

1896

Sept 9. Cool bright day, from the north. No heat yet this month. Whippoorwills still calling feebly and briefly. Julians arm much improved, sprained badly over two weeks ago.

13. Chapman came last night. Cloudy to-day and mild. In P.M. we all go to cut a bee tree down near black pond -- 3 miles. Find some one has been there before and cut it.

15. Charming Sept. days, warm, still, peaceful. No frost yet. Heard whippoorwill again to-night. Grapes all off.

Hiram and I sit here on our porch in the twilight after our supper and talk of old days. How I love to hear again the names of the hired men who worked for father so long ago, and some of whom I knew as a little boy. Hiram remembers them all. There was George Jenkins and Rube Dart who

cut a fallow up above the "clover meadow". Hiram used to carry them their dinners, '35 or '36. Then Dan H. Montgomery about 37, then Jo Jenkins, then Gus Steward, then Abe Meeker about 1840, (still living) then Zeke Kelley, the Pete Tiffany then Barlow Tiffany and so on. The more recent hired men, who recalls them? They seem of no account beside these early figures, and yet they were the same. With what indescribable feeling I think of these workers over the old fields. The dogs father had too, how each one stands out, and the oxen and the horses! Oh, youth, what is the secret of thy illusions?

16. Much cooler this morning. Changed in the night, and the wind kept me from sleep.  
Turns out an ideal day -- work on my "Philosophy of the hard times."

17. Rain from S.W. sets in about 10 a.m. As I sit here working over my Whitman M.S. I hear the jays call and the winter wren scold in the bushes at the corner of the house. Foliage beginning to turn.

19. Rain last night and this morning with continuous low distant thunder. Began after midnight. Nearly two inches of water. The air thick and murky to-day and warm. A clear off shower at 6, and cooler breath.

20. Clear and cool and windy. A look of fall in the air.

(-- Eddies are always in opposition to the main current.)

In P.M. Hiram and I walk to Brookmans swamp and poke about the woods. A day of wonderful brilliancy and beauty.

22. Cloudy with light rain. A bad headache all day. Sit in doors at SS.

23. Cleared off last night, and much colder; feels as if a killing frost was near.

26. Lovely day, warm and clear. Spent part of it in the woods. Acorns falling everywhere, like the noise of falling stones rattling through the trees; quite startling at times. Such a harvest of acorns I do not remember; but no chestnuts this year.

28. Mild and still, but overcast. Lowne and Booth come up. No frost yet.

Oct 6. Mild [~~crossed out: fair~~] weather with much cloud since my last date. Start for Boston to-day. Stop in Albany and walk about with the girls of St A.

See the lotus in Bloom in W. park. The flower like a dream of Cleopatra. Reach B. at 9 P.M.

7 Cloudy, drizzlly till afternoon. About 3 P.M. speak before a womans club at Newburyport. Not very proud of my effort -- too much of an effort. Dine with Mrs Spaulding on Green St. A remarkable woman clear strong mind in a feeble body. Shows me [crossed out: an] many autograph letters. One from Emerson date 1838 to Dr Hedge, interests me. E. had been to N.Y. had seen much of Bryant, likes him, praises his simplicity, manliness etc. but says he lacks culture, has no time for books or thought but "spends his days weltering in the foaming foolishness of newspapers."

8 Ride through Mass on this bright Oct. day. Stop over night at the Pratts at Malden Bridge in Columbia Co.

9 Lovely day, reach home at 5 P.M.

10 Hard frost last night, first of the season; kills tomatoes and corn.

18. A cool week with one day of pretty heavy rain; only one day of sunshine, no frost. All the woods crimson, and orange and yellow -- yellow greatly predom-inating. All the week at Slab sides. Every night Hiram and I and Nip sit here by our open fire and read and talk and nod. Chapman and Brewster came yesterday for the day. Brewster a fine attractive fellow.

21 To Doylestown, Pa. where I speak in the evening to 1100 people, the court house is full to the wall. Do not do very well, do not speak easily and smoothly, and the audience not very sympathetic, jaded I suspect from the daily and nightly lectures of the three preceding days. Room too close. My under-shirt is wet with perspirations when I have finished. A beautiful Country is Bucks Co, like England; a rich rolling country every inch cultivated. As you near Phila things have a very finished substantial look; the bridges, the embankments, the roads, the station -- all suggest England. What a contrast to New England this Phila region presents in its fertility, its farms etc. and yet how below mentally. In these higher regions, the contrast is as great the other way.

22 Bright and sharp; back home at night. At D. saw people asleep in my audience for the first time; it had a depressing effect upon me. And that orchestra band in front of me with their stolid indifferent faces -- that depressed me, a wet blanket the first thing. I was more nervous than ever before and felt yesterday like cancelling all my engagements. I am no doubt shortening my life by this foolish lecturing business.

-- I notice that womens hats do not have anything like so intimate a relation to the head as mens hats do -- they seem more arbitrary and accidental. They appear to hover about the head or to have alighted there by chance. They in no case conform to or take the shape of the head. But is not this largely true of womens entire dress?



-- It is not till we get away from home that we see how our native hills and mountains tower up. --

Nov 1st Last of Oct fine and mild; many real golden days.

Yesterday Mr Chubb and Mr Shaw with 6 boys from the Brooklyn High School came and stayed till 5 P.M. to-day. A fine time. A nice lot of boys; I find their youth contagious. Cloudy but warm to-day.

3d Election day; clear and warm as Sept. No chance for Bryan I fear, tho' I would gladly see him elected just as a snub to the millionaires.

8. A mild week, with heavy rain yesterday and last night. All the streams roaring.

9. Go to Pottsville Pa. to speak; -- am not in good form

and speak very poorly. A large audience in an opera house -- cant see the faces of the people nor see my notes -- footlights glaring up in my face. Once the audience tittered in derision I think. I can't recall at what, probably at my awkwardness and failure to see my notes. Dont think these Pa. audiences care for me or what I have to say. I am much cast down. I find I must have the sympathy of my audience and if I fail to get it the wind is taken out of my sails at once. I am a poor machine -- never run twice alike, too sensitive; am apt to do extrememly well, or very poorly according to circumstances. I am called Doctor by nearly every body, and fine doctors very common all about me. It seems to be a favorite title here, as Colonel is in the South.

11 Am so unnerved that I jump my Brooklyn appointment to lecture and [grossed out: g] ask them to get Garland in my stead. Sleep very poor for nearly a week now.

15. Cold wave, the severest of the season, with a white wash of snow night before last; froze quite hard last night. Hiram and I still at S.S.

22. A rather mild pleasant week Spent two days in P. at Court. Nearly clear to-day and growing cold. Hiram and I have only a few days more at S.S.

23d Coldest night of the season, but clear and getting milder to-day.

The Whitman book came Saturday, -- think it has reality -- that the reader will on the whole have the sense of having come in contact with real ideas and distinctions and not with mere words. Could have made it much better if I had given

another year to it.

26 Thanksgiving; warm as Sept. Clear and Indian summery in the afternoon. Mercury above 60. Play croquet with Gordon girls. Hiram leaves me to-day to be gone several months -- thus closing a curious and interesting chapter in my life. He leaves me pensive and vacant. Hiram never looked into one of my books lying here on the table while here. When the Whitman book came I said to him with the book in my hand "Hiram here is the book you have heard me speak about as having cost me nearly 4 years work and which I re-wrote about four times." "That's the book, is it?" said Hiram, but never showed any curiosity about it, or desire to look into it. Of "A Year in the Fields" he looked at some of the pictures, but not all. Some of the home scenes he did not recognize.

27. Warm as May with clouds and S.W. wind. Mercury 70.

This morning poor Harry Sutcliff was killed by an express train near W.P. station. The event gave me such a shock as nearly to use me up. The best boy in the place by all odds. Sturdy, sober, religious, industrious, faithful -- a loss to the place and to the state. His black eyes and hair, and his rosy cheeks, made him a delight to look upon. I saw them take a small bible out of his breast pocket while examining the body. He was on his way to his work about 6 1/2 A.M; stepped out of the way of an up train and into the way of the down express. He had been attending the revival meetings here the past week, had had but little sleep, was [crossed out: up] at a party the night before till midnight, and was probably half asleep when the train struck him. Farewell dear Harry.

I do not forget this day that 44 years ago my little sister Eveline died. It came off warm that after noon like to-day -- after a severe spell of winter weather.

28. Still warm and showery. A severe cold wave reported to be near.

-- I shall never be aable to tell how much I am warped or biased in Whitmans favor so that I am barred from taking an inde-pendent view of him. I would give anything to be sure that I see him as he is, to be his judge and not his attorney. I early fell into the way of defending him and it may be, may be that I can take only an expert view of him The moment I begin writing about him I become his advocate; my mind slides into the old rut or seems to at once. I must think further about this.

-- One singular thing about Whitman was that common unlettered [~~crossed out: people~~] persons did not feel that he was separated from them -- they looked upon him as one of themselves -- with a difference that they did not quite understand but which did not disturb them. My hired man S. C. took to him greatly, and Peter Doyle and W. were real loving comrades. Some would consider this trait a defect, but I consider it a great merit -- without the [~~crossed out: W~~] breadth of relation to man-kind which this implies, W. would not be the inevitable democrat he claimed to be.

Dec 3d Cold wave -- down to 10 no snow --began to get cold two days ago.

5 Mild bright delightful Dec. day. Roads dry and dusty.

8. Mild and pleasant the past few days. Prof Triggs came Yesterday. We have had a day and a night [crossed out: at] in Whitman land and much talk and real intellectual intercourse. I think Triggs will yet strike out something new and valuable in the way of criticism -- may be formulated the principle of the new dem-ocratic criticism.

I told him Kennedy had written me that an old Yale professor of his, had said recently that Whitcomb Riley was the true poet of democracy instead of Whitman. We agreed that Riley was a true democratic poet, but not at all of command-ing genius; he suggests nothing is nothing but Riley. He is a specimen and not a genius a tribe; he is a local flora but not botany. There is no



spiritual or intellectual stimulus in Riley, one welcomes his poems as he welcomes any real and genuine thing; but they are minor productions, they are light craft that do not draw much water, Walt Whitmans keel scrapes the deepest bars. He could do nothing in the waters in which the Hoosier poet disports himself. W. is not the first or only democratic poet, but he is the first all inclusive one -- the first one in whom the democrats spirit have come to full maturity and proceeds to take possession of the world in its own right and confronts the old types with an egoism wqual to their own. Riley is a Hoosier poet. W. is a world poet.

9. Rained all night; mild and sunshiney to-day. Go to P. to hear Sam Maclaren

-- like him better than I expected. Very clever. That delicious scotch speech is of itself a bribe to me. I seem bound to like everything uttered in it.

10. Still mild -- no front -- partly overcast.

-- Looking over the poetry of some of the minor Brisisle poets -- David Gray. Massey Dolson etc. Their world do not cut through the origin of things glimpses of the pathos beauty of life, but not of its mystery, terror or power. We are never lifted to the heights or plunged into the depths.

-- Probably the main thing about Whitman after all is his tremendous egoism, the thrust and power of the personal pronoun. At first this rather [??] and irritates me, what a colonial egotist, we are apt to say; but by and by we come under

its power and see that it is not out of proportion -- that the man makes his worlds good that he is not above man but of the and would bring the whole race flush with himself. It is the egoism and ever living presence that makes the Leaves a man, in the sense that no other work is, of course it is the personal quality that tells in all writing and in all action too. How much of a man are you? is the "I" expression of mere personal conceit, or of a deep broad natural egoism? We usually call it character but by whatever name, it is the man back of all.

-- Are W's ethical values greater than his literary or artistic values? But does not the ethical value of any piece of writing finally depend upon the literary value? upon the manner of presentation? A sermon aims at ethical value but if its literary value be

low will its ethical value be high? I think not. Every page of Emerson has an ethical import which is enhanced by the poetic quality of the writing. Teh goody-goody books are good ethics, but they do not strike [crossed ou: ???] home because they are poor literature. W's ethical or patriotic or philosophic value will not save him; these things would not save the Bible -- only an effective presentation can embalm them. Matter and manner are both equally important. The younger writers, Stevenson, Pater, Howells, James have the manner but not the matter -- they have nothing important to say, but they say it extremely well. The matter is always in the man, in his personality, in the comprehensiveness of his relation to life and to nature -- in that something we call wright and authority. How extremely clever Howells, how he tickles the literary and visual sense

but he gives one no adequate sense of bulk or power -- he has no deep significance. The new men are all light-weights. They do not love greatly, or feel deeply or think profoundly.

Dec. 17 On my way over to Slab sides to-day was attracted by great hulibaloo among the chickadees and nuthatches in a hemlock tree. Such a chorus of tiny voices I had not heard for a long time. The tone was of trouble and dissent, if not of alarm. The nuthatch I think was the red bellied. I gazed long and long up into the dark dense green mass of the tree to make out the cause of the complaint. The chickadees were clinging to the ends of the sprays, as usual, very busy looking for food, and all the time uttering their plaint. At last I spied the cause -- a little owl on a limb looking down intently upon me. How annoying such exposure and hue and cry on the

part of the birds, must be to the little lover of quiet and privacy!

19. A little flurry of snow last night; cooler and windy this morning.

-- In N.Y. last Sunday heard a sermon on Nature and Evil by Merle Wright. Sound in its philosophy I think but lacking in vividness and concreteness in its presentation. It was Whitmans doctrine of evil -- that evil is temporary or unripe good, or a necessary part of the good, I should have said. My brethren, there is no abstract or absolute evil, there is only temporary and passing evil. Evil in human life is what hinders and defeats, and gives pain Ignorance is an evil when it does these things; Knowledge is an evil when it does these things. Evil tends to extinguish itself. The currant worm is an evil to the current; its course, if unchecked, is to kill and destroy that which it feeds upon

and thus bring about its own destruction. The same with the elm beetle or potato beetle. Fire is an evil when it gets the upper hand of you, and tends in the same way to self extinction. There is no principle of evil as the theologians have taught; things are evil with reference to us and our wants. There are antagonistic or mutually destructive forces in nature and the present state of things in the physical cosmos, is the equilibrium brought about by the endless clashing and warring of these forces. There is no such thing as cold, there is only heat; no such thing as darkness; true is only light. In a general survey evil is imperfection, and imperfection is a condition of growth, and hence necessary.

-- The case of young Harry Sutcliff and his death upon the R.R., still runs in my mind. It was said that he had recently been heard to say that he wished for death that he might join his mother in heaven. The revival meetings here at the church which he had been attending every night seem to have filled him with such thoughts. The engineer of the train said at the inquest that he thought he must have been deaf, as he paid no heed to the train screeching and thundering behind him in the still morning air. The up train was not yet in sight or hearing. How shall we account for it? What deadened him to the sound of the train? Some think he was meditating over the prayer meeting which he was to conduct that night in the church. If so what power of abstraction he must have had! Miss Gordon [~~crossed out: th~~] said



she believed God took away his reason at that moment, because he had other use for him! Think of such a view of the almighty as that! It was the will of God of course. If a man is struck by an engine going 40 miles an hour it is the will of God that he should be killed -- the world is thus made. Was it the will of God that he should be upon the track and should fail to hear the approaching train? Of course it was. [crossed out: Have] Given all the circumstances and conditions the physical and mental forces acting upon him would of course land him just there and just thus self absorbed. In this sense everything that happens is inevitable and is thus the will of God.

20 A bright, still sharp day. Mercury down to 18 this morning. No snow. I do not forget that this is the 16th anniversary of

Mothers death and the 93rd of fathers birth. Much thin floating ice in river to-day.

23. Winter, full fledged, upon us at last. Snowed all last night and all day to-day from north with mercury at 20 or lower; snow light and very dry, nearly one foot.

24 Clear, down to zero and below; river closed -- bright now ice in front of us

-- Extract from letter to admiring stranger -- "I am glad to hear that words of mine have been a help to any body. I think they have been a help to myself have deepened my love of nature and added to my resources. Writing or speaking from our heart, no doubt deepens the channel of our thoughts and feelings.

-- One season when I was 15 or 16, I had such a desire to go away to school. To this day I can occasionally

surprise a remnant of that desire in my mind, or a sort of lingering whiff or odor of it. I wanted to go to Harpersfield. Dick Van Dyke a neighbors boy [crossed out: went there] had been there and was going again in Sept. and I wanted to go with him. Father half-promised that I might go. He said I must help do up the falls work first. There was a field above the sugar bush that had to be crop-plowed. I must do that. So at it I went -- the first and last field I ever plowed. Day after day in the September weather I followed the plow, all the time thinking of Harpersfield. What a charm the name had for me. I lived in its atmosphere for weeks. But I never got there. Dick went and I stayed behind. Father when the pinch came, said no, he could not spare the money, the home school was good enough and I must wait But thinking it over at this late

day I conclude I went to Harpers-field after all, or that it came to me. The desire, the ambition, the dream, [crossed out: was] were probably more to me than the reality itself would have been. It gave a fine tone to my days. The disappointment was a good discipline, it threw me back upon upon myself and helped to clinch my purpose to yet go away to school upon money of my own earning, which I did [crossed out: in] a year or two later. How different with my own boy; he has but to wish for schooling and it is his. Is it best so? I doubt it. I fear he will miss the great educational value of defeat and denial.

-- If there were no freshets or floods in the creek, its channel would no doubt be more easy and uniform, but we should miss the great deep pools. The unsightly banks of gravel and drift is the price paid for the deep pools.

-- The dangerous thing is the desire to write -- the literacy itch; the only safety is in having something inside you that presses for utterance, some thought or experience that will be expressed.

Xmas; Two or three degrees below this morning -- the trees all feathered out with white frost plumage. Madam angry and abusive as usual -- all because I did not bring home a lot of worthless stuff for Xmas.

-- Business Depression -- That the whole energy of the civilized world can be turned into business channels -- into trade, manufacturing, farming mining, rail-roading, with all the stupendous aids of science, and not produce too much of everything -- this is what the political doctors do not see. That production must outrun consumption under

modern stimulated conditions, is self-evident. One man now does the work of twenty or more, and the currency has not increased in proportion. The per capita criterion is not the right one. The volume of goods to be handled and consumed is the measure. If these increase faster than the currency, prices will fall, because more things must be bought with less money.

31 A warmer spell the past few days. Today bright and clear and the sun melting the snow. The month goes out beautifully.

Jan. 1 Clear and sharp, mercury at 16 at ten am. Clouds come up hurriedly and cover the sky.

-- A good motto to start the new year upon: Set thy mark low as regards thy deserts, high as regards thy duties.

4 Still warm and soft, mercury about 50 degrees. Snow nearly all gone, no rain yet. A few days ago I saw and heard bluebirds. Spending my time writing a little in the forenoons on literary themes, sawing wood and walking in afternoon. -- To a certain critic: Can't you see that Whitman admits of and justifies this kind of statement -- Can't you see that is is all made out of him and that, therefore, the substance of it must be in him? Can't you see that it is not outside, cut and dried, eulogy, but a sympathetic drawing out and re-statement of his intrinsic values? Could I have written the book had not the

subject suggested it? or begot it upon me, as it were? You might as well say I eulogize Nature in my other books. I give you the result of the contact of my spirit with Whitman's. Whatever there is there comes from him through me. Could I have said these things of Tupper?

7 Mild clear weather, like November. Snow all gone; ice on river broken up in places. Bees have flown to this well. Five bluebirds yesterday, says Julian, eating berries of poison ivy.

8 Clear and a little colder, mercury down to 20 degrees this morning.



9 Bright, sharp day, mercury 17 degrees this morning. I write in forenoon and go over to SS in afternoon. I do not forget that it is the 13th anniversary of Father's death. No snow.

-- I wonder if there is another so-called literary man who spends his time as I do -- in the solitude of the country, amid the common people. Here I sit, night after night, year after year, alone in my little Study perched upon a broad slope of the Hudson, my light visible from afar, reading an hour or two each evening, and then to bed at 9. No callers, no society, no proper family or home life. Not in years has a person dropped in to spend the evening with me. Occasionally Julian comes in after

his return from school, and we talk awhile. (Julian is developing a very quick, keen, and eager intelligence.) Up in the morning before daylight and lend a hand in getting breakfast, and then the furnace and a few chores; the fifteen minute walk to the P.O. and back; building a fire in the Study; a little reading and then, at 9, to work with my pen till noon. Then dinner and a few chores, then sawing and splitting wood for the next 24 hours, then a walk to Slabsides, or elsewhere; then a little reading and dozing in my Study; then supper and darkness again. Every day and every day in winter the same. What long, long thoughts I have! What constant retrospection, what longing for the old days and people! The world goes by me

afar off. I hear its roar and hubub, but care little to mingle in it. It is mostly vanity and vexation of spirit.

17 Rain last night but not heavy. The last bit of snow gone. Clear today here, snow squalls in the Catskills. Colder in pm.

18 A cold wave, down to 20 degrees this morning; ground like iron; ice on river one broad glare. Sky clear with much wind. Health unusually good these days, and mind eager and active, even prolific of ideas.

-- Just looked again into Dr. Johnson. His essays do not seem to have been spoken out of his real mind at all, but out of some kind of artificial or put-on faculty, like most sermons one hears, or the editorials one reads

Most men are wiseer in talk than in writing. In writing we are apt to dip the cup too deep. Now if you want the cream of the milk you must not dip too deep. Real wisdom is light. After a man passes middle life, and have on wisdom, it is on the surface of his mind, and withing easy reach. Set him after it with his pen, and the chances are he will get but little of it. He will be too formal; he will get himself up for the occasion there will be no ease or indifference in his method; he will go to delving in his mind, and we will not get that simple self-expression we are after. The last benefit of

a conversation is that it makes a man simple, and makes him value the plain, near by things. What is interesting in a man is what he himself has felt or experienced. If you can tell us that, we shall listen eagerly. The raw man does not know this, but seeks the far-off or the deep=down. Hence the best writing is like talk, it is so direct, and there is so little beating around the bush in it. Hence comes in the value of the interviewer. If he get real talk out of the politician, or the celelbrity, the chances are that his report will be vastly more entertaining and meaty than a speach or a letter from the interviewer would be.

Or, it is like nudging the tree -- the ripe fruit falls easy. The pen often brings off unripe fruit, like a determined shake. We make a dead-set at the mind

We are determined it shall yield up its fruit. Talk is spontaneous, writing is premeditation and labor.

In Dr. Johnson's talk, you touch the real man; in his essays, you touch only his clothes, or his periwig. In letter, too, people are apt to give us their real selves, women especially.

Carlyle wrote as he talked; but the reading is less than the hearing because the voice and the laugh smoothed it. The printed page is rough. Now a smooth road does not add to the pleasure of riding or walking any more than a smooth page, a steady flow, adds to the pleasure of reading. And many of Carlyle's sentences do give the mind a jolt.

It seems as if the German language must bruise the eye at least, with all its capital letters.

-- Say a recent writer: "All health changes are evolutionary, not revolutionary". In fact, are not all revolutions evevolutions? we shall soon have no use for the word revolution. The French and The American Revolutions were certainly evolutions, growths, expansions.

20 Cold, down to 6 degrees aboce; ice like glass.

21 Snow last night, turning to rain; sploschy and foggy this morning. A great change.

-- It is better to be too soft than too hard, is it not? We win more love, we have more enjoyment; we are more flexible; we can give ourselves more freely and entirely.

P.M. Quite warm, sunshiny; snow nearly all gone. Sit in my summerhouse, Julian and I, for ten minutes; insects dancing in the air.

22 Bright and warm; only a little frost last night.

-- If I write my Autobiography shall call it, "How it was with me."

25 Cold wave, down to zero in some places here, 6 degrees above at my house.

How true it is that life blossoms but once for us, and that is in youth. The persons and events we knew then are primary; they made the world; they are part of the frame of things. All later ones are secondary and are soon forgotten.



The later men who take the places of those we knew in our youth, seem like substitutes, mere make-shifts, and of no account. The old men, the real old men, why, they are all dead long ago: we knew them in our youth; they were always old, old from the foundations of the earth. These old men are mere imitations. We can remember when they were not old! It is all put on. The grandfathers and grandmothers whom we know -- think of any present-day grandfathers and grandmothers being anything more than mere counterfeits of them!

28 A good-sized snow storm came up the coast; snowed all night and till noon today, 9 inches. A tearing wind this

afternoon and all night.

30 Bright, cold; zero in many places, 10 above at my house.

Feb. 1 Still bright and cold, 3 degrees below this morning. Still brilliant winter weather; sleighing fairly good; hauling manure and muck. Julian and I still alone. Mrs. B. in Poughkeepsie since the 35th.

-- A nuthatch feeding on the suet on the tree in front of my window uses his tail to frighten away the chickadees; spreads it suddenly like a fan, showing its brilliant colors of white, blue, and black. It seems to be his only weapon. The chicks are getting so they do not mind it. Just now he sat for nearly a minute near them with his tail spread, or opening and shutting it, while a chick ate away undisturbed.

5 Cold this morning, near zero. Ice harvest begins on the river today.

-- Hiram comes again at noon, looks well. A big "row-jow" in the kitchen at night, all for Hiram. If it was spring, we would move to Slabides at once.

6 Milder, begins raining slowly in afternoon.

7 Still slowly raining, with fog -- a bluebird a few days ago.

-- As we sit here at night with our minds reverted to the past, I love to ask Hiram again about the men. "In what year did Pete Tiffany work for us?" I ask. "In '44", says Hiram. What a strange feeling it gives me; what a vision of the year passes before me; What a far-off innocent time it seems to me! How many great

souls were about in the world at that time; they seem to have kept the earth warm. Oh, how pathetic is the retrospect, how unspeakable! It all comes to a focus on the old home, father and mother in the flower of their days, and the brood of us children all under the paternal wings.

-- When I see in the tlocal papter that a child has been born to some one in Roxbury, why should I think of father and mother, and feel a nameless pang. I do not know, but so it is. I can hardly analyze the feeling. Their last baby was born there over fifty years ago. I think of the joy they had in their children, and aof all their outlook upon life, and how it is all past and hushed so long ago. I see myself as a little boy rocking the cradle again, or minding the baby, while Mother bakes or mends or seeps or washes I hear her voice singing. I see Father pushing on

the work of the farm. Then there is another feeling. It seems late for babies to be born into the world; the show is about over; the curtain will soon fall; what can remain now of interest compared to what we have seen? It does not matter that one's reason tells him the world is old and played out only to him; that grandfather at my age probably felt the same, and his grandfather, and his, and his, felt the same; that to the young the world is young and untried, and full of promise, as it was to us in youth -- it does not matter I say, if this be so, the actual, concrete feeling remains the same, and life is a tale that is nearly finished.

10 Clear and mild this pm, mercury only 3 degrees below freezing last night. Mild since Sunday, the 7th. Snow nearly all gone; ice harvest cut short; doubtful if any more ice is cut. Hiram at work on a new wagon-box. I hear his hammer as I write. Not well the past three days. Sore throat and general lassitude.

19 Was quite seriously ill the 16, Grip, I suppose -- fever and much pain. Dr. Read came three times. Am slowly mending now. Catarrh in head and lung remains. Was shut in the house from Thursday till Thursday, a kind of purgatory.

A fine snow on the 11th about 10 inches. Colder after the snow. About zero one morning. Began to thaw Tuesday and has been bright and thawy since

Snow rapidly disappearing. Good say weather. Ice men in despair.

25 Go to N.Y. Stay till March 1. Stop at Hotel New Amsterdam with Hamlin Garland; a fine fellow, much talk, very profitable to me. Dine and lunch here and there as I am invited. Do not gain much in strength -- up too late o' nights.

March 1 Start for Washington this pm. Snowing in N.Y.

2 Lovely, mild, soft spring day in W. Walk out over the Rock Creek bridge; how the buried past comes back!

3 Rainy and Chilly.

4 an ideal day. Hang about the great inauguration crowd. See McKingley's hat as the carriage drives by. Do not

take much stock in him, tho' his face is a strong one.

Saty in W. till the 9th. On Sunday, the 7th, Miss Merriam and I walk to the woods; a bright but chilly day; find a single hepatica on Piney Branch where I used to pluck my first hepatica long ago.

8 Overcast and chilly. Frank Baker, Miss Merriam and I walk up Rock Creek above Blagden's Mill. Woods grand and new to me.

10 Home today. Ice in river broke up last night.

11 Bright, lovely day, sparrows, robins, bluebirds all about. A starling over by the station.

12 Threatens rain. Sparrows



vocal as of old. Do they touch me as of old? I try to think so. Hiram at work on the hen-house at SS yesterday. I go over in PM and sit near, and look on and try to realize that it is the Hiram of my boyhood, actually working here in this solitude.

Only a little frost last night.

-- In Washington I flitted about for a moment amid the old scenes of other days, through the halls of the Treasury, the Rotunda of the Capitol, the Monument lot, past the houses where I had lived, along Piney Branch and Rock Creek, full of thoughts of the past. Here I had stood or walked with Channy; here I had strolled with Walt' here I had wandered in solitude with my youth. How it all came back to me but with a pathos I did not then feel.

14 Snowing after a day of great brightness and sharpness. 2 1/2 inches.

17 Clear and shapr, down to 15 degrees this morning. Strength slowly recovering. WP Slow rain all night, fog and mist today; ice nearly all out of the river. Sparrows and robins singing as of old.

21 Damp, misty with signs of clearing this morning. Roads very muddy. Mercury above 40 degrees. On 19th it was up to 52 degrees.

23 Light sprinkle or rain last night. Warm and spring-like today; all the early birds here including phoebe.  
In afternoon Hiram and I move over to Slabsides and take up the old story where we dropped it last Nov.

24 began raining early in the evening. Wind in the east this mornign and raining slowly. Storm came up via Georgia. One robin, one sparrow, and one phoebe here this morning to keep me company. Also the mourning-doves.

I fee llike a toad that has got out from under the harrow.

29 After five days of blustery, chilly, squally cloudy March weather, we hae clear skies and a prospect of warm, cam days. Froze last night. Promises a splendid say day among the Delaware hills.

At SS reading Economics, and touching up some Mss.

Last night, sitting by the fire, Hiram and I again referred to the old names and events of long ago. That little span of one's youth, how its memories dominate one's life, especially as one grows old!

April 1 The fifth of the bright, sharp days -- days from the North. Froze quite hard last night, not a cloud today.

Yesterday Julian and I paddled up the Creek to Black Pond for ducks. No ducks seen. A warbler in song in the woods, probably the pine warbler. A flock of rusty blackbirds on the margin of the stream all singing in concert, a musical jangle; some of their notes very pleasing. I paddle up and Julian paddles back. Nip falls overboard twice, and then shakes the boat with his shivering. We return by Tom Riley's and Tom shows us where a hawk killed his rooster on Sunday.

April comes in dry, hard and brilliant -- a face of steel.

2 Bright crystalline days continue, 8 or 10 degrees of frost every night ideal sap-weather; roads getting dusty. Not a cloud, sky a hard, intense blue.

Van Ingen and daughter Josie up yesterday painting my portrait. Miss Ball of Vassar, and a Mrs. S up at 4 pm. Take them out to Julian's Rock -- two jolly women.

3 My 60th birthday. Clear and sharp as usual. I spent the day thus: After breakfast I read and wrote till near 11, when Van Ingen and his daughter arrived. Sat for Josie to paint my portrait till 12. Then had dinner; then talked and read paper for an hour; then sat again for Josie for an hour. All 3 go over to the house and poke about. Day much warmer. Forgot to say that after breakfast I helped Hiram saw off the butt of his hickory log -- a lugging, half-hour piece of work.

Health good, sleep ditto. Back rather weak and easily tired since the Grippe left me; mind fairly active; spirit pretty good.

5 The end of the brilliant days. Clouded up yesterday pm, and last night a gentle rain. Cloudy and mild this morning.

9 Heavy rain, rained all last night and near all day today from 3, probably 2 inches of water. Mrs. B. gone to Saratoga. Julian here with Hiram and me.

10 Bright and cool. Arbutus beginning to bloom.

11 Sunday bright and fine. Julian and I and the Taylor girls go to Sunset Rock in PM. The fresh green rye patches beyond Black Pond and the pink and red flush over the swamp maples along the Creek make a very pleasing April scene. J. and I see a Marsh hawk (male) alright in a field and devour

something. I go there and find a half [??] white footed mouse. Find a hand full of my fine arbutus. A charming day.

12 Quite a frost last night, but day promises to be fine.

[crossed out: 13] Fine day. Spoke in P. in the evening before teachers association.

13 Frost again last night; bright sharp day

14 Warmer, threatens rain; heard water thrush

15 Rain from NE. Sat by fire reading Walker on Money and watching my pot of beans baking in the chimney corner.  
Rain not wanted. Amasa set out 1200 celery plants yesterday.

Rain heavy in afternoon.

-- Walking in the woods I gathered a handful of hepaticas, some of them sweet-scented, as I came along I said this is what most of the poets do; they aim to gather a handful of poetic flowers. If one hepatica or one group of them is so beautiful there amid the dry leaves and woody rubbish, why shall we not gather a hundred of them and find the beauty multiplied an hundred fold? But it is not so. We gather the flower but not the beauty of which it was the occasion and of which it was only a part. In the room the bunch of flowers look tame and common place enough. The beauty was in the contrast, the unexpectedness, the separateness etc. In the poem there is just this too much of skimmed off or culled beauty. Its connection its genesis is not there; the best part is left out.



16 Bright and cool after the rain, light frost last night.

Stopped last night in the wet spongy meadow in front of Dick Martins and heard the "Wood cocks evening hymn", The bird was calling in the twilight, "yeap" "yeap" or "seap" seap" from the ground, a peculiar reedy call. Then by and by it started upward on an easy slant that peculiar whistling of its wings alone heard, then at an altitude of 100 feet or more, it began to [crossed out: circle] drift about in wide circles and broke out in an ecstatic chipper, almost a warble at times, with a peculiar smacking musical quality; then in a minute or so it dropped back to the ground again, not like the lark, but more spirally, and continued its call as before. In less than five minutes it was up again

Looking in the direction of the sun now in the late or mid after-noon, the soft maples stand in a rosy mist or nimbus against the vivid green of a meadow slope or rye field beyond. How pleasing the prospect, the maidenhood of April. The old dreams, the old longings come back. Oh, April, how I love you.

17. More rain; begun in the night. A disgust of rain seems near.

18 Easter Sunday; light frost again last night, no real warmth yet. Day promises to be bright and mild.

19 Warmer with threatening clouds from S.W.

First heard whipporwill on the 16th

20 A sudden and very severe cold wave last night, as if some one there in the North had opened a big window and let the Arctic currents flow in upon us. The whole atmosphere seemed chilled in ten minutes. Mercury dropped from 60 to 22 before morning with strong wind; formed ice nearly an inch thick; killed some, if not all the young celery; killed all my cherries, and I fear the currants, too.

21. Very cold again last night, about 24 degrees here, and 28 at Riverby. Milder to-day: a wonderfully clear and delightful day, Great damage to fruit buds all over the country. Below zero in northern Michigan

24 A soft brooding, slightly veiled April day, a female day, bewitching full of sentiment. Shad trees in bloom, warblers just arriving, turtle dove softly calling, swallows twittering over head, social sparrow chanting, farmer plowing, gardeners planting, downy wood pecker drumming, violets blooming. The streams and little brooks run full and clear, the river is full of shad and herring, the hen if off the nest with her tender brood. The cow hides her calf in the dry leaves in the woods, the sheep steer for the uplands, the sow nurses her "faint pink litter" in the sun -- in short it is late in April and the tide of life is mounting in all things. Mercury promises to reach above 70 degrees.

25. Our April hot spell upon us at last -- three days now of summer temperature -- to-day goes above 80. Everything growing on a jump; currants and cherry trees just beginning to bloom.

26. Cooler with light rain in the night. Clear and fine. How sweet is the world.

29. Frost again last night, but not severe. Spring comes reluctantly.

-- How free is Arnolds criticism from anything subtle, curious, far fetched; no hair splitting, no special pleading, no ingenious turnings and [??] He always keeps to the broad open road. It is always the common sense view, touched and heightened by his fine poetic and literary quality. Here in is a lesson for me.

April 30. April goes out like a dream, soft, warm, (above 70) veiled; the maples in a thin yellowish green veil, the cherry trees draped in white, a mist of green in the orchards and woods.

-- To a poet friend in the city

How I pity you; how much you are missing that a poet ought to see, -- the first dandelions by the road side, the grazing cattle, the succulent nip of the tender grass, -- the plow turning the furrow, the hen with her brood, the children on their way to school with hands full of violets and wild flowers; the emerald rye fields and a thousand other things that make the country so charming these last April days.

May 1st

Cloudy, with spurts of rain from N.E. Cooler.

2. Still cloudy with dashes of rain at long intervals. All the forest trees touched by the wand of spring. Poppletown Hill looks classic with its vivid green and brown.

5 After 4 days of cloud and rain the sky is again clear; ground well soaked. Cool. Mrs Hale and her friend come Monday the 3d. Two very interesting women. The new woman is a great improvement on the old. She loves the open air like a man and is nearly as unconventional. There seems to be more poetry in her soul than in the man's.

7 A perfect day yesterday. Rain last night from the West, Cool, and clearing this morning.

10 May, No fault to find with May now; warm S. wind yesterday and to-day, a greenish yellow over all the woods; the time of the blooming of orchards at hand; apple trees great bouquets, pear trees mounds of snow; warblers arriving; just heard the Connecticut again, as I did last year. k-chink, k-chink, k-chink, chr-r-r-r, or nearly that, very bright and animated song; delivered on the wing also as it flew to a new perch with quivering wing. Seems related to ground warblers.

Yesterday morning when we first got up, at 5, Hiram called my attention to some large black object [crossed out: upon] about mid way of a tree near the top of the ridge back of Ingersolls. It seemed as large as a turkey. Hiram said he bet it was a coon. I felt sure it was an Eagle. We kept an eye on it for nearly



an hour; then we saw it move, presently I saw a gleam of white as the bird bent forward to preen its plumage; then it stood up and lifted its plumage and wings and shook itself; a bald and no mistake Had he passed the night there? I hope so. By and by having fixed himself for the day, he launched into the air and flew directly over the house. The thought of him lingered all day. What attracted him here attracts me -- the wildness and seclusion; the precipitous gulf etc. Noble lodger, I hope you will come nightly to my craggy retreat. It is an inspiration for all day to look out of the window as I get up and see thee upon thy perch.

Fine shower in afternoon.

13. Rain all day. Rain yesterday also. The drains here full of water; a freshet in all the streams. Rain from S.W. and rather warm. Johnson and his wife left to-day. Came Tuesday night. Enjoyed their visit much. apple bloom beaten off by the rain.

14 Every thing sodden this morning, the sky as well; fog and heavy clouds. May in the sulks.  
Bright and warm in afternoon.

15. Rain again last night. Clear and lovely this morning. Rain enough to stand us a month.

18 Loveliest of May days, this the fourth in succession. A kind of shining nimbus diffused through the air  
22

23 Bright, clear cool day, after some rain; very beautiful, -- in the [???].

25 A fine rain again last night, rather warm to-day.

26. Cool; wind N.W; frost farther north. No real heat yet this spring; fine grass and grain weather. promises of a big hay crop.

27 Go out home to-day on early train all well, Boys working on the road.