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For those before Him gathered,
 His soul outpoured doth plead
 That he, Christ's chosen shepherd,
 The flock may duly feed:
 That, in his utter weakness,
 Strength may be his to speak
 Of truths that are immortal,
 And told for Jesus' sake.

• And hearts that shall be lifted
 Above all earthly care,
 By thoughts that voice shall utter
 That now is hushed in prayer,
 Shall, through a life awakened,
 A wondrous power claim,
 For words thus blessed of Jesus,
 And spoken in His name.

BOOK NOTES, BY A PARISH PRIEST.

HENRY D. THOREAU.¹

THOREAU, the Concord stoic, is one of those writers who, indebted to civilization and the university for much culture, used that culture in fresh explorations of Nature. His books, peculiar in their structure, are the freshest and the best in their own department. He was, first of all, a naturalist. He outgrew society. He became a citizen of the forest. His books, in their very titles, show the spirit of the man. They are: "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," "Walden, or Life in the Woods," "Excursions," and "The Maine

¹ *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.* By Henry D. Thoreau. Boston: James Munroe & Company. 12mo. pp. 413. 1849.

Walden. By Henry D. Thoreau. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 12mo. pp. 357. 1863.

Excursions. By Henry D. Thoreau. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 12mo. pp. 319. 1863.

The Maine Woods. By Henry D. Thoreau. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 12mo. pp. 323. 1864.

A Summer Cruise on the Coast of New England. Boston: Crosby & Nichols. 16mo. pp. 261. 1864.

Woods." Their contents are what their titles indicate. His "Week" is the record of an actual week's voyage upon those rivers; but its leisurely flow shows that the book was by no means written in a week or a month, but was the slow outcome of a thoughtful manhood. It is filled with the settled principles, facts, convictions of a man who is in his prime. The thoughts arise from his subject and range through religion, morals, society, literature, and the facts of humble life. His "Walden" shows how the retiring and determinate scholar may bury himself in the woods, and with a celibate life, may simplify his wants and divide his time equally between the exercise of muscle and of mind. It is a biography wholly unique, not so attractive nor surprising as Robinson Crusoe's, but to the inquiring few having a winning interest, which will always make it a classic in its kind. His "Excursions" is a volume of miscellaneous papers, collected since his death, and perhaps his most valuable contribution to natural history. The papers on the "Natural History of Massachusetts," "Wild Apples," "The Succession of Forest Trees," "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," and "A Winter Walk," are each fresh with new facts, and have permanent value not only to science, but to the literature or poetry of outward nature. Thoreau always distinguished between the uses of science and of literature, and while ignoring neither exactness nor truthfulness, he preferred to give the literary expression to scientific truth; and hence has increased his audience without lessening the value of his writings. His "Maine Woods" is the freshest of all. Reading it in these very days when such adventures are possible, and when so many parish priests, if they have healthy bodies and sound heads, and full purses (which last is the chief difficulty) are away in similar wild sporting-places of Nature, rekindling their love of the eternal and unchanging works of God, I have myself, while sitting by my library window, ascended the rugged rocks of Mount Katahdin by the single mountain-torrent, and walked over the matted tops of aged cedars; I have camped in the trackless wilderness, and killed the moose at Lake Chesuncook; I have wandered miles and miles with the Penobscot Indian in the birch canoe; I have lost myself in those unnamed wilds where only the Indian, and the moose, and the deer are at

home, and where the busy hum of civilized life may never come. No one can rest easy after reading this book, till he has seen the forests of Maine, and any one who has even set his eyes on them from a distance cannot but be entranced by their solemn spectral grandeur. I expect that scholars and thoughtful men not a few have been drawn thither this season by the inspiration of the "Maine Woods." To the worth of the volume this is the highest tribute which can be given. No one before Thoreau has explored their secrets and written the story of his adventures; and perhaps none had gone to them before with the true instincts of the naturalist, equally interested in the flower, the mountain, the forest, the lake, the animals, and the Indians. Our Concord hermit was prepared by the studies of his life to carry much away from them, and his instinct is so true for noteworthy things, that no one is disappointed. There remain materials for yet another volume from Thoreau. There are his papers in "The Dial" of transcendental fame; there are poems and essays scattered through the magazines; there are some yet unpublished. He was such a rare and singular man, that whatever he wrote is worth preservation. Even when you altogether dissent from his views, you recognize the unmistakable stamp of a *man*.

Coming now to a more minute examination of his writings, you are struck by their oneness of sentiment. The key-note of them all is sympathy with Nature. He sees all things from this point of view. It is said of Wordsworth, that his library was in his house, but his study was all out-doors. So it was with Thoreau. The more he was in the open air, in strange and beautiful scenery, among those whose ways were primitive and conformed to Nature, the better he enjoyed himself. His habits were regulated according to the single purpose which animated his life. Emerson, whom he was like in some respects, says of him: "He chose wisely, no doubt, for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and of Nature." "He knew how to sit immovable, a part of the rock he rested on, until the bird, the reptile, the fish, which had retired from him, should come back, and resume its habits, nay, moved by curiosity, should come to him and watch him." "He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it as freely by paths of his own.

He knew every track in the snow or on the ground, and what creature had taken this path before him." "Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket, his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds, microscope, jack-knife, and twine. He wore straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers, to brave shrub-oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or a squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for water-plants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor." "Snakes coiled round his leg; the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them out of the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters. Our naturalist had perfect magnanimity: he had no secrets; he would carry you to the heron's haunt or even to his most prized botanical swamp, — possibly knowing that you could never find it again, yet willing to take his risks." "So much knowledge of Nature's secret and genius few others possessed, none in a more large or religious synthesis." "He chose to be rich by making his wants few and supplying them himself." Such is a glimpse of his habits from one who knew him best.

He also says: "He was equally interested in every natural fact. The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature, and I know not any genius who so swiftly inferred universal law from the single fact. He was no pedant of a department." "He loved Nature so well, was so happy in her solitude, that he became very jealous of cities, and the sad work which their refinements and artifices made with man and his dwelling." These quotations give us the pith of his life. They tell us the kind of naturalist he was. They stamp his writings beforehand with a certain thoroughness and authority. But it will not be possible for me here to give more than the briefest hint of the wealth there is in his pages. I shall quote him rather to show the spirit and purpose of the author than to enlarge the reader's knowledge. Every thinker will demand the whole of Thoreau and for himself; only the full detail and all of it will satisfy the naturalist. Here are a few of those select paragraphs which are characteristic. In describing Mount Katahdin, he says: "The mountain seemed a vast aggregate of loose rocks, as if sometime it had rained rocks, and they

lay as they fell on the mountain sides, nowhere fairly at rest, but leaning on each other, all rocking-stones, with cavities between, but scarcely any soil or smoother shelf. They were the raw materials of a planet dropped from an unseen quarry, which the vast chemistry of Nature would anon work up, or work down, into the smiling and verdant plains and valleys of earth. This was *an undone extremity of the globe.* "The tops of mountains are among the unfinished parts of the globe, whither it is a slight insult to the gods to climb and pry into their secrets, and try their effect on our humanity. Only daring and insolent men, perchance, go there. Simple races, as savages, do not climb mountains, — their tops are sacred and mysterious tracts never visited by them." "Here was no man's garden but the unhand-selled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet earth, as it was made forever and ever — to be the dwelling of man, we say — so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it. It was matter, vast, terrific, — not his mother-earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in, — *no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there,* — the home this of necessity and fate. There was felt there the presence of a force not bound to be kind to man."

He thus enters into the feeling of mountain power with a sympathy which bends the very language to his purpose. His words are reverent; his thoughts, expressed with such point, are yet common to all minds. You see him in another mood in the following: —

"Who shall describe the inexpressible tenderness and immortal life of the grim forest, where Nature, though it be mid-winter, is ever in her spring; where the moss-grown and decaying trees are not old, but seem to enjoy a perpetual youth; and blissful, innocent Nature, like a serene infant, is too happy to make a noise, except by a few tinkling, lispng birds and trickling rills?"

"What a place to live, what a place to die and be buried in! There certainly men would live forever and laugh at death and the grave."

Here again the naturalist gives one of his finest touches: —

“When I detect a beauty in any of the recesses of Nature, I am reminded by the serene and retired spirit in which it requires to be contemplated, of the inexpressible privacy of a life, — how silent and unambitious it is. *The beauty there is in mosses must be considered from the holiest, quietest nook.*”

He says beautifully of the fox's step: “He treads so softly, that you would hardly hear it from any nearness, and yet with such expression, that it would *not be quite inaudible at any distance.*” And this, too, shows such an observant eye: “I am struck with the pleasing friendships and unanimities of Nature, as when the lichen on the trees takes the form of their leaves.”

Each of these quotations has a beauty of its own. The naturalist becomes the thinker or the poet, and invests Nature with the charm of new fancies. Notice how he strikes the very marrow of our own unexpressed thoughts concerning Nature in most fitting language. The description is cut out, clear and bold, — not a word to spare. But there is one paper in the “Excursions,” the one on “Autumnal Tints,” which I should like to quote entire. He says there: “October is the month for painted leaves. Their rich glow now flashes round the world. As fruits and leaves, and the day itself, acquire a bright tint just before they fall, so the year near its setting. October is its sunset sky; November the later twilight.” And he goes on to paint in his own matchless way all the glories of the ripened leaves. Who of us will not enjoy this glorious October as we enjoy no other month in the year? Who of us will not feast the eye and soul, too, with the inexhaustible variety of plumage? Who does not like to tread upon the dry leaves, or toss them back with a stick while searching for the brown chestnuts? Ah! reader, there is such joyous life in this October month as fills every true lover of Nature with ecstasy. You cannot be too thankful that your life is spared each year to witness anew the glory of the forest colors. To go up a high hill, not too high, and with the glass or naked eye, to tell the different trees by the scarlet of their leaves, or even without analysis, to drink in the full glory of this beautiful world, and then not to forget that a Divine Hand has made the eye to see, and the landscapè to be seen, and to feel the gushing thankfulness moistening the eye and quickening the pulse — such mo-

ments are worth a lifetime to one who tries to enjoy the world which God has made for us to dwell in. Let every one read this paper in this month and learn to enjoy Nature through Thoreau's eyes, if he does not know how through his own. And let me assure every one, that such warm sympathy with Nature, such close discrimination of the features of our American landscape, such minute knowledge of our natural history, such inspiring thoughtfulness, such unerring instinct, have seldom been found in any one writer as they are in Thoreau. Emerson truly describes him as "the bachelor of thought and of Nature." His life found its natural outlet through this channel. Hence his writings are personal, autobiographic. He reveals *himself* in his books. He throws the charm of a passion around his favorite subjects. The day will come when his writings will be held as one of our most original contributions to literature.

A sort of pendant to Thoreau lies upon my table, a pendant, too, to his labors as a naturalist, "A Summer Cruise on the Coast of New England," by Robert Carter. The only way in which Thoreau destroyed animal life was by fishing. His accounts of the fish in our rivers, scattered through all his books, are helped out by this short account of those which may be caught off shore. The two men differ widely. One could fish contentedly all his days; the other became a naturalist as a relief from editorial duties; yet the one is as accurate as the other, so far as he goes. I know not where you can find better descriptions of our common sea-coast fish than in this book; and the story of the cruise, though smacking a little too much of whisky to suit my fancy, and in some parts carelessly written, has abundant force and vivacity. It has the sea-breeze, the sea-spray, the sea-fish; and it is just long enough to make you wish it were longer. I shall put it on the same shelf with my Thoreau.

As an essayist, Thoreau takes a high rank. His writings may all be classed under this head. He never wrote mere rhetoric, sacrificing truth to words. He says very truly, that "steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing." It is true of his own. The intense truthfulness of his nature

makes his every sentence and word crisp and honest. In few writers do you find sentences so short and pointed, and which are not epigrammatic. He is never sententious, but you linger over his sayings, because they touch some secret spring in your humanity. In short, call it what you will, there is a pervasive charm about Thoreau's page which draws you on, and when you come to know him well, you see that there is great truth in his views of things. He is just enough removed from the common current of life to be original, and the ideal look which he always puts on, and by which he judges of all things, leads him aside just far enough to give a mild, scholarly fascination to his style and thoughts. His "Week" has many pages which are charming specimens of the literary essay. His thoughts upon Literature, upon Friendship, upon Life, much as I must dissent from most of them, tell very truthfully for the side of life on which he looked too exclusively. Whenever he treads the common highway, he sees so much more than we do, that we gladly listen. His style was his own; not pedantic; but having just the touch of the wildness of the forest about it, just the freshness which makes the woods inviting in June.

But liking Thoreau so well, willing to commend the rare qualities of his head and heart, his genius, like the pearl, was the fruit of disease. Or is it that some men (I have known two or three) are so made constitutionally that they turn off from the common life of man, and rebel, like Satan, from the appointments of God? Thoreau was drawn aside into companionship with Nature from the first. He was made with certain strong tendencies; it was not education, but the original bent of genius; but his education followed his genius; his intellectual associations were all in one way. His biography is given in what Emerson says of his habits. It has been a study with me to trace out how much his peculiarities of religious belief were the fruit of his genius, and how much came from his antagonisms, from the social circumstances of his life. The plain fact is, that he had no religion, in our sense of the word. What he says of Christianity in his "Week" shows an indifference which shocks an honest mind. He believes in it no more than he does in any mythology. He sneers continually at the Puritan forms; their doctrines and creeds seem to him

outworn and vain and useless. Yet in his most secret intercourse with Nature, when he pours out his soul in meditation, his thoughts wander painfully after an object of faith. There is a soul there hungering after God.

I discover in Thoreau no lack of religious instincts. In his heart he is not irreverent; the problems of life were ever pressing upon him, and making him serious; he turns from religion, because, as he sees it, it has lost its truthfulness, and seems only a mixture of prejudice and bigotry. Growing up amid a religious system, which presents the terrors without the amenities of the law, his instincts turned him from it, and meeting none of its more lovable forms, he made his religion for himself. It was a sort of pantheism; that he was safe in Nature; that the spirit of the universe was the same as his own; that somehow at death his own spirit would be absorbed in the general life. Vague, misty as was this faith, when once embraced, it held him always. It was meat and drink to him. The same alternative has been accepted by hundreds of the best minds in New England. You, my reader, may be one of those who has sometime in his life turned to Nature for a God, and believed only in the reflected image of himself!

Yet the deepest love of Nature exists when we see God in Nature. Wordsworth had as deep an inspiration as Thoreau, and he raises you at times almost to infinity itself, by the sublimity of his communings with the outward world. Says Thoreau, "The deepest thinker is the farthest travelled;" but the deepest thinker in Nature is he who goes beyond the form, and penetrates to the great fact of a Maker. The Scriptures have the most ravishing conceptions of outward Nature, but they always join them with the deeper truth of Nature's God. It is this truth which the devout and thoughtful Christian carries upon the hillside and the mountain, and into the great solitudes of the forests. It inspires and consecrates this earth as God's handiwork. So that those who do not blindly worship Nature, but enjoy Nature and worship God, are the truest interpreters of Nature.

I charge, then, much of Thoreau's prejudice and perversion of religious truth upon the religious system under whose shadow he grew up. That system was a degenerated Puritanism.

Thoreau is the logical fruit of New England Unitarianism. His principle of making his reason his sole guide, selecting for himself, is a prime thing in their creed. Using their principle with a generous liberty, he rejected their whole faith as untrue to his own instincts. Using the same principle, Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson rejected revealed religion altogether.

Thoreau's writings will always be instructive; they will endure; they are full of beauty; they are honest and sincere; but while I shall always prize his green-bound volumes in my companionship with Nature, I shall ever point to him as a most signal instance of one whose religious instincts were perverted, in part by the prejudice of a gloomy faith, in part by adopting for his guidance the faulty principles which are at the bottom of that faith.

THE MONTH.

It is with more than personal regret and sadness that we record the death, on the 6th of September, at Portland, Maine, of the Rev. Thomas Mather Smith, D. D., formerly President of Kenyon College, and at the time of his decease Emeritus Professor of Systematic Divinity in the Theological Seminary of the Diocese of Ohio. The departure of this pure minded and gifted man and eminent Christian, after a life devoted to the sacred ministry and to the work of instructing those who were to minister to others, is a loss to the Church of God, and a loss deeply to be mourned at a time like this, when the wise counsels, the rich experience, and the mature scholarship of such a man seems especially to be in demand.

The life of a Christian minister and Professor of Theology, presents very few marked incidents, and beyond the dates of his birth, his baptism, his ordination, the number of his years of labor, the places where these years of mental toil were passed, and the time of death, gives us little to record in days like these, of stirring scenes and epochs never to be forgotten. And still, it would be far from doing justice to this useful and honored life of nearly threescore years and ten not to note the few facts we give below, leaving it to other and abler hands to