift has the luck of the weather been this season. Next summer we shall all parch for this extravagance.