VIII

FEBRUARY, 1859

(ÆT. 41)

Feb. 1. P. M. — Up Assabet.

The river having suddenly gone down since the freshet, I see cakes of ice eight or ten feet across left two feet high or more above the banks, frozen to four or five maples or oaks. Indeed, each shore is lined with them, where wooded, a continuous row attached to alders, maples, swamp white oaks, etc., which grow through them or against their edges. They are somewhat like tables of a picnic party or a muster-field dinner. Rustic tables and seats. Sometimes a little inclined, having settled on one side. Also an ice-belt adheres to the steep shores, and the rain and melted snow, running down, has drifted over the edge of it, forming abundant and pretty icicles, and you see where this hard and thick ice has bent under its own weight.

As for large oak leaves now, I think there is not much difference between the white and scarlet oaks; then come black, red, and swamp white, but the last one has scarcely any.

Feb. 2. I see Peter Hutchinson cutting down a large red oak on A. Heywood's hillside, west of the former's house. He points out to me what he calls the "gray oak" there, with "a thicker bark" than the red. It is the scarlet oak.

Feb. 3. Five minutes before 3 P. M., Father died.[1]

After a sickness of some two years, going down-town in pleasant weather, doing a little business from time to time, hoeing a little in the garden, etc., Father took to his chamber January 13th, and did not come down again. Most of the time previously he had coughed and expectorated a great deal. Latterly he did not cough, but continued to raise. He continued to sit up in his chamber till within a week before he died. He sat up for a little while on the Sunday four days before he died. Generally he was very silent for many months. He was quite conscious to the last, and his death was so easy that we should not have been aware that he was dying, though we were sitting around his bed, if we had not watched very closely.[2]

I have touched a body which was flexible and warm, yet tenantless, — warmed by what fire? When the spirit that animated some matter has left it, who else, what else, can animate it?

How enduring are our bodies, after all! The forms of our brothers and sisters, our parents and children and wives, lie still in the hills and fields round about us, not to mention those of our remoter ancestors, and the matter which composed the body of our first human father still exists under another name.

When in sickness the body is emaciated, and the ex-

[1] [This sentence (with the date) has a full page to itself in the original Journal.]

[2] [See *Familiar Letters*, pp. 350, 351; Riv. 407, 408.]

pression of the face in various ways is changed, you perceive unexpected resemblances to other members of the same family; as if within the same family there was a greater general similarity in the framework of the face than in its filling up and clothing.

Father first came to this town to live with his father about the end of the last century, when he was about twelve years old. (His father died in 1801.) Afterward he went to the Lexington Academy (Parker's?) a short time, perhaps a year, then into Deacon White's store as clerk; then learned the dry-goods business in a store in Salem. (Aunt J. shows me a letter from him directly after his going there, dated 1807.) Was with a Hathaway. When about twenty-one, opened a store for himself on the corner where the town house stands of late years, a yellow building, now moved and altered into John Keyes's house. He did so well there that Isaac Hurd went into partnership with him, to his injury. They soon dissolved, but could not settle without going to law, when my father gained the case, bringing his books into court. Then, I think, he went to Bangor and set up with Billings, selling to Indians (among others); married; lived in Boston; writes thence to aunts at Bangor in 1815 with John on his knee; moved to Concord (*where I was born*), then to Chelmsford, to Boston, to Concord again, and here remained. Mother first came to Concord about the same age that father did, but a little before him.

As far as I know, Father, when he died, was not only one of the oldest men in the middle of Concord, but the

one perhaps best acquainted with the inhabitants, and the local, social, and street history of the middle of the town, for the last fifty years. He belonged in a peculiar sense to the village street; loved to sit in the shops or at the post-office and read the daily papers. I think that he remembered more about the worthies (and unworthies) of Concord village forty years ago, both from dealing as a trader and from familiar intercourse with them, than any one else. Our other neighbors, now living or very recently dead, have either come to the town more recently than he, or have lived more aloof from the mass of the inhabitants.

Some have spoken slightingly of the Indians, as a race possessing so little skill and wit, so low in the scale of humanity, and so brutish that they hardly deserved to be remembered, — using only the terms "miserable," "wretched," "pitiful," and the like. In writing their histories of this country they have so hastily disposed of this refuse of humanity (as they might have called it) which littered and defiled the shore and the interior. But even the indigenous animals are inexhaustibly interesting to us. How much more, then, the indigenous man of America! If wild men, so much more like ourselves than they are unlike, have inhabited these shores before us, we wish to know particularly what manner of men they were, how they lived here, their relation to nature, their arts and their customs, their fancies and superstitions. They paddled over these waters, they wandered in these woods, and they had their fancies and beliefs connected with the sea and the forest, which

concern us quite as much as the fables of Oriental nations do. It frequently happens that the historian, though he professes more humanity than the trapper, mountain man, or gold-digger, who shoots one as a wild beast, really exhibits and practices a similar inhumanity to him, wielding a pen instead of a rifle.

One tells you with more contempt than pity that the Indian had no religion, holding up both hands, and this to all the shallow-brained and bigoted seems to mean something important, but it is commonly a distinction without a difference. Pray, how much more religion has the historian? If Henry Ward Beecher knows so much more about God than another, if he has made some discovery of truth in this direction, I would thank him to publish it in *Silliman's Journal*, with as few flourishes as possible.

It is the spirit of humanity, that which animates both so-called savages and civilized nations, working through a man, and not the man expressing himself, that interests us most. The thought of a so-called savage tribe is generally far more just than that of a single civilized man.

I perceive that we partially die ourselves through sympathy at the death of each of our friends or near relatives. Each such experience is an assault on our vital force. It becomes a source of wonder that they who have lost many friends still live. After long watching around the sick-bed of a friend, we, too, partially give up the ghost with him, and are the less to be identified with this state of things.

The writer must to some extent inspire himself. Most

of his sentences may at first lie dead in his essay, but when all are arranged, some life and color will be reflected on them from the mature and successful lines; they will appear to pulsate with fresh life, and he will be enabled to eke out their slumbering sense, and make them worthy of their neighborhood. In his first essay on a given theme, he produces scarcely more than a frame and groundwork for his sentiment and poetry. Each clear thought that he attains to draws in its train many divided thoughts or perceptions. The writer has much to do even to create a theme for himself. Most that is first written on any subject is a mere groping after it, mere rubble-stone and foundation. It is only when many observations of different periods have been brought together that he begins to grasp his subject and can make one pertinent and just observation.

Feb. 5. When we have experienced many disappointments, such as the loss of friends, the notes of birds cease to affect us as they did.

I see another butcher-bird on the top of a young tree by the pond.

Feb. 7. Evidently the distant woods are more blue in a warm and moist or misty day in winter, and is not this connected with the blue in snow in similar days?

Going along the Nut Meadow or Jimmy Miles road, when I see the sulphur lichens on the rails brightening with the moisture I feel like studying them again as a relisher or tonic, to make life go down and digest well, as we use pepper and vinegar and salads. They are a

sort of winter greens which we gather and assimilate with our eyes.[1] That's the true use of the study of lichens. I expect that the lichenist will have the keenest relish for Nature in her every-day mood and dress. He will have the appetite of the worm that never dies, of the grub. To study lichens is to get a taste of earth and health, to go gnawing the rails and rocks. This product of the bark is the essence of all times. The lichenist extracts nutriment from the very crust of the earth. A taste for this study is an evidence of titanic health, a sane earthiness. It makes not so much blood as soil of life. It fits a man to deal with the barrenest and rockiest experience. A little moisture, a fog, or rain, or melted snow makes his wilderness to blossom like the rose. As some strong animal appetites, not satisfied with starch and muscle and fat, are fain to eat that which eats and digests, — the contents of the crop and the stomach and entrails themselves, — so the lichenist loves the tripe of the rock, — that which eats and digests the rocks. He eats the eater. "Eat-all" may be his name. A lichenist fats where others starve. His provender never fails. What is the barrenest waste to him, the barest rocks? A rail is the sleekest and fattest of coursers for him.[2] He picks anew the bones which have been picked a generation since, for when their marrow is gone they are clothed with new flesh for him. What diet drink can be compared with a tea or soup made of the very crust of the earth? There is no such collyrium or salve for sore eyes as these brightening lichens in a moist day. Go and

[1] [Channing, p. 112.]

[2] [Channing, p. 73.]

bathe and screen your eyes with them in the softened light of the woods.

Feb. 11. P. M. — To Ball's Hill over ice.

Among the common phenomena of the ice are those triangular points of thick ice heaved up a couple of feet where the ice has recently settled about a rock. The rock looks somewhat like a dark fruit within a gaping shell or bur. Also, now, as often after a freshet in cold weather, the ice which had formed around and frozen to the trees and bushes along the shore, settling, draws them down to the ground or water, often breaking them extensively. It reminds you of an alligator or other evil genius of the river pulling the trees and bushes which had come to drink into the water. If a maple or alder is unfortunate enough to dip its lower limbs into the freshet, dallying with it, their fate is sealed, for the water, freezing that night, takes fast hold on them like a vise, and when the water runs out from beneath, an irresistible weight brings them down to the ground and holds them there. Only the spring sun will soften the heart of this relentless monster, when, commonly, it is too late. How the ice far in the meadows, thus settling, spreads the clumps of willows, etc., on every side!

Nature works by contraries. That which in summer was most fluid and unresting is now most solid and motionless. If in the summer you cast a twig into the stream it instantly moved along with the current, and nothing remained as it was. Now I see yonder a long

row of black twigs standing erect in mid-channel where two months ago a fisherman set them and fastened his lines to them. They stand there motionless as guide-posts while snow and ice are piled up about them.

Such is the cold skill of the artist. He carves a statue out of a material which is fluid as water to the ordinary workman. His sentiments are a quarry which he works.[1]

I see only the chain of sunken boats passing round a tree above the ice.

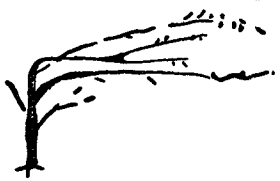
The south side of Ball's Hill, which is warm and half bare, is tracked up with partridges, and I start several there. So is it next Sunday with the Hill shore, east of Fair Haven Pond. These birds are sure to be found now on such slopes, where only the ground and dry leaves are exposed.

The water lately went down, and the ice settled on the meadows, and now rain has come, and cold again, and this surface is alternate ice and snow. Looking from this hill toward the sun, they are seen to be handsomely watered all over with alternate waves of shining ice and white snow-crust, literally "watered" on the grandest scale, — this palace floor.

Feb. 12. *Saturday.* You may account for that ash by the Rock having such a balanced and regular outline by the fact that in an open place their branches are equally drawn toward the light on all sides, and not because of a mutual understanding through the trunk.

[1] [Channing, p. 301.]

For there is Cheney's abele, which stands just south of a large elm. It grows wholly southward, and in form is just half a tree. So with



the tupelos under the Hill shore, east of Fair Haven Pond. They terminate abruptly like a bull's horn, having no upward leading shoot, and bend off over the water, — are singularly one-sided. In short, trees appear to grow regularly because the sky and diffusion of light are commonly regular.

There is a peculiarly drooping elm at George Prescott's great gate just north of his house, very different from the common or upright stiff-branched ones near by it.

Feb. 13. P. M. — On ice to Fair Haven Pond.

Yesterday there was no skating, unless you swept the snow from the ice; but to-day, though there has been no rain nor thaw, there is pretty good skating. Yesterday the water which had flowed, and was flowing, back over the ice on each side of the river and the meadows, a rod or two in width, was merely skimmed over, but last night it froze so that there is good skating there. Also the wind will generally lay bare some portion of the ice, unless the snow is very deep.

This yellowish ice which froze yesterday and last night is thickly and evenly strewn with fibrous frost-crystals very much like bits of asbestos, an inch or more long, sometimes arranged like a star or rosette, one for every inch or two; but where I broke in yesterday, and

apparently wherever the water overflowed the thin ice late in the day, there are none. I think that this is the vapor from the water which found its way up through the ice and froze in the night. It is sprinkled like some kind of grain, and is in certain places much more thickly strewn, as where a little snow shows itself above the ice.

The old ice is covered with a dry, powdery snow about one inch deep, from which, as I walk toward the sun, this perfectly clear, bright afternoon, at 3.30 o'clock, the colors of the rainbow are reflected from a myriad fine facets. It is as if the dust of diamonds and other precious stones were spread all around. The blue and red predominate. Though I distinguish these colors everywhere toward the sun, they are so much more abundantly reflected to me from two particular directions that I see two distant rays, or arms, so to call them, of this rainbow-like dust, one on each side of the sun, stretching away from me and about half a dozen feet wide, the two arms including an angle of about sixty degrees. When I look from the sun, I see merely dazzling white points. I can easily see some of these dazzling grains fifteen or twenty rods distant on any side, though the facet which reflects this light cannot be more than a tenth or twelfth of an inch at most. Yet I might easily, and commonly do, overlook all this.

Winter comes to make walking possible where there was no walking in summer. Not till winter do we take possession of the whole of our territory. I have three great highways raying out from one centre, which is near my door. I may walk down the main river or up either of its two branches. Could any avenues be contrived more convenient? With this river I am not compelled to walk in the tracks of horses.

Never is there so much light in the air as in one of these bright winter afternoons, when all the earth is covered with new-fallen snow and there is not a cloud in the sky. The sky is much the darkest side, like the bluish lining of an egg-shell. There seems nothing left to make night out of. With this white earth beneath and that spot[less] skimmed-milk sky above him, man is but a black speck inclosed in a white egg-shell.

Sometimes in our prosaic moods, life appears to us but a certain number more of days like those which we have lived, to be cheered not by more friends and friendship but probably fewer and less. As, perchance, we anticipate the end of this day before it is done, close the shutters, and with a cheerless resignation commence the barren evening whose fruitless end we clearly see, we despondingly think that all of life that is left is only this experience repeated a certain number of times. And so it would be, if it were not for the faculty of imagination.

I see, under this ice an inch thick, a large bubble with three cracks across it, yet they are so fine — though quite distinct — that they let no air up, and I release it with my knife. An air-bubble very soon makes the ice look whitish above it. It is whitest of all when it is fairly inclosed, with ice beneath it. When, by treading above it, I dislodge a bubble under this ice which formed only last night, I see that it leaves the outline of its form behind, the ice being a little thinner above it.

Here is the track of one who walked here yesterday. The age of the track is betrayed by a certain smoothness

or shininess produced by the sun shining on the raw and disturbed edges and melting them. The fresh track is evidently made in a dry, powdery substance; that of yesterday, as if it were made in a slightly glutinous matter, or which possessed considerable tenacity.

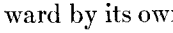
Then there is the wonderful stillness of a winter day. The sources of sound, as of water, are frozen up; scarcely a tinkling rill of it is to be heard. When we listen, we hear only that sound of the surf of our internal sea, rising and swelling in our ears as in two seashells. It is the sabbath of the year, stillness audible, or at most we hear the ice belching and crackling as if struggling for utterance.

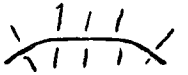
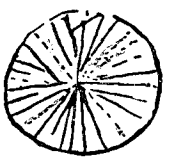
A transient acquaintance with any phenomenon is not sufficient to make it completely the subject of your muse. You must be so conversant with it as to *remember* it and be reminded of it long afterward, while it lies remotely fair and elysian in the horizon, approachable only by the imagination.

Feb. 14. P. M. — On ice up Assabet to railroad.

The ice-belt which I still see along the steep bank of the Assabet is now some three weeks old, and though it was then six or eight inches thick, it is now only two or three, or much less, in many places nearly wasted away, and those once horizontal tables are often fallen aslant, like shields pierced with many holes. That belt, at first

consisting of more or less blunt triangles projecting four or five feet from the bank, was at first, of course,

perfectly horizontal and level (I see where dogs and foxes have run along on it for half a mile together), but now, such is the flexibility of the ice, it is bent downward by its own weight, thus:  or if you stand in front of it, it is a waving or undulating line instead of a

level one, *i. e.* on its edge. I see one table, where the ice is a little more than one inch thick, which is curved downward on the sides eighteen inches within a horizontal distance of two and a half feet, thus:  There is nothing like a crack at this bend. Some of the belt itself, where three inches thick, has bent downward eighteen inches at four or five feet from the bank. I also see on Sunset Interval a large cake a rod square and a foot thick with more than a foot of soil attached beneath, which, by its own weight resting high and dry there, has bent very considerably. In one great cake there just like this, I see a fence-post with three holes in it standing upright, and perhaps the whole of it has been brought away in the soil beneath. It does not appear where it came from. Looking at the edge of one of these cakes, I notice some bubbles, seen edgewise, in the form of some buttons or of an inverted Moorish dome.   These are they which when you look down on them appear thus:

As I walk over thin ice, settling it down, I see great bubbles under, three or four feet wide, go waddling or wobbling away like a scared lady impeded

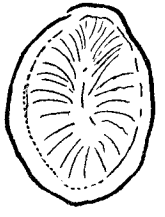
by her train.[1] I have but little doubt that the musquash gets air from these bubbles, which are probably very conspicuous under the ice. They are its reservoirs.

Feb. 15. P. M. — Up river to Fair Haven Pond.

I thought, by the peculiar moaning sound of the wind about the dining-room at noon, that we should have a rain-storm. I heard only one blast through some crack, but no doubt that betrayed a *pluvious* breath.

I am surprised to find how much it has thawed in the street, though there has been no rain, only a south wind. There is already water standing over an icy foundation, and the dirt of the street is more obvious, the snow having partly melted away from it. We walk through almost invisible puddles on the river and meadows, in which we see the trees, etc., reflected.

I see some remarkable overflowed ice. Here is one shield of an oval form, some twenty feet long, very regularly and interestingly mottled with yellowish or dead-leaf color, the stain of the mead, which by some law has been regularly distributed through the white, yet so delicately shaded off that it almost makes you dizzy to look at it. It reminds me of the beginning of a higher organization, or bony structure in a molluscous fish. The overflow must have been from the centre, where it burst up and flowed each way. In the proper light I am surprised to detect very fine and perfectly regular curving rays within the ice, just like the veins of some



[1] [Channing, p. 301.]

leaves, only finer and more regular, bilateral, perhaps a trace of the water as it flowed, — say like the lines of a cowry shell. It is but imperfectly suggested in the drawing.

Against the thickening air, trees are more and more distinct. The apple trees, so moist, are blacker than ever. A distant white birch, erect on a hill against the white, misty sky, looks, with its fine twigs, so distinct and black, like a millipede crawling up to heaven. The white oak leaves against the darker green of pines, now moist, are far more reddish.

Against Bittern Cliff I feel the first drop strike the right slope of my nose and run down the ravine there. Such is the origin of rivers.[1] Not till half a mile further my doubting companion feels another on his nose also, and I get one [in] my eye, and soon after I see the countless dimples in the puddles on the ice. So measured and deliberate is Nature always. Then the gentle, spring-like rain begins, and we turn about.

The sound of it pattering on the dry oak leaves, where young oaks thickly cover a hillside, is just like that of wind stirring them, when first heard, but is steady and monotonous and so betrayed. We rejoice to be wetted, and the very smell of wet woollen clothes exhilarates us.

I forgot to say (the 14th) that there are two of those ice-belts, a narrower and thinner one about twenty inches below the first, often connected with it by icicles at the edge. Thus each rise was recorded.

[1] [Channing, p. 118.]

Feb. 16. P. M. — From the entrance of the Mill road I look back through the sun, this soft afternoon, to some white pine tops near Jenny Dugan's. Their flattish boughs rest stratum above stratum like a cloud, a green mackerel sky, hardly reminding me of the concealed earth so far beneath. They are like a flaky crust of the earth,[1] a more ethereal, terebinthine, evergreen earth. It occurs to me that my eyes rest on them with the same pleasure as do those of the hen-hawk which has been nestled in them.

My eyes nibble the piny sierra which makes the horizon's edge, as a hungry man nibbles a cracker.

The hen-hawk and the pine are friends. The same thing which keeps the hen-hawk in the woods, away from the cities, keeps me here. That bird settles with confidence on a white pine top and not upon your weathercock. That bird will not be poultry of yours, lays no eggs for you, forever hides its nest. Though willed, or *wild*, it is not willful in its wildness. The unsympathizing man regards the wildness of some animals, their strangeness to him, as a sin; as if all their virtue consisted in their tamableness. He has always a charge in his gun ready for their extermination. What we call wildness is a civilization other than our own. The hen-hawk shuns the farmer, but it seeks the friendly shelter and support of the pine. It will not consent to walk in the barn-yard, but it loves to soar above the clouds. It has its own way and is beautiful, when we would fain subject it to our will. So any surpassing work of art is strange and wild to the mass of men, as is genius itself.

[1] [Channing, p. 114.]

No hawk that soars and steals our poultry is wilder than genius, and none is more persecuted or above persecution. It can never be poet laureate, to say "Pretty Poll" and "Polly want a cracker."[1]

Feb. 20. Have just read "Counterparts, or the Cross of Love," by the author of "Charles Auchester." It is very interesting — its illustration of Love and Friendship — as showing how much we can know of each other through sympathy merely, without any of the ordinary information. You know about a person who deeply interests you more than you can be told. A look, a gesture, an act, which to everybody else is insignificant tells you more about that one than words can. (How language is always found to serve best the highest moods, and expression of the highest truths!) If he wished to conceal something from you it would be apparent. It is as if a bird told you. Something of moment occurs. Your friend designs that it shall be a secret to you. Vain wish! You will know it, and his design. He says consciously nothing about it, yet as he is necessarily affected by it, its effect is visible to you. From this effect you infer the cause. Have you not already anticipated a thousand possible accidents? Can you be surprised? You unconsciously through sympathy make the right supposition. No other will account for precisely this behavior. You are disingenuous, and yet your knowledge exceeds the woodcraft of the cunningest hunter. It is as if you had a sort of trap, knowing the haunts of your game, what lures attract it,

[1] [Channing, p. 114.]

and its track, etc. You have foreseen how it will behave when it is caught, and now you only behold what you anticipated.

Sometimes from the altered manner of our friend, which no cloak can possibly conceal, we know that something has happened, and what it was, all the essential particulars, though it would be a long story to tell, — though it may involve the agency of four or five persons who never breathed it to you. Yet you are sure, as if you had detected all their tracks in the wood. You are the more sure because, in the case of love, effects follow their causes more inevitably than usual, this being a controlling power. Why, a friend tells all with a look, a tone, a gesture, a presence, a friendliness. He is present when absent.

In the composition it is the greatest art to find out as quickly as possible which are the best passages you have written, and tear the rest away to come at them. Even the poorest parts will be most effective when they serve these, as pediments to the column.

How much the writer lives and endures in coming before the public so often! A few years or books are with him equal to a long life of experience, suffering, etc. It is well if he does not become hardened. He learns how to bear contempt and to despise himself. He makes, as it were, *post-mortem* examinations of himself before he is dead. Such is art.

P. M. — The rain ceases, and it clears up at 5 P. M. It is a warm west wind and a remarkably soft sky, like plush; perhaps a lingering moisture there. What a reve[la]tion the blue and the bright tints in the west

again, after the storm and darkness! It is the opening of the windows of heaven after the flood!

Feb. 22. Go to Worcester to lecture in a parlor.

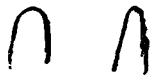
Feb. 23. P. M. — Walk to Quinsigamond Pond, where was good skating yesterday, but this very pleasant and warm day it is suddenly quite too soft. I was just saying to Blake that I should look for hard ice in the shade, or [on the] north side, of some wooded hill close to the shore, though skating was out of the question elsewhere, when, looking up, I saw a gentleman and lady very gracefully gyrating and, as it were, courtesying to each other in a small bay under such a hill on the opposite shore of the pond. Intervening bushes and shore concealed the ice, so that their swift and graceful motions, their bodies inclined at various angles as they gyrated forward and backward about a small space, looking as if they would hit each other, reminded me of the circling of two winged insects in the air, or hawks receding and approaching.

I first hear and then see eight or ten bluebirds going over. Perhaps they have not reached Concord yet. One boy tells me that he saw a bluebird in Concord on Sunday, the 20th.[1]

I see, just caught in the pond, a brook pickerel which, though it has no transverse bars, but a much finer and slighter reticulation than the common, is very distinct from it in the length and form of the snout. This is

[1] *Vide* March 9th. According to newspaper, they were seen 23d February also in Connecticut, and March 3d in West Roxbury.

much shorter and broader as you look down on it, thus:



In Bell Pond (once Bladder Pond) on the same road, near to Worcester, they were catching little shiners, only, at most, two inches long, for perch bait. (The perch and pickerel they commonly catch at Quinsigamond are small.) They cut a round hole about three feet in diameter and let down a simple net of this form, with only a stone to sink it in the bottom, then cast Indian meal or bits of cracker into the water, and the minnows swim forward after the bait, and the fisherman, without seeing them, pulls up the net at a venture.

Feb. 25. Heard Staples, Tuttle, E. Wood, N. Barrett, and others this morning at the post-office talking about the profit of milk-farming. The general conclusion seemed to be that it was less profitable than it was three years ago. Yet Staples thought he could name half a dozen who had done well. He named one. He thought he could name eight or ten who had paid off the mortgages on their farms by this means within a few years. Tuttle said he would give him a good supper if he would name three. Staples named only the one referred to above, David Buttrick, but he added, looking at Tuttle, "There is yourself. You know you came to town with nothing in your pocket but an old razor, a few pennies, and a damned dull jack-knife, and

now you are richer than David Buttrick." "Well," answered Tuttle, "I should n't have been, if I had n't used the razor so much."

When it snowed yesterday very large flakes, an inch in diameter, Aunt said, "They are picking geese." This, it seems, is an old saying.

Measure your health by your sympathy with morning and spring. If there is no response in you to the awakening of nature, — if the prospect of an early morning walk does not banish sleep, if the warble of the first bluebird does not thrill you, — know that the morning and spring of your life are past. Thus may you feel your pulse.

I heard this morning a nuthatch on the elms in the street. I think that they are heard oftener and again [*sic*] at the approach of spring, just as the *phœbe* note of the chickadee is; and so their *gnah gnah* is a herald of the spring.

Joe Smith says that he saw blackbirds this morning. I hear that robins were seen a week or more ago. So the birds are quite early this year.

P. M. — Up river on ice.

I see a handful of the scarlet *Rosa Carolina* hips in the crotch of a willow on some mud, a foot or more above the ice. They are partly eaten, and I think were placed there by a musquash. The rose bush, with a few hips on it, still stands in the ice within a few feet. Goodwin says he has seen their tracks eight or ten rods long to an apple tree near the water, where they have been for apples.

Along edge of Staples's meadow sprout-land, the young maples, some three years old, are stripped down,

i. e. the lower branches for a foot or two, by the ice falling. This barks and wounds the young trees severely.

The ice over the middle of the river is now alternately dark and whitish. I see the river beginning to show dark through the thinnest parts, in broad crescents convex up-stream, single or connected.

A good book is not made in the cheap and offhand manner of many of our scientific Reports, ushered in by the message of the President communicating it to Congress, and the order of Congress that so many thousand copies be printed, with the letters of instruction for the Secretary of the Interior (or rather exterior); the bulk of the book being a journal of a picnic or sporting expedition by a brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, illustrated by photographs of the traveller's footsteps across the plains and an admirable engraving of his native village as it appeared on leaving it, and followed by an appendix on the palæontology of the route by a distinguished savant who was not there, the last illustrated by very finely executed engravings of some old broken shells picked up on the road.

There are several men of whose comings and goings the town knows little. I mean the trappers. They may be seen coming from the woods and river, perhaps with nothing in their hands, and you do not suspect what they have been about. They go about their business in a stealthy manner for fear that any shall see

where they set their traps, — for the fur trade still flourishes here. Every year they visit the out-of-the-way swamps and meadows and brooks to set or examine their traps for musquash or mink, and the owners of the land commonly know nothing of it. But, few as the trappers are here, it seems by Goodwin's accounts that they steal one another's traps.

All the criticism which I got on my lecture on Autumnal Tints at Worcester on the 22d was that I assumed that my audience had not seen so much of them as they had. But after reading it I am more than ever convinced that they have not seen much of them, — that there are very few persons who do see much of nature.

Feb. 27. P. M. — To Cliffs.

Though it was a dry, powdery snow-storm yesterday, the sun is now so high that the snow is soft and sticky this afternoon. The sky, too, is soft to look at, and the air to feel on my cheek.

Health makes the poet, or sympathy with nature, a good appetite for his food, which is constantly renewing him, whetting his senses. Pay for your victuals, then, with poetry; give back life for life.

Feb. 28. To Cambridge and Boston.

Saw a mackerel in the market. The upper half of its sides is mottled blue and white like the mackerel sky, as stated January 19th, 1858.

END OF VOLUME XI