AMOS ALCOTT

CONCORD DAYS

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Alcott A.

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Содержание

A. Bronson Alcott
Concord Days

"Cheerful and various thoughts not always bound
To counsel, nor in deep ideas drowned."

James Howel.

APRIL

1869

"Now fades the last long streak of snow."

– Tennyson.

DIARIES

Thursday, 1.

Come again into my study, having sat some time for greater comfort in the sunnier east room by an open fire, as needful in our climate, almost, as in that of changeable England. Busy days these last, with a little something to show for them. After all, I am here most at home, and myself surrounded by friendly pictures and books, free to follow the mood of the moment, – read, write, recreate. I wish more came of it all. Here are these voluminous diaries, showy seen from without, with far too little of life transcribed within. Was it the accident of being shown, when a boy, in the old oaken cabinet, my mother's little journal, that set me out in this chase of myself, continued almost uninterruptedly, and now fixed by habit as a part of the day, like the rising and setting of the sun? Yet it has educated me into whatever skill I possess with the pen, I know not to how much besides; has made me emulous of attaining the art of portraying my thoughts, occupations, surroundings, friendships; and could I succeed in sketching to the life a single day's doings, should esteem myself as having accomplished the chiefest feat in literature. Yet the nobler the life and the busier, the less, perhaps, gets written, and that which is, the less rewards perusal.

"Life's the true poem could it be writ,
Yet who can live at once and utter it."

All is in the flowing moments. But who shall arrest these and fix the features of the passing person behind the pageantry, and write the diary of one's existence?

MY HOUSE

Saturday, 3.

My neighbors flatter me in telling me that I have one of the best placed and most picturesque houses in our town. I know very well the secret of what they praise. 'Tis simply adapting the color and repairs to the architecture, and holding these in keeping with the spot.

A house, like a person, invites by amiable reserves, as if it loved to be introduced in perspective and reached by courteous approaches. Let it show bashfully behind shrubberies, screen its proportions decorously in plain tints, not thrust itself rudely, like an inn, upon the street at cross-roads. A wide lawn in front, sloping to the road gracefully, gives it the stately air and courtly approach. I like the ancient mansions for this reason; these old Puritan residences for their unpretending air, their sober tints, in strict keeping with Wordsworth's rule of coloring, viz. that of the sod about the grounds. A slight exaltation of this defines best the architecture by distinguishing it from surrounding objects in

the landscape. Modest tints are always becoming. White and red intolerable. And for some variety in dressing, the neighboring barks of shrubbery suggest and best characterize the coloring.

As for fences and gates, I was told that mine were unlike any other in the world, yet as good as anybody's, hereby meaning to praise them, I infer. If less durable than others, the cost is inconsiderable, and has the associated pleasure, besides, of having come out of such ideal capital as I had invested in my own head and hands. A common carpenter would have spent more time in planing and fixing his pickets and set something in straight lines with angular corners to deform the landscape; then the painter must have followed with some tint mixed neither by nature nor art. Now my work delights my eyes whenever I step out-of-doors, adding its ornament to the spot. Grotesque it may be with its knotted ornaments, Druid supports, yet in keeping with the woods behind it. Besides, what pleasure the construction has given! Form, color, ornamentation alike concern builder and occupant, as they were blossoms of his taste and of the landscape. A good architect is both builder and colorist, and should be a good man besides, according to the ancient authorities. Roman Vitruvius claims as much, if not more, of him: —

"It is necessary," he says, "that an architect should be instructed in the precepts of moral philosophy; for he ought to have a great soul, and be bold without arrogance, just, faithful, and totally exempt from avarice. He should have a great docility, which may hinder him from neglecting the advice that is given him, not only of the meanest artist, but also of those that understand nothing of architecture; for not only architects but all the world must judge his works."

Houses have their history, are venerable on account of their age and origin. Even our newly-settled country of but a century or two has already crowned homesteads still standing with royal honors. Mine, I conjecture, is not far from one hundred and fifty years' standing. It was a first-class country house in its day, with its window-seats in parlor and chambers, ornamental summers and casements, its ample fireplaces, and lean-to on the northern side. Like most of its period it was open to the road with overshadowing elms still embowering the mansion; had a lion-headed door-knocker, and huge chimney-tops surmounting the gables. Of learned ancestry, moreover; having been the homestead of a brother of President Hoar, of Harvard College, and remained in possession of members of that venerable family down to near the beginning of the present century. The site is hardly surpassed by any on the old Boston road; the woods behind crowning the range of hills running north almost to the village, and bordering east on Wayside, Hawthorne's last residence. It must have been chosen by an original settler, probably coming with the Rev. Peter Bulkeley from England, in 1635.[1]

The ancient elms before the house, of a hundred years' standing and more, are the pride of the yard. It were sacrilege to remove a limb or twig unless decayed, so luxuriant and far-spreading, overshadowing the roof and gables, yet admitting the light into hall and chambers. Sunny rooms, sunny household. "Build your house," says a mystic author, "upon a firm foundation, and let your aspect be towards the east, where the sun rises, that so you may enjoy its fruitfulness in your household and orchards."

Whether the first settler planted these elms, or whether they are survivors of the primitive forest which was felled to make way and room for the rude shelter of the hardy settlers, is not ascertained. Their roots penetrate primitive soil; the surrounding grounds have become productive by the industry and skill, mellowed and meliorated by the humanities of their descendants. They came honestly by their homesteads, paying their swarthy claimants fair prices for them; the landscape is still inviting by its prairie aspects, its brook-sides and meadows where the red men trod.

It was these broad meadows beside the "Grass ground River" that tempted alike the white and red man, – the one for pasturage, the other for fishing, – and brought the little colony through the

[1] Johnson, in his "Wonder Working Providence Concerning New England," describes the company of settlers on their way from Cambridge, under the lead of the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, the principal founder of Concord.

wilderness to form the settlement named "Musketaquid," after the river of that name (signifying grass ground), and later taking that of Concord, not without note in history.

"Beneath low hills, in the broad interval
Through which at will our Indian rivulet
Winds mindful still of sannup and of squaw,
Whose pipe and arrow oft the plough unburies;
Here, in pine houses, built of new-fallen trees,
Supplanters of the tribe, the planters dwelt."

The view from the rustic seat overlooking my house commands the amphitheatre in which the house stands, and through which flows Mill brook, bordered on the south and east by the Lincoln woods. It is a quiet prospect and might be taken for an English landscape; needs but a tower or castle overtopping the trees surrounding it. The willows by the rock bridge over the brook, the winding lane once the main track of travel before the turnpike branching off from the old Boston road by Emerson's door was built, adds to the illusion, while on the east stands the pine-clad hill, Hawthorne's favorite haunt, and hiding his last residence from sight.

On the southwest is an ancient wood, Thoreau's pride, beyond which is Walden Pond, distant about a mile from my house, and best reached by the lane opening opposite Hawthorne's. Fringed on all sides by woods, the interval, once a mill pond, is now in meadow and garden land, the slopes planted in vineyards, market gardens and orchards lining the road along which stand the farmers' houses visible in the opening.

This road has more than a local interest. If any road may claim the originality of being entitled to the name of American, it is this, – since along its dust the British regulars retreated from their memorable repulse at the Old North Bridge, the Concord military following fast upon their heels, and from the hill-tops giving them salutes of musketry till they disappeared beyond Lexington, and gave a day to history.

An agricultural town from the first, it is yet such in large measure; though like others in its neighborhood becoming suburban and commercial. Fields once in corn and grass are now in vineyards and orchards, tillage winding up the slopes from the low lands to the hill-tops. The venerable woods once crowning these are fast falling victims to the axe. The farmsteads are no longer the rural homes they were when every member of the family took part in domestic affairs; foreign help serves where daughters once served; they with their brothers having left the housekeeping and farming for school, factories, trade, a profession, and things are drifting towards an urbane and municipal civilization, the metropolis extending its boundaries, and absorbing the townships for many miles round.

Moreover, the primitive features of the landscape are being obliterated by the modern facilities for business and travel, less perhaps than in most places lying so near the metropolis; the social still less than the natural; the descendants of the primitive fathers of the settlement cherishing a pride of ancestry not unbecoming in a republic, less favorable for the perpetuation of family distinctions and manners than in countries under monarchical rule.

OUTLOOK

Monday, 5.

One's outlook is a part of his virtue. Does it matter nothing to him what objects accost him whenever he glances from his windows, or steps out-of-doors? He who is so far weaned from the landscape, or indifferent to it, as not to derive a sweet and robust habit of character therefrom, seems out of keeping with nature and himself. I suspect something amiss in him who has no love, no

enthusiasm for his surroundings, and that his friendships, if such he profess, are of a cold and isolate quality at best; one even questions, at times, whether the residents of cities, where art has thrown around them a world of its own, are compensated by all this luxury of display, – to say nothing of the social artifices wont to steal into their costly compliments, – for the simple surroundings of the countryman, which prompt to manliness and true gentility. A country dwelling without shrubbery, hills near or in the distance, a forest and water view, if but a rivulet, seems so far incomplete as if the occupants themselves were raw and impoverished. Wood and water god both, man loves to traverse the forests, wade the streams, and confess his kindred alliance with primeval things. He leaps not from the woods into civility at a single bound, neither comes from cities and conversations freed from the wildness of his dispositions. Something of the forester stirs within him when occasion provokes, as if men were trees transformed, and delighted to claim their affinities with their sylvan ancestry.

Man never tires of Nature's scene,
Himself the liveliest evergreen.

THOREAU

My friend and neighbor united these qualities of sylvan and human in a more remarkable manner than any whom it has been my happiness to know. Lover of the wild, he lived a borderer on the confines of civilization, jealous of the least encroachment upon his possessions.

"Society were all but rude
In his umbrageous solitude."

I had never thought of knowing a man so thoroughly of the country, and so purely a son of nature. I think he had the profoundest passion for it of any one of his time; and had the human sentiment been as tender and pervading, would have given us pastorals of which Virgil and Theocritus might have envied him the authorship had they chanced to be his contemporaries. As it was, he came nearer the antique spirit than any of our native poets, and touched the fields and groves and streams of his native town with a classic interest that shall not fade. Some of his verses are suffused with an elegiac tenderness, as if the woods and brooks bewailed the absence of their Lycidas, and murmured their griefs meanwhile to one another, – responsive like idyls. Living in close companionship with nature, his muse breathed the spirit and voice of poetry. For when the heart is once divorced from the senses and all sympathy with common things, then poetry has fled and the love that sings.

The most welcome of companions was this plain countryman. One seldom meets with thoughts like his, coming so scented of mountain and field breezes and rippling springs, so like a luxuriant clod from under forest leaves, moist and mossy with earth-spirits. His presence was tonic, like ice water in dog-days to the parched citizen pent in chambers and under brazen ceilings. Welcome as the gurgle of brooks and dipping of pitchers, – then drink and be cool! He seemed one with things, of nature's essence and core, knit of strong timbers, – like a wood and its inhabitants. There was in him sod and shade, wilds and waters manifold, – the mould and mist of earth and sky. Self-poised and sagacious as any denizen of the elements, he had the key to every animal's brain, every plant; and were an Indian to flower forth and reveal the scents hidden in his cranium, it would not be more surprising than the speech of our Sylvanus. He belonged to the Homeric age, – was older than pastures and gardens, as if he were of the race of heroes and one with the elements. He of all men seemed to be the native New-Englander, as much so as the oak, the granite ledge; our best sample of an indigenous American, untouched by the old country, unless he came down rather from Thor, the Northman, whose name he bore.

A peripatetic philosopher, and out-of-doors for the best part of his days and nights, he had manifold weather and seasons in him; the manners of an animal of probity and virtue unstained. Of all our moralists, he seemed the wholesomest, the busiest, and the best republican citizen in the world; always at home minding his own affairs. A little over-confident by genius, and stiffly individual, dropping society clean out of his theories, while standing friendly in his strict sense of friendship, there was in him an integrity and love of justice that made possible and actual the virtues of Sparta and the Stoics, – all the more welcome in his time of shuffling and pusillanimity. Plutarch would have made him immortal in his pages had he lived before his day. Nor have we any so modern withal, so entirely his own and ours: too purely so to be appreciated at once. A scholar by birthright, and an author, his fame had not, at his decease, travelled far from the banks of the rivers he described in his books; but one hazards only the truth in affirming of his prose, that in substance and pith, it surpasses that of any naturalist of his time; and he is sure of large reading in the future. There are fairer fishes in his pages than any swimming in our streams; some sleep of his on the banks of the Merrimack by moonlight that Egypt never rivalled; a morning of which Memnon might have envied the music, and a greyhound he once had, meant for Adonis; frogs, better than any of Aristophanes; apples wilder than Adam's. His senses seemed double, giving him access to secrets not easily read by others; in sagacity resembling that of the beaver, the bee, the dog, the deer; an instinct for seeing and judging, as by some other, or seventh sense; dealing with objects as if they were shooting forth from his mind mythologically, thus completing the world all round to his senses; a creation of his at the moment. I am sure he knew the animals one by one, as most else knowable in his town; the plants, the geography, as Adam did in his Paradise, if, indeed, he were not that ancestor himself. His works are pieces of exquisite sense, celebrations of Nature's virginity exemplified by rare learning, delicate art, replete with observations as accurate as original; contributions of the unique to the natural history of his country, and without which it were incomplete. Seldom has a head circumscribed so much of the sense and core of Cosmos as this footed intelligence.

If one would learn the wealth of wit there was in this plain man, the information, the poetry, the piety, he should have accompanied him on an afternoon walk to Walden, or elsewhere about the skirts of his village residence. Pagan as he might outwardly appear, yet he was the hearty worshipper of whatsoever is sound and wholesome in nature, – a piece of russet probity and strong sense, that nature delighted to own and honor. His talk was suggestive, subtle, sincere, under as many masks and mimicries as the shows he might pass; as significant, substantial, – nature choosing to speak through his mouth-piece, – cynically, perhaps, and searching into the marrows of men and times he spoke of, to his discomfort mostly and avoidance.

Nature, poetry, life, – not politics, not strict science, not society as it is, – were his preferred themes. The world was holy, the things seen symbolizing the things unseen, and thus worthy of worship, calling men out-of-doors and under the firmament for health and wholesomeness to be insinuated into their souls, not as idolators, but as idealists. His religion was of the most primitive type, inclusive of all natural creatures and things, even to "the sparrow that falls to the ground," though never by shot of his, and for whatsoever was manly in men, his worship was comparable to that of the priests and heroes of all time. I should say he inspired the sentiment of love, if, indeed, the sentiment did not seem to partake of something purer, were that possible, but nameless from its excellency. Certainly he was better poised and more nearly self-reliant than other men.

"The happy man who lived content
With his own town, his continent,
Whose chiding streams its banks did curb
As ocean circumscribes its orb,
Round which, when he his walk did take,
Thought he performed far more than Drake;

For other lands he took less thought
Than this his muse and mother brought."

More primitive and Homeric than any American, his style of thinking was robust, racy, as if Nature herself had built his sentences and seasoned the sense of his paragraphs with her own vigor and salubrity. Nothing can be spared from them; there is nothing superfluous; all is compact, concrete, as nature is.

His politics were of a piece with his individualism. We must admit that he found little in political or religious establishments answering to his wants, that his attitude was defiant, if not annihilating, as if he had said to himself: —

"The state is man's pantry at most, and filled at an enormous cost, – a spoliation of the human commonwealth. Let it go. Heroes can live on nuts, and freemen sun themselves in the clefts of rocks, rather than sell their liberty for this pottage of slavery. We, the few honest neighbors, can help one another; and should the state ask any favors of us, we can take the matter into consideration leisurely, and at our convenience give a respectful answer.

"But why require a state to protect one's rights? the man is all. Let him husband himself; needs he other servant or runner? Self-keeping is the best economy. That is a great age when the state is nothing and man is all. He founds himself in freedom, and maintains his uprightness therein; founds an empire and maintains states. Just retire from those concerns, and see how soon they must needs go to pieces, the sooner for the virtue thus withdrawn from them. All the manliness of individuals is sunk in that partnership in trade. Not only must I come out of institutions, but come out of myself, if I will be free and independent. Shall one be denied the privilege on coming of mature age of choosing whether he will be a citizen of the country he happens to be born in, or another? And what better title to a spot of ground than being a man, and having none? Is not man superior to state or country? I plead exemption from all interference by men or states with my individual prerogatives. That is mine which none can steal from me, nor is that yours which I or any man can take away."

"I am too high born to be propertied,
To be a secondary at control,
Or useful serving man and instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world."

A famous speech is recorded of an old Norseman thoroughly characteristic of this Teuton. "I believe neither in idols nor demons; I put my sole trust in my own strength of body and soul." The ancient crest of a pick-axe, with the motto, "Either I will find a way or make one," characterizes the same sturdy independence and practical materialism which distinguishes the descendants of Thor, whose symbol was a hammer.

He wrote in his Journal: —

"Perhaps I am descended from the Northman named Thorer, the dog-footed. He was the most powerful man of the North. To judge from his name, *Thorer Hund* belonged to the same family. Thorer is one of the most, if not the most common name in the chronicles of the Northmen. Snörro Sturleson says, 'from Thor's name comes Thorer, also Thorarimnn.' Again, 'Earl Rognvald was King Harald's dearest friend, and the king had the greatest regard for him. He was married to Hilda, a daughter of Rolf Nalfia, and their sons were Rolf and Thorer. Rolf became a great Viking, and of so stout a growth that no horse could carry him, and wheresoever he went, he went on foot, and therefore he was called Gange-Rolf.' Laing says in a note, what Sturleson also tells in the text, 'Gange-Rolf, Rolf-Ganger, Rolf the walker, was the conqueror of Normandy. Gange-Rolf's son was William, father of Richard, who was the father of Richard Longspear, and grandfather of William the Bastard, from whom the following English kings are descended.'"

"King Harald set Earl Rognvald's son Thorer over Möre, and gave him his daughter Alof in marriage. Thorer, called the Silent, got the same territory his father Rognvald had possessed. His brother Einar going into battle to take vengeance on his father's murderers, sang a kind of reproach against his brothers, Rollang and Rolf, for their slowness, and concludes: —

'And silent Thorer sits and dreams
At home, beside the mead bowl's streams.'

"Of himself it is related, that 'he cut a spread eagle on the back of his enemy Halfdan.'

"So it seems that from one branch of the family were descended the kings of England, and from the other, myself."

In his journal I find these lines: —

"Light-headed, thoughtless, shall I take my way
When I to Thee this being have resigned;
Well knowing when upon a future day,
With usurer's trust, more than myself to find."

Note. "Thoreau was born in Concord on the 12th of July, 1817. The old-fashioned house, its roof nearly reaching to the ground in the rear, remains as it was when he first saw the light in the easternmost of its upper chambers. It was the residence of his grandmother, and a perfect piece of our New-England style of building, with its gray, unpainted boards, its grassy, unfenced door-yard. The house is somewhat isolate and remote from thoroughfares. The Virginia road is an old-fashioned, winding, at length deserted pathway, the more smiling for its forked orchards, tumbling walks, and mossy banks. About the house are pleasant, sunny meadows, deep with their beds of peat, so cheering with its homely, heath-like fragrance, and in its front runs a constant stream through the centre of that great tract sometimes called 'Bedford Levels,' – this brook a source of the Shawsheen River. It was lovely that he should draw his first breath in a pure country air, out of crowded towns, amid the pleasant russet fields.

"His parents were active, vivacious people; his grandfather, by his father's side, coming from the Isle of Jersey, a Frenchman and Catholic, who married a Scotch woman named Jennie Burns. On his mother's side the descent is from the well-known Jones family of Weston, Mass., and the Rev. Charles Dunbar, a graduate of Harvard College, who preached in Salem, and at length settled in Keene, New Hampshire. As variable an ancestry as can well be afforded, with marked family characters on both sides. About a year and a half from Henry's birth, the family removed to the town of Chelmsford, thence to Boston, coming back, however, to Concord when he was of a very tender age; his earliest memory of most of the town was a ride to Walden Pond with his grandmother, when he thought that he should be glad to live there. He retained a peculiar pronunciation of the letter R, with a decided French accent. He says, 'September is the fifth month with a burr in it.' His great-grandmother's name was Marie le Galais, and his grandfather, John Thoreau, was baptized April 28, 1754, and partook of the Catholic sacrament in the parish of St. Helier, Isle of Jersey, in May, 1773. Thus near to old France and the church was our Yankee boy.

"A moment may be spent on a few traits of Thoreau, of a personal kind. In height he was about the average. In his build, spare, with limbs that were rather

longer than usual, or of which he made a longer use. His face once seen could not be forgotten; the features quite marked, the nose aquiline, or very Roman, like one of the portraits of Cæsar (more like a beak, as was said), large overhanging brows above the deepest-set blue eyes that could be seen, – blue in certain lights, and in others gray, – eyes expressive of all shades of feeling, but never weak or near-sighted; the forehead not unusually broad or high, full of concentrated energy and purpose; the mouth, with prominent lips, pursed up with meaning and thought when shut, and giving out when open a stream of the most varied and unusual and instructive sayings. His hair was a dark brown, exceedingly abundant, fine, and soft, and for several years he wore a comely beard. His whole figure had an active earnestness as if he had not a moment to waste. The clenched hand betokened purpose. In walking he made a short cut if he could, and when sitting in the shade, or by the wall-side, seemed merely the clearer to look forward into the next piece of activity. Even in the boat he had a wary, transitory air, his eyes on the lookout; perhaps there might be ducks, or the Blondin turtle, or an otter, or sparrow. He was a plain man in his features and dress, – one who could not be mistaken, and this kind of plainness is not out of keeping with beauty. He sometimes went as far as homeliness, which again, even if there be a prejudice against it, shines out at times beyond a vulgar beauty."
W. Ellery Channing.

SELF-PRIVACY

Thursday, 8.

"A sweet self-privacy in a right soul
Outruns the earth, and lines the utmost pole."

For a diary, slight arches will suffice to convey the day's freight across; the lighter these, the speedier and more graceful the transit. Any current event, passing thought, rumor, were transportable, if simply dispatched. And the more significant, as the more familiar and private. Life were the less sweet and companionable if cumbered with affairs, overloaded with thought, dizzied with anxieties. Better the quiet temper that takes the days as they pass, and as if an eternity were vouchsafed for completing one's task, the time too short to waste in murmurs or postponements.

"Cares, like eclipses, darken our endeavors;
Our duties are our best gods."

A quiet life furnishes little of incident; dealing with thoughts and things in a meditative manner, it has the less for those who have a more stirring stake in current affairs. Yet one fancies that what interests himself may interest others of like mind, if not of like pursuits; and more especially when, as in a diary, he writes only of what has some real or imagined relation to what concerns him. His record may be careless, inconsequent, like the days it chronicles, with but the slender thread of sleep connecting its leaves; or perhaps the newspaper, once an accident, and coming irregularly, links his evening with morning, morning with evening; newspaper before breakfast, before business, before sleep; daily bread. One almost defines his culture, his social standing, by the journals he takes. Observe the difference between persons and neighborhoods familiar with current newspapers and those who are not. Very different from the times when a country boy must ride his miles after his Saturday's work to get some glimmering of what was passing in the great world around him;

before libraries and lectures were established, steam and lightning were carriers and couriers for all mankind. No life is insular now. Every thought resounds throughout the globe. Electricity competes with thought in the race. The telegraph, locomotive, the press, render cabinets and colleges almost superfluous. Travel makes all men countrymen, makes people noblemen and kings, every man tasting of liberty and dominion. And who but the kings themselves can unking themselves?

Still, like most things, our periodical literature is far from being a pure benefit, and one may quote Plato's saying as applicable to the superficial culture which this of itself fosters: "Total ignorance were in no wise a thing so vile and wicked, nor the greatest of evils; but multifarious knowledge and learning acquired under bad management, causes much more harm."

Rather what is thought and spoken in drawing-rooms, clubs, in private assemblies, best intimates the spirit and tendencies of a community. Things are known but at second-hand as represented in public prints, or spoken on platforms. Admitted to private houses, one may report accurately the census of civility, and cast the horoscope of the coming time. Nor do I sympathize with some of my friends in their dislike of reporters. One defends himself from intrusion, as a general rule; but where the public have a generous interest in one's thoughts, his occupations and manners, the discourtesy is rather in withholding these from any false modesty. Besides, the version is more likely to be nearer the truth than if left to chance curiosity, which piques itself all the more on getting what was thus withheld, with any additions the mood favors.

SUNDAY LECTURES

Sunday, 11.

The course of Sunday lectures at Horticultural Hall opened in January closes to-day. They have proved a brilliant success. Each speaker has attracted, besides the body of steady attendants, his personal friends, thus varying the audiences from Sunday to Sunday, and giving an example of varied teaching unprecedented in our time. The reports of these discourses, imperfect as they are, deserve preservation. They have relation to the drift of thinking in our New-England community especially, and are of historical importance. If not accepting all that has been spoken on this platform by the successive speakers, one may take a hearty interest in these adventures into the world of thought and duty; nor can any who have attended steadily from Sunday to Sunday question their serving a religious need of the time. The views of persons, distinguished as are most of the speakers, are not insignificant, since these are not among the least of the influences secretly, if not openly, moulding the manners and institutions of a community in which the thoughts and aims of the humblest individuals have weight, and the young are so eager to learn of their thoughtful elders.

When I recollect the ardor with which I sought the acquaintance of those whom I imagined had ideas to communicate, and my delight in such when found, I am led to think how very desirable were an institution to which young students might resort during such portion of the year as might be most convenient, to enjoy the fellowship of some of our most cultivated persons, – scholarships being provided for such as had not the means of defraying the necessary expenses, – thus enabling bright young men and women, whether college graduates or not, to complete what colleges do not give. Not every student comes into that intellectual sympathy with his professor, which renders instruction most enjoyable, yet without which the highest ends of culture are not attained. With a faculty composed of persons whose names a moment's thought will suggest, opportunities would be given for that sympathetic communion of mind with mind in which all living instruction and influence consist.

EMERSON

Tuesday, 13.

Emerson has lately completed a course of readings on English Poetry to an appreciative company in Boston. It is a variation of his method of communicating with his companies, and not less becoming than even his usual form of lecture. It matters not in his case; for such is the charm of his manner, that wherever he appears, the cultured class will delight in his utterances; and one may quote Socrates in Phædrus, where Plato makes him say, "For as men lead hungry creatures by holding out a green bough, or an apple, so you, Phædrus, it would seem, might lead me about all Attica, and, indeed, wherever else you please, by extending to me discourses out of your books." Not less aptly Goethe describes him, in his letters to Schiller, where he calls the rhapsodist, "A wise man, who, in calm thoughtfulness, shows what has happened; his discourse aiming less to excite than to calm his auditors, in order that they shall listen to him with contentment and long. He apportions the interest equally, because it is not in his power to balance a too lively impression. He grasps backwards and forwards at pleasure. He is followed, because he has only to do with the imagination, which of itself produces images, and which, up to a certain degree, is indifferent what kind he calls up. He does not appear to his auditors, but recites, as it were, behind a curtain; so there is a total abstraction from himself, and it seems to them as though they heard only the voice of the Muses."

See our Ion standing there, his audience, his manuscript before him, himself also an auditor, as he reads, of the Genius sitting behind him, and to whom he defers, eagerly catching the words, – the words, – as if the accents were first reaching his ears too, and entrancing alike oracle and auditor. We admire the stately sense, the splendor of diction, and are charmed as we listen. Even his hesitancy between the delivery of his periods, his perilous passages from paragraph to paragraph of manuscript, we have almost learned to like, as if he were but sorting his keys meanwhile for opening his cabinets; the spring of locks following, himself seeming as eager as any of us to get sight of his specimens as they come forth from their proper drawers, and we wait willingly till his gem is out glittering; admire the setting, too, scarcely less than the jewel itself. The magic minstrel and speaker, whose rhetoric, voiced as by organ-stops, delivers the sentiment from his breast in cadences peculiar to himself; now hurling it forth on the ear, echoing; then, as his mood and matter invite, dying away, like

"Music of mild lutes,
Or silver-coated flutes,
Or the concealing winds that can convey
Never their tone to the rude ear of day."

He works his miracles with it, as Hermes did, his voice conducting the sense alike to eye and ear by its lyrical movement and refraining melody. So his compositions affect us, not as logic linked in syllogisms, but as voluntaries rather, as preludes, in which one is not tied to any design of air, but may vary his key or note at pleasure, as if improvised without any particular scope of argument; each period, paragraph, being a perfect note in itself, however it may chance chime with its accompaniments in the piece, as a waltz of wandering stars, a dance of Hesperus with Orion. His rhetoric dazzles by its circuits, contrasts, antitheses; imagination, as in all sprightly minds, being his wand of Power. He comes along his own paths, too, and in his own fashion. What though he build his piers downwards from the firmament to the tumbling tides, and so throw his radiant span across the fissures of his argument, and himself pass over the frolic arches, Ariel-wise, – is the skill less admirable, the masonry the less secure for its singularity? So his books are best read as irregular writings, in which the sentiment is, by his enthusiasm, transfused throughout the piece, telling on the

mind in cadences of a current undersong, giving the impression of a connected whole, – which it seldom is, – such is the rhapsodist's cunning in its structure and delivery.

The highest compliment we can pay the scholar is that of having edified and instructed us, we know not how, unless by the pleasure his words have given us. Conceive how much the lyceum owes to his presence and teachings; how great the debt of many to him for their hour's entertainment. His, if any one's, let the institution pass into history, since his art, more than another's, has clothed it with beauty, and made it the place of popular resort, our purest organ of intellectual entertainment for New England and the Western cities. And besides this, its immediate value to his auditors everywhere, it has been serviceable in ways they least suspect; most of his works, having had their first readings on its platform, were here fashioned and polished, in good part, like Plutarch's morals, to become the more acceptable to readers of his published books. Does it matter what topic he touches? He adorns all with a severe sententious beauty, a freshness and sanction next to that of godliness, if not that in spirit and effect.

"The princely mind, that can
Teach man to keep a God in man;
And when wise poets would search out to see
Good men, behold them all in thee."

'Tis over thirty years since his first book was printed. Then followed volumes of essays, poems, orations, addresses; and during all the intervening period, down to the present, he has read briefs of his lectures through a wide range, from Canada to the Capitol; in most of the Free States; in the large cities, East and West, before large audiences; in the smallest towns, and to the humblest companies. Such has been his appeal to the mind of his countrymen, such his acceptance by them. He has read lectures in the principal cities of England also. A poet, speaking to individuals as few others can speak, and to persons in their privileged moments, he is heard as none others are. The more personal he is, the more prevailing, if not the more popular. 'Tis everything to have a true believer in the world, dealing with men and matters as if they were divine in idea and real in fact; meeting persons and events at a glance directly, not at a millionth remove, and so passing fair and fresh into life and literature.

Consider how largely our letters have been enriched by his contributions. Consider, too, the change his views have wrought in our methods of thinking; how he has won over the bigot, the unbeliever, at least to tolerance and moderation, if not acknowledgment, by his circumspection and candor of statement.

"His shining armor,
A perfect charmer;
Even the hornets of divinity
Allow him a brief space,
And his thought has a place
Upon the well-bound library's chaste shelves,
Where man of various wisdom rarely delves."

Poet and moralist, he has beauty and truth for all men's edification and delight. His works are studies. And any youth of free senses and fresh affections shall be spared years of tedious toil, in which wisdom and fair learning are, for the most part, held at arm's-length, planets' width, from his grasp, by graduating from this college. His books are surcharged with vigorous thoughts, a sprightly wit. They abound in strong sense, happy humor, keen criticisms, subtile insights, noble morals, clothed in a chaste and manly diction, fresh with the breath of health and progress.

We characterize and class him with the moralists who surprise us with an accidental wisdom, strokes of wit, felicities of phrase, – as Plutarch, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Saadi, Montaigne, Bacon, Selden, Sir Thomas Browne, Cowley, Coleridge, Goethe, – with whose delightful essays, notwithstanding all the pleasure they give us, we still plead our disappointment at not having been admitted to the closer intimacy which these loyal leaves had with their owners' mind before torn from his note-books, jealous, even, at not having been taken into his confidence in the editing itself.

We read, never as if he were the dogmatist, but a fair-speaking mind, frankly declaring his convictions, and committing these to our consideration, hoping we may have thought like things ourselves; oftenest, indeed, taking this for granted as he wrote. There is nothing of the spirit of proselyting, but the delightful deference ever to our free sense and right of opinion. He might take for his motto the sentiment of Henry More, where, speaking of himself, he says: "Exquisite disquisition begets diffidence; diffidence in knowledge, humility; humility, good manners and meek conversation. For my part, I desire no man to take anything I write or speak upon trust without canvassing, and would be thought rather to propound than to assert what I have here or elsewhere written or spoken. But continually to have expressed my diffidence in the very tractates and colloquies themselves, had been languid and ridiculous."

Then he has chosen proper times and manners for saying his good things; has spoken to almost every great interest as it rose. Nor has he let the good opportunities pass unheeded, or failed to make them for himself. He has taken discretion along as his constant attendant and ally; has shown how the gentlest temper ever deals the surest blows. His method is that of the sun against his rival for the cloak, and so is free from any madness of those, who, forgetting the strength of the solar ray, go blustering against men's prejudices, as if the wearers would run at once against these winds of opposition into their arms for shelter. What higher praise can we bestow on any one than to say of him, that he harbors another's prejudices with a hospitality so cordial as to give him for the time the sympathy next best to, if, indeed, it be not edification in, charity itself? For what disturbs more, and distracts mankind, than the uncivil manners that cleave man from man? Yet, for whose amendment letters, love, Christianity, were all given!

There is a virtuous curiosity felt by readers of remarkable books to learn something more of their author's literary tastes, habits, and dispositions, than these ordinarily furnish. Yet to gratify this is a task as difficult as delicate, requiring a diffidency akin to that with which one would accost the author himself, and without which graceful armor it were impertinent for a friend even to undertake it. We may venture but a stroke or two here.

All men love the country who love mankind with a wholesome love, and have poetry and company in them. Our essayist makes good this preference. If city bred, he has been for the best part of his life a villager and countryman. Only a traveller at times professionally, he prefers home-keeping; is a student of the landscape, of mankind, of rugged strength wherever found; liking plain persons, plain ways, plain clothes; prefers earnest people; shuns egotists, publicity; likes solitude, and knows its uses. Courting society as a spectacle not less than a pleasure, he carries off the spoils. Delighting in the broadest views of men and things, he seeks all accessible displays of both for draping his thoughts and works. And how is his page produced? Is it imaginable that he conceives his piece as a whole, and then sits down to execute his task at a heat? Is not this imaginable rather, and the key to the construction of his works? Living for composition as few authors can, and holding company, studies, sleep, exercise, affairs, subservient to thought, his products are gathered as they ripen, stored in his commonplaces; their contents transcribed at intervals, and classified. It is the order of ideas, of imagination observed in the arrangement, not of logical sequence. You may begin at the last paragraph and read backwards. 'Tis Iris-built. Each period is self-poised; there may be a chasm of years between the opening passage and the last written, and there is endless time in the composition. Jewels all! Separate stars. You may have them in a galaxy, if you like, or view them separate and apart. But every one finds that, if he take an essay, or verses, however the writer may have pleased himself with

the cunning workmanship, 'tis cloud-fashioned, and a blind pathway for any one else. Cross as you can, or not cross, it matters not, you may climb or leap, move in circles, turn somersaults;

"In sympathetic sorrow sweep the ground,"

like his swallow in Hermione. Dissolving views, prospects, vistas opening wide and far, yet earth, sky, – realities all, not illusions. Here is substance, sod, sun; much fair weather in the seer as in his leaves. The whole quaternion of the seasons, the sidereal year, has been poured into these periods. Afternoon walks furnished their perspectives, rounded and melodized them. These good things have been talked and slept over, meditated standing and sitting, read and polished in the utterance, submitted to all various tests, and, so accepted, they pass into print. Light fancies, dreams, moods, refrains, were set on foot, and sent jaunting about the fields, along wood-paths, by Walden shores, by hill and brook-sides, to come home and claim their rank and honors too in his pages. Composed of surrounding matters, populous with thoughts, brisk with images, these books are wholesome, homelike, and could have been written only in New England, and by our poet.

"Because I was content with these poor fields,
Low, open meads, slender and sluggish streams,
And found a home in haunts which others scorned,
The partial wood-gods overpaid my love,
And granted me the freedom of their state,
And in their secret senate have prevailed
With the dear, dangerous lords that rule our life,
Made moon and planets parties to their bond,
And through my rock-like, solitary wont
Shot million rays of thought and tenderness.
For me, in showers, in sweeping showers, the spring
Visits the valley; – break away the clouds, —
I bathe in the morn's soft and silvered air,
And loiter willing by yon loitering stream.
Sparrows far off, and nearer, April's bird,
Blue-coated, flying before from tree to tree,
Courageous, sing a delicate overture
To lead the tardy concert of the year.
Onward and nearer rides the sun of May;
And wide around, the marriage of the plants
Is sweetly solemnized. Then flows amain
The surge of summer's beauty; dell and crag,
Hollow and lake, hill-side, and pine arcade,
Are touched with Genius. Yonder ragged cliff
Has thousand faces in a thousand hours.

… The gentle deities
Showed me the lore of colors and of sounds,
The innumerable tenements of beauty,
The miracle of generative force,
Far-reaching concords of astronomy
Felt in the plants and in the punctual birds;
Better, the linked purpose of the whole,

And, chiefest prize, found I true liberty
In the glad home plain-dealing nature gave.
The polite found me impolite; the great
Would mortify me, but in vain; for still
I am a willow of the wilderness,
Loving the wind that bent me. All my hurts
My garden spade can heal. A woodland walk,
A quest of river-grapes, a mocking thrush,
A wild-rose, or rock-loving columbine,
Salve my worst wounds.
For thus the wood-gods murmured in my ear:
'Dost love our manners? Canst thou silent lie?
Canst thou, thy pride forgot, like nature pass
Into the winter night's extinguished mood?
Canst thou shine now, then darkle,
And being latent feel thyself no less?
As, when the all-worshipped moon attracts the eye,
The river, hill, stems, foliage, are obscure,
Yet envies none, none are unenviable.'"

I know of but one subtraction from the pleasure the reading of his books – shall I say his conversation? – gives me, – his pains to be impersonal or discrete, as if he feared any the least intrusion of himself were an offence offered to self-respect, the courtesy due to intercourse and authorship; thus depriving his page, his company, of attractions the great masters of both knew how to insinuate into their text and talk without overstepping the bounds of social or literary decorum. What is more delightful than personal magnetism? 'Tis the charm of good fellowship as of good writing. To get and to give the largest measure of satisfaction, to fill ourselves with the nectar of select experiences, not without some intertinctures of egotism so charming in a companion, is what we seek in books of the class of his, as in their authors. We associate diffidence properly with learning, frankness with fellowship, and owe a certain blushing reverence to both. For though our companion be a bashful man, – and he is the worse if wanting this grace, – we yet wish him to be an enthusiast behind all reserves, and capable of abandonment sometimes in his books. I know how rare this genial humor is, this frankness of the blood, and how surpassing are the gifts of good spirits, especially here in cold New England, where, for the most part,

"Our virtues grow
Beneath our humors, and at seasons show."

And yet, under our east winds of reserve, there hides an obscure courtesy in the best natures, which neither temperament nor breeding can spoil. Sometimes manners the most distant are friendly foils for holding eager dispositions subject to the measures of right behavior. 'Tis not every New-Englander that dares venture upon the frankness, the plain speaking, commended by the Greek poet.

"Caress me not with words, while far away
Thy heart is absent, and thy feelings stray;
But if thou love me with a faithful breast,
Be that pure love with zeal sincere exprest;
And if thou hate, the bold aversion show
With open face avowed, and known my foe."

Fortunate the visitor who is admitted of a morning for the high discourse, or permitted to join the poet in his afternoon walks to Walden, the cliffs, or elsewhere, – hours likely to be remembered as unlike any others in his calendar of experiences. I may say for me they have made ideas possible by hospitalities given to a fellowship so enjoyable. Shall I describe them as sallies oftenest into the cloud-lands, into scenes and intimacies ever new, none the less novel or remote than when first experienced, colloquies, in favored moments, on themes, perchance,

"Of Fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute;"

nor yet

"In wand'ring mazes lost,"

as in Milton's page;

But pathways plain through starry alcoves high,
Or thence descending to the level plains.

Interviews, however, bringing their trail of perplexing thoughts, costing some days' duties, several nights' sleep oftentimes to restore one to his place and poise for customary employment; half a dozen annually being full as many as the stoutest heads may well undertake without detriment. Certainly safer not to venture without the sure credentials, unless one will have his pretensions pricked, his conceits reduced to their vague dimensions.

"Fools have no means to meet
But by their feet."

But to the modest, the ingenuous, the gifted, welcome! Nor can any bearing be more poetic and polite than his to all such, to youth and accomplished women especially. I may not intrude further than to say, that, beyond any I have known, his is a faith approaching to superstition concerning admirable persons, the divinity of friendship come down from childhood, and surviving yet in memory if not in expectation, the rumor of excellence of any sort being like the arrival of a new gift to mankind, and he the first to proffer his recognition and hope. His affection for conversation, for clubs, is a lively intimation of this religion of fellowship. He, shall we say, if any, must have taken the census of the admirable people of his time, perhaps numbering as many among his friends as most living Americans, while he is recognized as the representative mind of his country, to whom distinguished foreigners are especially commended on visiting us.

Of Emerson's books I am not here designing to speak critically, rather of his genius and personal influence; yet, in passing, may remark that his "English Traits" deserves to be honored as one in which England, Old and New, may alike take national pride as being the liveliest portraiture of British genius and accomplishments there is, – a book, like Tacitus, to be quoted as a masterpiece of historical painting, and perpetuating the New-Englander's fame with that of his race. 'Tis a victory of eyes over hands, a triumph of ideas. Nor has there been for some time any criticism of a people so characteristic and complete. It remains for him to do like justice to New England. Not a metaphysician, and rightly discarding any claims to systematic thinking; the poet in spirit, if not always in form; the consistent idealist, yet the realist none the less, – he has illustrated the learning and thought of former times on the noblest themes, coming nearest of any to emancipating the mind of his own from the errors and dreams of past ages.

Plutarch tells us that of old they were wont to call men φώτα, which imports light, not only for the vehement desire man has to know, but to communicate also. And the Platonists fancied that the gods, being above men, had something whereof man did not partake, pure intellect and knowledge, and they kept on their way quietly. The beasts, being below men, had something whereof man had less, sense and growth, so they lived quietly in their way. While man had something in him whereof neither gods nor beasts had any trace, which gave him all the trouble, and made all the confusion in the world, – and that was egotism and opinion.

A finer discrimination of gifts might show that Genius ranges through this threefold dominion, partaking in turn of their essence and degrees.

Was our poet planted so fast in intellect, so firmly rooted in the mind, so dazzled with light, yet so cleft withal by duplicity of gifts, that fated thus to traverse the mid-world of contrast and contrariety, he was ever glancing forth from his coverts at life as reflected through his dividing prism, the resident never long of the tracts he surveyed, yet their persistent Muse nevertheless? And so housed in the Mind, and sallying forth from thence in quest of his game, whether of persons or things, he was the Mercury, the merchantman of ideas to his century. Nor was he personally alone in his thinking. Beside him stood his townsman, whose sylvan intelligence, fast rooted in Nature, was yet armed with a sagacity, a subtlety and strength, that penetrated while divining the essences of creatures and things he studied, and of which he seemed Atlas and Head.

Forcible protestants against the materialism of their own, as of preceding times, these masterly Idealists substantiate beyond all question their right to the empires they sway, – the rich estates of an original Genius.

RECREATION

Friday, 16.

A-field all summer, all winter in-doors, was the Anglo-Saxon rule, and holds good for the Anglo-American to-day. Englishmen still, here in New England we borrow, at some variance with the sun's courses, our calendar from the old country. Ordinarily our seasons fall almost a month later, our winter hardly opening till New-year's, nor spring till All Fools' Day, the date of which can hardly fall amiss, and with All Saints' may be left indefinite in wit's almanac. Doubtless there is a closer sympathy than we suspect between souls and seasons. Sensitive to climate within as weather without, our intelligence dips or rises as the signs range from Aries to Pisces in the ideal ephemeris, measuring to faculty and member in turn the rising or falling tides, and so determining our solar and lunar periods.

"'Tis not every day that I
Fitted am to prophesy;
No; but when the spirit fills
The fantastic pinnacles
Full of fire, then I write
As the Godhead doth indite.
Thus enraged, my lines are hurled,
Like the sibyls, through the world.
Look, how next the holy fire
Either slakes, or doth retire;
So the fancy carols, till when
That brave spirit comes again."

Nature is the best dictionary and school of eloquence; genius the pupil of sun and stars, woodlands, waters, the fields, the spectacle of things seen under all aspects, in all seasons and moods. Blot these from his vision, and the scholar's page were of small account. Letters show pale and poor from inside chambers and halls of learning alone; and whoever will deal directly with ideas, is often abroad to import the stuff of things into his diction, and clothe them in a rhetoric robust and racy, addressing the senses and mind at once. One is surprised at finding how a little exercise, though taken for the thousandth time, and along familiar haunts even, refreshes and strengthens body and mind. A turn about his grounds, a sally into the woods, climbing the hill-top, sauntering by brook-sides, brings him back with new senses and a new soul. One's handwriting becomes illuminated as he turns his leaves, the thoughts standing out distinctly, which before were blurred, and failed to show their import. Then his thought is sprightliest, and tells its tale firmly to the end. It sets flowing what blood one has in his veins, quickening wonderfully his circulations; he is valiant, humorsome, the soul prevailing in every part, and he takes hope of himself and the world around him.

An open fire, too, that best of friends to greet him within doors for most of the months; better than councils of friends to settle numerous questions wont to smoulder and fret by an air-tight, or flash forth in no lovely manner at unexpected moments. And where else is conversation possible? A countryman without an open fire will consider whether he can afford to spend himself and family to spare his wood-lot. It was comforting to see the other day on a bookseller's counter, tiles of porcelain, with suggestive devices of the graceful hospitalities of the olden time, when every mantelpiece had its attractions of fable and verse, the conversation enhanced by the friendly blaze, around which the family gathered and paid their devotions to friendships, human and divine.

"Go where I will, thou lucky Lar, stay here
Close by the glittering chimney all the year."

Then, a country-seat for summer and a city residence for the winter were desirable. For recreation, the due allowance taken from business, leisures as profitable as labors, alike enjoyable, and promoting the relish for more.

"Books, studies, business, entertain the light,
And sleep as undisturbed as death the night.
Acquaintance one would have, but when it depends
Not on the number, but the choice of friends.
His house a cottage more
Than palace, and should fitting be
For all his use, no luxury."

One's house should be roomy enough for his thought, for his family and guests; honor the ceilings, and geniality the hearthstone. Ample apartments, a charming landscape and surroundings; these have their influence on the dispositions, the tastes, manners of the inmates, and are not to be left out of account. Yet, without nobility to grace them, what were the costly palace, its parlors and parks, luxuries and elegancies, within or without, – the handsome house owing its chief beauty to the occupants, the company, one's virtues and accomplishments draw inside of the mansion; persons being the figures that grace the edifice, else unfurnished, and but a showy pile of ostentation and folly, as desolate within as pretentious without.

"Two things money cannot buy,
Breeding and integrity."

"It happens," says Plutarch, "that neither rich furniture, nor moveables, nor abundance of gold, nor descent from an illustrious family, nor greatness of authority, nor eloquence, and all the charms of speaking, can procure so great a serenity of life, as a mind free from guilt and kept untainted, not only from actions but from purposes that are wicked. By this means the soul will be not only unpolluted, but not disturbed; the fountain will run clear and unsullied, and the streams that flow from it will be just and honest deeds, full of satisfaction, a brisk energy of spirit which makes a man an enthusiast in his joy, and a tenacious memory sweeter than hope, which, as Pindar says, 'with a virgin warmth cherishes old men.' For as shrubs which are cut down with morning dew upon them, do for a long time after retain their fragrance, so the good actions of a wise man perfume his mind and leave a rich scent behind them. So that joy is, as it were, watered with those essences, and owes its flourishing to them."

GENEALOGIES

Monday, 19.

One values his chosen place of residence, whether he be a native or not, less for its natural history and advantages than for its civil and social privileges.

"The hills were reared, the rivers scooped in vain,
If learning's altars vanish from the plain."

And all the more, if, while retaining the ancient manners, it cherish the family sentiment against the straggling habits which separate members so widely in our times that intercourse is had seldomer than of old; names of kindred hardly surviving save in the fresh recollections of childhood by the dwellers apart; far more of life than we know being planted fast in ancestral homes, the best of it associated with these, as if there were a geography of the affections that nothing could uproot.

A people can hardly have attained to nationality till it knows its ancestor and is not ashamed of its antecedents. If such studies were once deemed beneath the dignity of an American, they are no longer. We are not the less national for honoring our forefathers. Blood is a history. Blood is a destiny. How persistent it is, let the institutions of England, Old and New, bear testimony, since on this prerogative – call it race, rank, family, nature, culture, nationality, what you will – both peoples stand and pride themselves, lion and eagle, an impregnable Saxondom, a common speech, blazoning their descent.

"Ours is the tongue the bards sang in of old,
And Druids their dark knowledge did unfold;
Merlin in this his prophesies did vent,
Which through the world of fame bear such extent.
Thus spake the son of Mars, and Britain bold,
Who first 'mongst Christian worthies is enrolled;
And many thousand more, whom but to name
Were but to syllable great Shakespeare's fame."

A strong race, the blood flows boldly in its veins, truculent, if need be, aggressive, and holding its own, as pronounced in the women as in the men, here in New England as in Old, the dragon couchant and ready to spring in defence of privileges and titles; magnanimous none the less, and merciful, as in the times of St. George and Bonduca. One needs but read Tacitus on the Manners of the Ancient Germans, to find the parentage of traits which still constitute the Englishmen, Old

and New, showing how persistent, under every variety of geographical and political conditions, is the genius of races.

'Tis due to every name that some one or more inheriting it should search out its traits and titles, as these descend along the stream of generations and reappear in individuals. And we best study the fortunes of families, of races and peoples, here at their sources. Even heraldries have their significance. And it is accounted the rule that names are entitled to the better qualities of their emblazonries, each having something admirable and to be honored in its origin.[2]

Thus the Cock is alike the herald of the dawn and sentinel of the night; the emblem of watchfulness and of wisdom; of vigilance and of perseverance, and *Semper Vigilans*, the appropriate motto of family arms bearing the name with its variations.

So the poet

OF THE COCK

"Father of Lights! what sunny seed,
What glance of day, hast thou confined
Unto this bird? To all the breed
This busy ray thou hast assigned;
Their magnetism works all night
And dreams of paradise and light,
It seems their candle howe'er done
Was tin'd and lighted at the sun."

SCHOLARSHIP

Wednesday, 28.

Apart they sit, the better know,
Why towns and talk sway men below.

[2] Verstegan, in his Restitution of Decayed Intelligence, in Antiquities concerning the most Noble and Renowned English Nation, 1634, treating of the origin of names, says: —"For a general rule, the reader may please to note, that our surnames of families, be they of one or more syllables, that have either a *k* or a *w*, are all of them of the ancient English race, so that neither the *k* or *w* are used in Latin, nor in any of the three languages thereon depending, which sometimes causes confusion in the writing our names (originally coming from the Teutonic) in Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish languages. Neither the *k* nor *w* being in the Latin nor in the French, they could not be with the Normans in use, whose language was French, as also their surnames. As for the surnames in our Norman catalogue which have in them the letters *k* and *w*, which the French do not use, these are not to be thought to have been Norman, but of those gentlemen of Flanders which Baldwin, the Earl of that country and father-in-law unto the Conquerer, did send to aid him. Besides these, sundry other surnames do appear to have been in the Netherlands and not in Normandy; albeit they are without doubt set in the list of the Normans. And whereas in searching for such as may remain in England of the race of the Danes, they are not such as, according to the vulgar opinion, have their surnames ending in *son*. In the Netherlands, it is often found that very many surnames end in *son*, as Johnson, Williamson, Phillipson, and the like; i. e. sons of that name of John, etc. "Then some have their surnames according to the color of hair or complexion, as white, black, brown, gray, and reddish; and those in whom these names from such causes begin, do thereby lose their former denomination. Some again for their surnames have the names of beasts; and it should seem for one thing or another wherein they represented some property of theirs; as lion, wolf, fox, bull, buck, hare, hart, lamb, and the like. Others of birds; as cock, peacock, swan, crane, heron, partridge, dove, sparrow, and the like. Others of fish; as salmon, herring, rock, pilchard, and the like. And albeit the ancestors of the bearers of these had in other times other surnames, yet because almost all these and other like names do belong to our English tongue, I do think him to be of the ancient English, and if not all, yet the most part. And here by occasion of these names, I must note, and that as it were for a general rule, *that what family soever has their first and chief coat of arms correspondent unto their surname, it is evident sign that it had that surname before it had those arms*."

Freedom from affairs, and leisure to entertain his thoughts, is the scholar's paradise. Hardly less the delight in comparing notes with another in conversation. It is the chiefest of satisfactions this last, where sympathy is possible and perfect. One does not see his thought distinctly till it is reflected in the image of another's. Personal perspective gives the distance necessary to bring out its significance. "There are some," says Thoreau, "whose ears help me so much that my things have a rare significance when I read to them. It is almost too good a hearing, so that, for the time, I regard my writing from too favorable a point of view." Yet the criticism of admiration is far more acceptable and the more likely to be just than that of censure. Much learning does not make an accomplished critic; taste, sensibility, sympathy, ideality, are indispensable. A man of talent may apprehend and judge fairly of works of his class. But genius alone comprehends and appreciates truly the works of genius.

Nor are all moods equally favorable for criticism. "It may be owing to my mood at the time," says Goethe, "but it seems to me, that as well in treating of writings as of actions, unless one speak with a loving sympathy, a certain enthusiasm, the result is so defective as to have little value. Pleasure, delight, sympathy in things, is all that is real; and that reproduces reality in us; all else is empty and vain." One must seize the traits as they rise with the tender touch, else they elude and dissolve in the moment; pass into the obscurity out of which they emerged, and are lost forever. Much depends upon this, that one make the most of his time, and miss no propitious moods.

Rarely does one win a success with either tongue or pen. Of the books printed, scarcely never the volume entire justifies its appearance in type. Much is void of deep and permanent significance, touches nothing in one's experience, and fails to command attention. Even subjects of gravest quality, unless treated suggestively, find no place in a permanent literature. It is not enough that the thing is literally defined, stated logically; it needs to be complemented ideally, – set forth in lucid imagery to tell the story to the end. Style carries weight oftentimes when seemingly light itself. Movement is necessary, while the logic is unapparent, – all the more profound and edifying as it appeals to and speaks from the deeper instincts, and so makes claims upon the reader's mind. That is good which stands strong in its own strength, detached from local relations. So a book of thoughts suggests thought, edifies, inspires. Whatever interests at successive readings has life in it, and deserves type and paper.

My code of composition stands thus, and this is my advice to whom it may concern: —

Burn every scrap that stands not the test of all moods of criticism. Such lack longevity. What is left gains immensely. Such is the law. Very little of what is thought admirable at the writing holds good over night. Sleep on your writing; take a walk over it; scrutinize it of a morning; review it of an afternoon; digest it after a meal; let it sleep in your drawer a twelvemonth; never venture a whisper about it to your friend, if he be an author especially. You may read selections to sensible women, – if young the better; and if it stand these trials, you may offer it to a publisher, and think yourself fortunate if he refuse to print it. Then you may be sure you have written a book worthy of type, and wait with assurance for a publisher and reader thirty years hence, – that is, when you are engaged in authorship that needs neither type nor publisher.

"Learning," says Fuller, "hath gained most by those books by which the printers have lost." It must be an enlightened public that asks for works the most enlightened publishers decline printing. A magazine were ruined already if it reflected its fears only. Yet one cannot expect the trade to venture reputation or money in spreading unpopular views.

Ben Jonson wrote to his bookseller: —

"Thou that mak'st gain thy end, and wisely well
Call'st a book good or bad, as it doth sell,
Use mine so too; I give thee leave, but crave
For the luck's sake, it thus much favor have; —

To lie upon thy stall, till it be sought,
Not offered as it made suit to be bought;
Nor have my title page on posts or walls,
Or in cleft-sticks advanced to make calls
For termers, or some clerk-like serving man
Who scarce can spell the hard names, whose knight less can.
If, without these vile arts it will not sell,
Send it to Bucklersbury, there 't will, well."

Time is the best critic, and the better for his intolerance of any inferiority. And fortunate for literature that he is thus choice and exacting. Books, like character, are works of time, and must run the gauntlet of criticism to gain enduring celebrity. The best books may sometimes wait for their half century, or longer, for appreciative readers – create their readers; the few ready to appreciate these at their issue being the most enlightened of their time, and they diffuse the light to their circle of readers. The torch of truth thus transmitted sheds its light over hemispheres, – the globe at last.

"Hail! native language, that with sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavoring tongue to speak,
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips
Half unpronounced slide through my infant lips,
Driving dull silence from the portal door
Where he had mutely sat two years before —
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask
That now I use thee in my latter task.
Now haste thee strait to do me once a pleasure,
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest treasure,
Not those new-fangled toys, and trimming slight,
Which takes our late fantastics with delight,
But cull those richest robes, and gay'st attire,
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits admire."

Thus wrote Milton at the age of nineteen, and made his college illustrious and the language afterwards. Yet the purest English is not always spoken or written by graduates of universities. Speech is the fruit of breeding and of character, and one shall find sometimes in remote rural districts the language spoken in its simplicity and purity, especially by sprightly boys and girls who have not been vexed with their grammars and school tasks. Ours is one of the richest of the spoken tongues; it may not be the simplest in structure and ease of attainment; yet this last may be facilitated by simple and natural methods of studying it. Taught by masters like Ascham or Milton, students might acquire the art of speaking and of writing the language in its purity and elegance, as did these great masters in their day. Ascham lays down this sensible rule: "He that will write well in any tongue, must follow this advice of Aristotle: '*to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do, and so should every man understand him, and the judgment of wise men about him*.'"

George Chapman, the translator of Homer, thus speaks of the scholarly pedantries of his time, of which ours affords too many examples: —

"For as great clerks can use no English words,
Because (alas! great clerks) English affords,
Say they, no height nor copy, – a rude tongue,
Since 'tis their native, – but, in Greek and Latin

Their wits are rare, for thence true poesy sprung,
Through which, truth knows, they have but skill to chat in,
Compared with what they might have in their own."

Camden said, "that though our tongue may not be as sacred as the Hebrew, nor as learned as the Greek, yet it is as fluent as the Latin, as courteous as the Spanish, as court-like as the French, and as amorous as the Italian; so that being beautified and enriched out of these tongues, partly by enfranchising and endenizing foreign words, partly by implanting new ones with artful composition, our tongue is as copious, pithy, and significative as any in Europe."

If one would learn its riches at sight, let him glance along the pages of Richardson's Dictionary; and at the same time survey its history from Gower and Chaucer down to our time.

"If there be, what I believe there is," says Dr. Johnson, "in every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so component and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered; this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of eloquence. The polite are always catching modish expressions, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making it better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where Shakespeare seems to have gathered his comic dialogues. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellences deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of the language."

MAY

"Sweet country life, to such unknown
Whose lives are others, not their own,
But serving courts and cities, be
Less happy, less enjoying thee."

– *Herrick.*

RURAL AFFAIRS

Monday, 3.

Fair spring days, the farmers beginning the planting of the season's crops. One cannot well forego the pleasures which the culture of a garden affords. He must have a little spot upon which to bestow his affections, and own his affinities with earth and sky. The profits in a pecuniary way may be inconsiderable, but the pleasures are rewarding. Formerly I allowed neither hoe, spade, nor rake, not handled by myself, to approach my plants. But when one has put his garden within covers, to be handled in a book, he fancies he has earned the privilege of delegating the tillage thereafter, in part, to other hands, and may please himself with its superintendence; especially when he is so fortunate as to secure the services of any who can take their orders without debate, and execute them with dispatch; and if he care to compare opinions with them, find they have views of their own, and respect for his. And the more agreeable if they have a pleasant humor and the piety of lively spirits.

"In laborer's ballads oft more piety
God finds than in *Te Deum's* melody."

"When our ancestors," says Cato, "praised a good man, they called him a good agriculturist and a good husbandman; he was thought to be greatly honored who was thus praised."

Without his plot of ground for tillage and ornamentation, a countryman seems out of place, its culture and keeping being the best occupation for keeping himself wholesome and sweet. The garden is the tie uniting man and nature. How civic an orchard shows in a clearing, – a garden in a prairie, as if nature waited for man to arrive and complete her, by converting the wild into the human, and thus to marry beauty and utility on the spot! A house, too, without garden or orchard, is unfurnished, incomplete, does not fulfil our ideas of the homestead, but stands isolate, defiant in its individualism, with a savage, slovenly air, and distance, that lacks softening and blending with the surrounding landscape. Besides, it were tantalizing to note the natural advantages of one's grounds, and at the same time be unskilful to complete what nature has sketched for the hand of art to adorn and idealize. With a little skill, good taste, and small outlay of time and pains, one may render any spot a pretty paradise of beauty and comfort, – if these are not one in due combination, and not for himself only, but for those who shall inherit when he shall have left it. The rightful ownership in the landscape is born of one's genius, partakes of his essence thus wrought with the substance of the soil, the structures which he erects thereon. Whoever enriches and adorns the smallest spot, lives not in vain. For him the poet sings, the moralist points his choicest periods.

I know of nothing better suited to inspire a taste for rural affairs than a Gardener's Almanac, containing matters good to be known by country people. All the more attractive the volume if tastefully illustrated, and contain reprints of select pastoral verses, biographies, with portraits of those

who have written on country affairs, and lists of their works. The old herbals, too, with all their absurdities, are still tempting books, and contain much information important for the countryman to possess.[3]

Cowley and Evelyn are of rural authors the most attractive. Cowley's Essays are delightful reading. Nor shall I forgive his biographer for destroying the letters of a man of whom King Charles said at his interment in Westminster Abbey, "Mr. Cowley has not left a better in England." The friend and correspondent of the most distinguished poets, statesmen, and gentlemen of his time, himself the first poet of his day, his letters must have been most interesting and important, and but for the unsettled temper of affairs, would doubtless have been added to our polite literature.

Had King Charles remembered Cowley's friend Evelyn, the compliment both to the living and dead would have been just. Evelyn was the best of citizens and most loyal of subjects. A complete list of his writings shows to what excellent uses he gave himself. The planter of forests in his time, he might be profitably consulted as regards the replanting of New England now.

Respecting his planting, and the origin of his Sylva, he writes to his friend, Lady Sunderland, August, 1690: —

"As to the Kalendar your ladyship mentions, whatever assistance it may be to some novice gardener, sure I am his lordship will find nothing in it worth his notice, but an old inclination to an innocent diversion; and the acceptance it found with my dear, and while he lived, worthy friend, Mr. Cowley; upon whose reputation only it has survived seven impressions, and is now entering on the eighth, with some considerable improvement more agreeable to the present curiosity. 'Tis now, Madam, almost forty years since I first writ it, when horticulture was not much advanced in England, and near thirty years since it was published, which consideration will, I hope, excuse its many defects. If in the meantime it deserve the name of no unuseful trifle, 'tis all it is capable of.

"When, many years ago, I came from rambling abroad, and a great deal more since I came home than gave me much satisfaction, and, as events have proved, scarce worth one's pursuit, I cast about how I should employ the time which hangs on most young men's hands, to the best advantage; and, when books and grave studies grew tedious, and other impertinence would be pressing, by what innocent diversions I might sometimes relieve myself without compliance to recreations I took no felicity in, because they did not contribute to any improvement of mind. This set me upon planting of trees, and brought forth my Sylva, which book, infinitely beyond my expectations, is now also calling for a fourth impression, and has been the occasion of propagating many millions of useful timber trees throughout this nation, as I may justify without immodesty, from many letters of acknowledgement received from gentlemen of the first quality, and others altogether strangers to me. His late Majesty, Charles II, was sometimes graciously pleased to take notice of it to me; and that I had by that book alone incited a world of planters to repair their broken estates and woods which the greedy rebels had wasted and made such havoc of. Upon encouragement, I was once speaking to a mighty man then in despotic power to mention the great inclination I had to serve his majesty in a little office then newly vacant (the salary I think hardly £300), whose province was to inspect the timber trees in his majesty's forests, etc., and take care of their culture and improvement; but this was conferred upon another,

[3] To the list of ancient authors, as Cato, Columella, Varro, Palladius, Virgil, Theocritus, Tibullus, selections might be added from Cowley, Marlowe, Browne, Spenser, Tusser, Dyer, Phillips, Shenstone, Cowper, Thomson, and others less known. Evelyn's works are of great value, his Kalendarium Hortense particularly. And for showing the state of agriculture and of the language in his time, Tusser's Five Hundred Points of Husbandry is full of information, while his quaint humor adds to his rugged rhymes a primitive charm. Then of the old herbals, Gerard's is best known. He was the father of English herbalists, and had a garden attached to his house in Holbern. Coles published his Adam in Eden, the Paradise of Plants, in 1659; Austin his Treatise on Fruit Trees ten years earlier. Dr. Holland's translation of the School of Salerne, or the Regiment of Health, appeared in 1649. Thos. Tryon wrote on the virtues of plants, and on health, about the same time, and his works are very suggestive and valuable. Miller, gardener to the Chelsea Gardens, gave the first edition of his Gardener's Dictionary to the press in 1731. Sir William Temple also wrote sensibly on herbs. Cowley's Six Books of Plants was published in English in 1708. Phillips' History of Cultivated Plants, etc., published in 1822, is a book of great merit. So is Culpepper's Herbal.

who, I believe, had seldom been out of the smoke of London, where, though there was a great deal of timber, there were not many trees. I confess I had an inclination to the employment upon a public account as well as its being suitable to my rural genius, born as I was, at Watton, among woods.

"Soon after this, happened the direful conflagration of this city, when, taking notice of our want of books of architecture in the English tongue, I published those most useful directions of ten of the best authors on that subject, whose works were very rarely to be had, all written in French, Latin, or Italian, and so not intelligible to our mechanics. What the fruit of that labor and cost has been, (for the sculptures, which are elegant, were very chargeable,) the great improvement of our workmen and several impressions of the copy since will best testify.

"In this method I thought proper to begin planting trees, because they would require time for growth, and be advancing to delight and shade at least, and were, therefore, by no means to be neglected and deferred, while buildings might be raised and finished in a summer or two, if the owner pleased.

"Thus, Madam, I endeavored to do my countrymen some little service, in as natural an order as I could for the improving and adorning of their estates and dwellings, and, if possible, make them in love with those useful and innocent pleasures, in exchange for a wasteful and ignoble sloth which I had observed so universally corrupted an ingenious education.

"To these I likewise added my little history of Chalcography, a treatise of the perfection of painting and of libraries, medals, with some other intermesses which might divert within doors as well as altogether without."

PASTORALS

Saturday, 8.

False were the muse, did she not bring
Our village poet's offering —
Haunts, fields, and groves, weaving his rhymes,
Leaves verse and fame to coming times.

Is it for the reason that rural life here in New England furnishes nothing for pastoral verse, that our poets have as yet produced so little? Yet we cannot have had almost three centuries' residence on this side of the Atlantic, with old England's dialect, traditions, and customs still current in our rural districts for perspective, not to have so adorned life and landscape with poetic associations as to have neither honey nor dew for hiving in sweet and tender verse, though it should fall short of the antique or British models. Our fields and rivers, brooks and groves, the rural occupations of country-folk, have not been undeserving of being celebrated in appropriate verse. Our forefathers delighted in Revolutionary lore. We celebrate natural scenery, legends of foreign climes, historic events, but rarely indulge in touches of simple country life. And the idyls of New England await their poet, unless the following verses announce his arrival: —

NEW ENGLAND

"My country, 'tis for thee I strike the lyre;
My country, wide as is the free wind's flight,
I prize New England as she lights her fire
In every Prairie's midst; and where the bright

Enchanting stars shine pure through Southern night,
She still is there the guardian on the tower,
To open for the world a purer hour.

"Could they but know the wild enchanting thrill
That in our homely houses fills the heart,
To feel how faithfully New England's will
Beats in each artery, and each small part
Of this great Continent, their blood would start
In Georgia, or where Spain once sat in state,
Or Texas, with her lone star, desolate.

• • • • •

"'Tis a New-England thought, to make this land
The very home of Freedom, and the nurse
"Of each sublime emotion; she does stand
Between the sunny South, and the dread curse
Of God, who else should make her hearse
Of condemnation to this Union's life, —
She stands to heal this plague, and banish strife.

"I do not sing of this, but hymn the day
That gilds our cheerful villages and plains,
Our hamlets strewn at distance on the way,
Our forests and the ancient streams' domains;
We are a band of brothers, and our pains
Are freely shared; no beggar in our roads,
Content and peace within our fair abodes.

"In my small cottage on the lonely hill,
Where like a hermit I must bide my time,
Surrounded by a landscape lying still
All seasons through as in the winter's prime,
Rude and as homely as these verses chime,
I have a satisfaction which no king
Has often felt, if Fortune's happiest thing.

"'Tis not my fortune, which is meanly low,
'Tis not my merit that is nothing worth,
'Tis not that I have stores of thought below
Which everywhere should build up heaven on earth;
Nor was I highly favored in my birth;
Few friends have I, and they are much to me,
Yet fly above my poor society.

"But all about me live New-England men,

Their humble houses meet my daily gaze, —
The children of this land where Life again
Flows like a great stream in sunshiny ways,
This is a joy to know them, and my days
Are filled with love to meditate on them, —
These native gentlemen on Nature's hem.

"That I could take one feature of their life,
Then on my page a mellow light should shine;
Their days are holidays, with labor rife,
Labor the song of praise that sounds divine,
And better, far, than any hymn of mine;
The patient Earth sets platters for their food,
Corn, milk, and apples, and the best of good.

"See here no shining scenes for artist's eye,
This woollen frock shall make no painter's fame;
These homely tools all burnishing deny;
The beasts are slow and heavy, still or tame;
The sensual eye may think this labor lame;
'Tis in the man where lies the sweetest art,
His true endeavor in his earnest part.

● ● ● ● ●

"He meets the year confiding; no great throws,
That suddenly bring riches, does he use,
But like Thor's hammer vast, his patient blows
Vanquish his difficult tasks, he does refuse
To tread the path, nor know the way he views;
No sad complaining words he uttereth,
But draws in peace a free and easy breath.

● ● ● ● ●

"This man takes pleasure o'er the crackling fire,
His glittering axe subdued the monarch oak,
He earned the cheerful blaze by something higher
Than pensioned blows, – he owned the tree he stroke,
And knows the value of the distant smoke
When he returns at night, his labor done,
Matched in his action with the long day's sun.

● ● ● ● ●

"I love these homely mansions, and to me
A farmer's house seems better than a king's;
The palace boasts its art, but liberty
And honest pride and toil are splendid things;
They carved this clumsy lintel, and it brings
The man upon its front; Greece hath her art, —
But this rude homestead shows the farmer's heart.

"I love to meet him on the frozen road,
How manly is his eye, as clear as air; —
He cheers his beasts without the brutal goad,
His face is ruddy, and his features fair;
His brave good-day sounds like an honest prayer;
This man is in his place and feels his trust, —
'Tis not dull plodding through the heavy crust.

"And when I have him at his homely hearth,
Within his homestead, where no ornament
Glows on the mantel but his own true worth,
I feel as if within an Arab's tent
His hospitality is more than meant;
I there am welcome, as the sunlight is,
I must feel warm to be a friend of his.

● ● ● ● ●

"How many brave adventures with the cold,
Built up the cumberous cellar of plain stone;
How many summer heats the bricks did mould,
That make the ample fireplace, and the tone
Of twice a thousand winds sing through the zone
Of rustic paling round the modest yard, —
These are the verses of this simple bard.

"Who sings the praise of Woman in our clime?
I do not boast her beauty or her grace;
Some humble duties render her sublime,
She the sweet nurse of this New-England race,
The flower upon the country's sterile face,
The mother of New England's sons, the pride
Of every house where these good sons abide.

"There is a Roman splendor in her smile,

A tenderness that owes its depth to toil;
Well may she leave the soft voluptuous wile
That forms the woman of a softer soil;
She does pour forth herself a fragrant oil
Upon the dark austerities of Fate,
And make a garden else all desolate.

"From early morn to fading eve she stands,
Labor's best offering on the shrine of worth,
And Labor's jewels glitter on her hands,
To make a plenty out of partial dearth,
To animate the heaviness of earth,
To stand and serve serenely through the pain,
To nurse a vigorous race and ne'er complain.

"New-England women are New-England's pride,
'Tis fitting they should be so, they are free, —
Intelligence doth all their acts decide,
Such deeds more charming than old ancestry.
I could not dwell beside them, and not be
Enamored of them greatly; they are meant
To charm the Poet, by their pure intent.

"A natural honest bearing of their lot,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.