THOREAU AS A NATURE ESSAYIST

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time nature has been of supreme interest to man, who has constantly attempted to understand such matters as the stars, the sun, the moon, the wind, and many others. He was even more interested in objects that lived and grew, especially those which could be of great benefit to him. It was soon learned that such things as wild beasts, storms, and disease were harmful and greatly feared. And so all these facts increased man's curiosity and aroused his desire to have more accurate knowledge about natural objects in order that he might use natural forces advantageously. Gradually mastering the forces of nature, he became much more civilized, in the early ages, however, living at the mercy of wild beasts, of disease, and of the elements. Now his conquest of nature seems about complete, since he has learned to subdue her and use her powers for beneficial purposes. This accumulation of knowledge through the ages is now available to everyone and serves as a basis for more scientific investigation.

Henry David Thoreau, of course, was only one of many who investigated the wonders of nature; but with so much emphasis being placed upon her many various aspects, it seems likely Thoreau's contributions may continue to influence an ever-growing desire to know what is in the offing.

For one thing, he sincerely believed the world was a place of wonder and that each new day produced new experiences and

interesting sights. Everything capable of being handled and investigated--the birds and animals, the changing seasons, the trees and flowers, the different kinds of animal life, and a vast number of other objects--were to him the forces which awaited entrance into his mind and informed him he was indeed living in a most fascinating and curious world.

More important than anything else, nature heartily extended to Thoreau a wonderful sense of companionship with all living things and with the great open spaces. From these sources he eagerly and readily learned to appreciate sound, color, and form. The sunset and thunderclouds in the sky, the flash of the blue jay's breast, the bird songs, the pattering rhythm of rain on the roof, the wind sighing in the tree tops, the murmuring brooks, the amusing antics of squirrels--these and many more became an active part of his world. As a result of all this, there developed in Thoreau a sense of kinship with all inanimate and animate objects.

As brought out in this study, the Concord naturalist made frequent and extensive excursions that were recorded and later published. He possessed a genuine knack for depicting vividly and interestingly his many journeys, and, appropriately enough, he had above everything else a most sincere love of nature. In addition, by reading, listening, and observing he obtained accurate knowledge and therefore was well prepared for writing about the numerous subjects always held close to his heart.

EARLY INFLUENCES LEADING TO THOREAU'S INTEREST IN NATURE

Before Thoreau's time no other writer wrote as he did; since then, however, there have been many who have used a similar style. True, if he served as the inspiration for Gandhi and other members of the British Labor Party, so was he the father of the present-day writers who deal with nature. Many writers might well be called nature lovers, but there is a certain unusual emphasis in Thoreau's work used similarly by his successors. However, such emphasis was not used by his predecessors.[1]

Numerous influences led Henry David Thoreau to assume an active role in the wonders of nature. Probably the most influential factor came in his own beloved community of Concord, Massachusetts, where he was offered all the necessities of life.[2] Even as a student at Harvard, he frequently could not help remembering the wind in the woods at Concord.[3] As a child, Thoreau was a dreamer; this is evidenced by his disliking games, parades, and other activities. However, he thoroughly enjoyed sitting near a window at home watching the hawks in the sky.[4]

Thoreau was fully conscious that Concord was not only a land, but also a community; and in his writings, he achieved far

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[1] J. W. Krutch, "A Little Fishy Friend," Nation, 169 (Oct. 8, 1949), 350.

[2] Henry Seidel Canby, Thoreau, p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

[4] Ibid., p. 33.

more than did any other citizen whose activities were confined within the limits of the village.[1] To him, the country in and around the village had all the beauty and grandeur any nature lover could ask for. Although he traveled occasionally,[2] "he haunted Concord and its neighbourhood as faithfully as the stork its ancestral nest."[3] In fact, very few writers have ever studied their respective countrysides with more interest than Thoreau devoted to the meadows, woods, and streams around Concord. Because of Thoreau's intense interest in this section of New England, Bronson Alcott once predicted the Concord naturalist would one day write the perfect "Atlas of Concord";[4] this became a reality when the little town of Concord came to life in Thoreau's books.[5] "...he made an American town--some streets, some lakes, many farms, and stretches of swamps, hardwood scrub, and pine groves--into his Delphi, where sometimes perversely, but often humorously and with eloquence, an oracle spoke."[6]

"There is much truth in Thoreau's romantic memory of Walden Pond, that, though no country child, he was early dedicated to the woods, lakes, and the companionship of nature. He was a town

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1 Canby, op. cit., p. 4.

2 William Sharp, "Thoreau, Henry David." Encyclopaedia Britannica, Eleventh edition, XXVI:877.

3 Canby, op. cit., p. 33.

4 George F. Whicher, Walden Revisited, p. 26.

5 Canby, op. cit., p. xv.

6 Ibid.

boy converted to the wild."[1] The one childhood experience Thoreau never forgot was his visit to Walden Pond with his grandmother.[2] He wrote:

> When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now tonight my flute has waked the echoes over that very water. The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture, and even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my infant dreams, and one of the results of my presence and influence is seen in these bean leaves, corn blades, and potato vines.[3]

Other members of the family greatly enhanced Thoreau's interest in Nature. It is not known which of his parents was the more ardent nature-lover, but it generally is accepted that both often took the family with them into the forests and along the rivers.[4] Although the family were amateur naturalists, Henry did not become a really enthusiastic admirer of nature until later. When he did turn to the more scientific aspects, he surpassed them all, taking up the spy glass and note book and laying down his rod and gun. He showed much reluctance, though, in giving up the joys of the hunter and fisherman.[5]

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[1] Canby, op. cit., p. 33.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

[3] Henry D. Thoreau, Walden, p. 169.

[4] Canby, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

[5] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

It seems that Thoreau derived most of his ambition and tireless energy from his mother, Cynthia Dunbar Thoreau, who constantly strived to better the circumstances for her family.[1] He also seems to have received much of his love of nature from her.[2]

> Early, too, came the tendency to reverie and the love of solitude, although for some years he lived, like Wordsworth, mainly the life of glad animal movements, wandering over the countryside, to woods, lakes, and rivers--hunting, fishing, berry-picking, boating, swimming....Always he wanted something active; if only to seek the river to gaze at a canal-boat, a rare bird of passage in Concord, swimming quietly along from a strange land to a strange land, or to watch the Indians, who every year came to sell beads and baskets, and pitched their tents, like the red men of old, in the meadows of the town.[3]

The youngest of the Thoreau children, Sophia, also exerted some influence upon her brother; as she passionately loved flowers, she always saw to it that the Thoreau houses were well provided with them, and thus, in her own way, also aroused Henry's interest in them.[4]

Through associations with his greatest friend and constant companion--his brother John--Thoreau learned much information that he always treasured highly.[5] Amiable, religious, and well read concerning matters of real value, John at one time was the

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1 Canby, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

2 Norman Foerster, Nature in American Literature, p. 70.

3 Ibid., p. 71.

4 Canby, op. cit., p. 29.

5 Ibid., p. 35.

amateur naturalist of the family. In fact, it was John's list of Concord birds that enabled Thoreau to write his first text-book dealing with ornithology.[1]

In developing into manhood, the two brothers often spent much time in the great area of unsettled country north of Concord--Walden Pond--in search of wild creatures, especially mink and muskrat; and even though Thoreau never hunted bird or beast and seldom fished in later life, he became proficient with rod and gun.[2]

When Thoreau was graduated from Harvard University in 1837, he was undecided as to any particular profession. Holding a scholarship at the University, he had proved very studious, mainly in the classics and in English poetry. And so eventually, Henry and John opened a private school, where, among other studies, Thoreau had ample opportunities to learn more about plants and animal life of the countryside.[3]

In 1839 the two brothers combined their efforts in an undertaking which proved to be their most enjoyable experience together, a week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. Thoreau had often stood on the banks of the Concord and watched the smooth-gliding current passing over the bending weeds and shining pebbles far below the surface, completely convinced that here

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1 Canby, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
2 Whicher, op. cit., pp. 17,18.
3 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Mother Nature had indeed made one of her most wonderful contributions. Desirous of learning what lay beyond, Thoreau and his brother purchased necessary provisions and started down the stream on Saturday, August 31, in their fifteen by three and one-half foot boat.[1]

Early in 1842 Thoreau suffered his greatest loss when John died of lockjaw.[2] Three years before this, Thoreau had written a wonderful tribute which clearly indicated his true feelings about his brother:

> My friend is not of some other race or family of men, but flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone. He is my real brother. I see his nature groping yonder so like mine. We do not live far apart. Have not the fates associated us in many ways?...Is it of no significance that we have so long partaken of the same loaf, drank at the same fountain, breathed the same air summer and winter, felt the same heat and cold; that the same fruits have been pleased to refresh us both, and have never had a thought of different fibre the one from the other?[3]

A significant part of Thoreau's youth came when a Mrs. Ward and her daughter Prudence went to live with the Thoreaus. Henry's Aunt Maria had become an intimate friend of the widow of Colonel Joseph Ward, famous during the Revolution, and her daughter Prudence, who painted flowers and was an amateur botanist. As a result, Prudence introduced the study of botany into

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[1] H. G. O. Blake, editor, Thoreau's Complete Works, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, V. 5, p. 11.

[2] Whicher, op. cit., p. 21.

[3] Blake, op. cit., p. 302.

the family.[1]

Later in life Thoreau lived in Lincoln township with his friend, Stearns Wheeler, who had constructed a shack in which he spent a great deal of time studying. This experience seems to have resulted in Thoreau's desire to undergo a similar experience by himself, and so Walden was the answer.[2]

> He was drawn to solitude by what was deepest in his nature. He could no more tell what it was than a lover can set down in words the reasons for his devotion. There was nothing any more original in Thoreau's going to the woods than there is in a young man's falling in love, but in both cases the participant feels that no one has ever had such an experience before.[3]

While still a boy in the little town of Concord, Thoreau was delighted to have the opportunity to be associated with J. R. Agassiz, the naturalist, who not only was the greatest authority of his day on marine zoology, but also the discoverer of many facts related to animal life and geology. Because of what he later became, it was small wonder that Thoreau was greatly influenced by this Swiss-born scientist, whose imminence was attained largely through his ability to communicate imagination and enthusiasm to his pupils.[4]

Also, had it not been for Agassiz, for whom Thoreau collected such specimens as turtles and fish from the Concord River and Walden Pond, Thoreau might not have become too familiar with one

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1 Canby, op. cit., p. 23.

2 Whicher, op. cit., p. 13.

3 Ibid.

4 David Starr Jordon, "Agassiz, Jean Louis Rodolphe." Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952 printing. I:340.

of thie country's conflicte.

Deepite critical remarks about Thoreau'e nature studies, his woodcraft, and his ornithology, present-day ecientiste have gradually come to recognize Thoreau as one of themselves.

Modern taxonomy dates from the time Linneaue used a natural system of classification, which was eomewhat modified by the idea of development, or evolution, into the modern classification, a modification that wae progreseing during Thoreau'e lifetime under such leaders ae DeCandolle, Torrey, Darwin, and Gray. It ie of considerable significance to note that Thoreau allied himself with these men by his acceptance of thie theory of development.

In Thoreau'e time the nearest approach to the science of ecology was plant geography. The exploratory and taxonomic work of euch men as Bartram, in America, and Humboldt, in South America, was being coneolidated in studies which endeavored to define the boundariee of the world's dietribution of flora and to determine the conditions and limitations of plant migration or specific creation....remained undecided, unless Darwin's Origin of Speciee can be accepted as the agent of immediate eettlement. Thoreau reacted againet the hypothesis of special creation; however, he died in 1862 before having the opportunity to read the Origin of Species.

Conservation was not a science in Thoreau'e day, but rather the dream of some farsighted men and the passion of a group allied to men like Alcott who were vegetariane because they could

not adhere to the destruction of animal life. Although ecology as a science was not known, some plant geographers and taxonomists were contributing work on associations and habitats that more or less served to classify them as pioneers of ecology. Thoreau was unofficially a member of this group.

Even though evolution and specific creation had a place in nearly all ecclesiastical and scientific thinking, Thoreau seems to have taken little part in it. In mentioning Darwin several times, his association was always with regard to the Voyage of a Naturalist around the World. He made no references to Lamarck's earlier studies on acquired characteristics. The fact that he was somewhat familiar with the Vestiges of Creation lies in Alcott's criticism of it to a group at Cambridge in 1854, as well as in a diary entry, that he and Thoreau had discussed "genesis," a term Alcott used in this pre-Darwin period to designate the concept of change. It seems apparent that Thoreau could have become familiar with the controversy had he done considerable reading in connection with geology.

And so Thoreau's strongest link with this conflict was a result of his associations with Agassiz. Correspondence with James Elliot Cabot, who cooperated with Agassiz in his work on American fishes, bears out the fact that Thoreau sent specimens during 1847, many at Agassiz's request, and that some of them had previously not been identified. Other than his extensive correspondence about fish with Cabot, Thoreau frequently met Agassiz at Concord, where the two men examined and carefully studied turtles.

Agassiz's influence, therefore, cannot be overlooked in any attempt to account for Thoreau's acceptance of the developmental viewpoint in natural history; although Agassiz was an advocate of special creation to account for the geographic distribution of species, his work in morphology was based upon the concept of development.[1]

Three other men of prominence who exerted a considerable amount of influence upon Thoreau were Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. It seems that Thoreau was attracted to Whitman because of the mutual interest both men had for wild nature, for a loon, an otter, or a woodchuck.[2] As for Wordsworth, Thoreau's interest in him started at Harvard.

At an early age Thoreau had developed an avid interest in reading. Although his standing in class was only average, he had been granted a scholarship at Harvard; he spent much time in the library reading the works of such English authors as Coleridge, Carlyle, and Wordsworth. He especially enjoyed the writings of Wordsworth, who practically all his life enjoyed nature to the fullest extent.[3]

Concord, Massachusetts, also laid claim to another man, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had ushered in Transcendentalism with his book called Nature,[4] which Thoreau first read while attending

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1 Philip and Kathryn Whitford, "Thoreau: Pioneer Ecologist and Conservationist," Scientific Monthly, 73(Nov., 1951), 291-292.

2 Bliss Perry, editor, The Heart of Emerson's Journals, p. 291.

3 Whicher, op. cit., p. 18.

4 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Harvard.[1] Then, when Thoreau's formal education was completed, Emerson and Thoreau became very close friends. Emerson fully believed in nature and felt America could be made new by a younger generation possessing clear minds close to nature,[2] and he likewise enjoyed seeing some of his own personality traits extended in his pupils. Henry David Thoreau showed such desirable traits.[3]

In his writings Thoreau also indicated that Ralph Waldo Emerson influenced him somewhat. In fact, Emerson said Thoreau, who had unconsciously acquired his style, imitated his tones and manners to such an extent that listening to him became a matter of considerable annoyance. And although Thoreau mastered the short, well-expressed sentence, his style often proved inartistic and rude, hardly similar to Emerson's style. No one has ever excelled Thoreau in the field of minute description; and his keen powers of observation, his ability to keep his attention upon one thing for a long time, and his love of solitude and of nature all go to make up his individuality of style.[4]

Of this famous early American who was known as a leader in the world of intellect and who was influential in developing Thoreau's natural ability as a writer, by encouraging Thoreau to read profusely--thus providing the younger man a background with

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1 Whicher, op. cit., p. 18.

2 Canby, op. cit., p. 90.

3 Ibid., p. 92.

4 Fred Lewis Pattee, A History of American Literature, pp. 226-227.

which to write[1]--it has been said that

> Emerson has special talents unequalled. The divine in man has had no more easy, methodically distinct expression. His personal influence upon young persons is greater than any man's. In his world every man would be a poet, Love would reign, Beauty would take place, Man and Nature would harmonize.[2]

And so Henry David Thoreau became an American scholar according to Emerson's own definition, with an abundance of self-trust as he devoted himself to the study of nature, books, and action. He measured all his accomplishments with his own rule and sought to make them his own by thinking and living them, and thus followed his chosen course deliberately and fanatically.[3]

> It led him, as he conceived, away from men to the sphinx-like nature that men had long neglected. Nature, rightly read, was the key to all mysteries; and, loving her, attuned to her harmonies, clear-eyed in the study of her flowing lineaments, he bravely took the knowledge of her for his province.[4]

More specifically, Thoreau's ultimate goal--to have complete fusion with nature--is clearly indicated in this portion of The Thaw:[5]

> Fain would I stretch me by the highway side,
> To thaw and trickle with the melting snow,
> That mingled soul and body with the tide,
> I too may through the pores of nature flow.[6]

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1 Whicher, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

2 Odell Shepard, editor, The Heart of Thoreau's Journals, p. 46.

3 Foerster, op. cit., p. 77.

4 Ibid.

5 Max Cosman, "Thoreau and Nature," The Personalist, 21 (Oct., 1940), 393.

6 Carl Bode, editor, Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau, p. 107.

> It is as if reason, present in organic material, had after severe introspective exercise grown conscious of its inorganic origin and become willing to restore a long forgotten relationship; it is as if the human heart, not content with companionship of its fellows, had sought a more immediate passage to its Maker and found it, paradox of paradoxes, unhindered and all-sufficing in His non-human works.[1]

STYLE AND CRITICISMS OF THOREAU

Actually, there were no pre-Walden years in this man'e interest in nature, eince practically all his life he had been familiar with Walden. When he wae etill a boy, the family, capably led by hie nature-loving mother, epent a great deal of time on nature expeditions. By 1845 Thoreau had obeerved birds in the groves near Harvard Yard, had walked to Wachusett and written an eeeay about the journey, had traveled with hie brother down the Concord River and up the Merrimack, had enjoyed many winter walke, and knew much of night and moonlight. But probably he knew Walden best of all and certainly went there no stranger when he decided to become a resident of that region. All thie certainly proves an early and devoted interest to nature, witnessed by the appearance of nature directly or indirectly on nearly every page Thoreau wrote for the magazines, such as the Dial, before 1845 and equally on every page of his book, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, which he wrote while living at the pond. However, one oan say that this long intereet in

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[1] Cosman, op. cit.

nature was not exactly scientific. A true romantic, he found deep and emotional thoughts in the flowers he eaw and could addreee a rhodora as endearingly as Emerson ever did. Before Walden, he had for many years observed nature affectionately, and enjoyed it as experience rather than as experiment, and known nature personally. But thie poetic approach, not in the least disparaging, wae obviouely not scientific. A large place remains in literature for such a person, because such recordinge charm the hearts of readers almost as much as nature herself had charmed Thoreau's heart. But his was an understanding heart that sublimated his observations into emotional or even spiritual moments. If the observations prove scientific, they are only incidentally so. Thoreau was primarily an artist using the materials of nature.[1]

Even though the citizens of Concord may have had their customary celebration of Independence Day in 1845, another eignificant event occurred when Thoreau began his two-year residence on the shore of Walden Pond.[2] Such contemporaries and critics ae Lowell, Hecker, and Stevenson did not approve of this plan; however, it showed common sense. First, he wanted very much to live satisfactorily; also he desired to record his experiences.[3]

During his sojourn at Walden, Thoreau worked laboriously

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[1] Raymond Adams, "Thoreau's Science," Scientific Monthly, 60 (May,1945), 379-380.

[2] Whicher, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

[3] Canby, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

on the two book manuscripts, the only books published before his death: A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; and Walden: or Life in the Woods, critically regarded by many as one of the greatest contributions to nineteenth century literature.[1] Unquestionably his great masterpieces, they were based upon fact as drawn from his journals, in addition to honest, conscientious recordings, well-expressed ideas, and definite skill in the combination of factual impressions.[2]

Before going to Walden, Thoreau had published seven essays, fourteen poems, some selections or translations from ancient literature, and a few prose fragments in various magazines. Of the seven essays, "Natural History of Massachusetts," "A Winter Walk," and "A Walk to Wachusett" are clearly natural history and may have scientific content. Both as an essay and as science, "Natural History of Massachusetts" has more to be said for it. It begins as a review of four natural history surveys published by the Commissioners on the Zoological and Botanical Survey of the State of Massachusetts, but also included many passages from Thoreau's journal, of better quality than the passages in the other two essays already mentioned. Yet this same essay, based on four books of science, is not the work of a scientist; instead, its main interest lies in the fact that it is a delightful essay and that it is the first of its kind.[3]

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1 Whicher, op. cit., p. 15.
2 Ibid., p. 32.
3 Adams, op. cit., p. 380.

Hawthorne wrote in his journal for September 1, 1842:

> Mr. Thoreau dined with us yesterday....He is a keen and delicate observed of nature,--a genuine observer,--which I suspect is almost as rare a character as even an original poet;...he has written a good article, a rambling disquisition on Natural History, in the last "Dial", which he says, was chiefly made up from journals of his own observations...true, innate and literal... yet giving the spirit as well as the letter of what he sees. There is a basis of good sense and of moral truth, too, throughout the article, which also is a reflection of his character....and I find him a healthy and wholesome man to know.[1]

Thoreau's contribution to the specific form of the natural history essay is but a small part of his work. It is significant, though, because he was the first American writer to put natural history observations into the form of separate essays that were composed with literary considerations in view, and because he was associated with a movement that was destined to exercise great effect upon American letters in general, and especially upon interest in nature.[2]

> He represents the first instance of the poetic temperament writing on nature themes, with a background of scientific knowledge, and with a scholar's appreciation of literary values. He cannot be said to have established any definite requirements in regard to form; his own work shows considerable variation in this respect, but he produced a small group of well made essays with which the work of later writers must inevitably be compared by anyone taking a historical view of the field.[3]

The influence Thoreau had upon the attitude, content, and spirit toward nature of the essays that have followed him is more

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[1] Nathaniel Hawthorne, American Note Books, pp. 96-98.

[2] Philip M. Hicks, The Development of the Natural History Essay in American Literature, p. 96.

[3] Ibid.

important than his influence upon their form. This was exerted by the man's personality in his complete work, but particularly in Walden. In form, however, Walden should be considered as a book, rather than as a series of essays. A person needs the economic background of the first hundred pages, which do not deal with natural history, together with the continuity of development that is added to the picture by each succeeding chapter, in order to get the full value from them. And yet, considered individually, they so excel in the style and spirit of the essay that they must be included in the literature of this field, although they were not written specifically as essays.[1]

> Indeed one may suspect that those carefully devised connections indicate that Thoreau felt the necessity of giving some continuity to a series which is rather diverse in subject matter. The Walden essays give us Thoreau at his best. They seem to present the man in his natural element. The pages glow with vigor of his enjoyment of the life he is living. They are full of gusto and joy, marred a little by the fact that he must at times depreciate the lives that others lead in order to exalt his own, as in the case of his scorn of the villagers and the farmers. It is Thoreau the moralist who speaks in such passages. He can accept the cruel and ugly facts of nature, because he views them all, accident and waste alike, as part of the divine plan. But man, the free agent, choosing the ignoble part, represents degeneracy, and the sight uncorks his scorn. The Walden essays are freed from the burden of his verse that the earlier essays carried, and are less heavily freighted with the fruits of his classicism. He has drawn closer to nature. They are of the woods and earth and elemental things. They represent the nearest approach in our literature to that 'wildness', the lack of which Thoreau deplored in 'Walking'. Walden is a personal book. The natural history of Henry David Thoreau is in it, as well as that of the pond and woods.[2]

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[1] Hicks, op. cit., p. 96.

[2] Ibid.

Even though the amount of Thoreau's writing that is definitely in essay form is not a large proportion of his total work, it is sufficient to rank him with the essayists and to encourage an examination of his use of this form. A suitable starting point is his opinion concerning writing and methods of composition. He was both a journalist and an essayist. So far as total space is concerned, the Journal exceeds the material which he took to put in more definite form.[1] His devotion to the practice of daily entries was expressed when he wrote that no day was wasted so long as he put into writing a sincere and thoughtful idea. It must not be forgotten, however, that he considered the Journal as a store house of future literary product. In using the journal for daily observations, he did not consider it as the end.[2]

Frequently on a moment's notice he wrote in his journal in an attempt to catch the outdoor spirit that such a book should hold. Two years after initiating this plan, he wrote:

> How can a man write the same thoughts by the light of the moon, resting his book on a rail by the side of a remote potato field, that he does by the light of the sun at his study table. The light is but a luminousness. My pencil seems to move through a creamy, mystic medium. The moonlight is rich and somewhat opaque, like cream, but the daylight is thin and blue, like skimmed milk. I am less conscious than in the presence of the sun, my instincts have more influence.[3]

The more popular Walden was not too readily accepted by

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[1] Hicks, op. cit., p. 85.

[2] H. G. O. Blake, editor, Summer, p. 99.

[3] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

society in general; not until after his death was it reprinted. Currently, though, it is well received and has many more readers than does the Week. The reason for this popularity seems to be due to the fact that it shows more unity and more strength. Also, the definite critical ideals of society depicted are of greater interest to society than are the adventures in nature presented in the first book.[1]

This self-appointed custodian of the wilderness proudly boasted of Concord, where, in 1635, the first plantation of the Massachusetts Colony was settled. He observed and studied religiously and thus painted a most fascinating word picture of the Concord River and woods known to word-fanciers in the reading world.[2]

Thoreau was an uncouth rustic and a natural mystic of the first order. At Harvard his classmates had often observed his passing silently to and from his classes, finding him cold and unimpressionable, the main reason being that he carried a far deeper fire than warmed their own surfaces.[3]

> He has it not from any Harvard contact but direct from the gods themselves. To the Greeks, Demeter and Kore; to him nature, or Nature, and without superstition. That is the supreme fact for him, through a lifetime.[4]

To many, it must seem incredible that great significance is

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[1] Krutch, op. cit., p. 350.

[2] Henry C. Tracy, American Naturists, pp. 67, 68.

[3] Ibid., p. 70.

[4] Ibid.

attached to the life or to the writings of Thoreau. An English poet of the more talkative type, who apparently needed the spirit of inner Walden, once commented on the fact that Thoreau did not amount to much. Since neither a restless, storming poet nor an embittered intellectual can learn anything important in the Week or Walden, there can be no logical answer to such a critical remark. Either he will be seeking ideas to be matched with the most recent oracles, or for devising verse or prose patterns.

Most important in Thoreau was that he first made nature mean something; in other words, he made it articulate. Nature is not nearly so much a set of laws and abstractions as it is a reality. To be a true naturist, one must realize reality; Thoreau achieved this in a very satisfactory manner.

Thoreau's predecessors had viewed the woods of the world as an objective reality, as it is with children. The Bartrams collected, classified, and distributed its trophies; with Audubon it was chiefly the world of a hunter and sportsman in which its most interesting forms, the birds, presented themselves; and he became engrossed by their forms, colors, motions, all of which he had the passion to reproduce.

In some respects, though, Thoreau was comparable to Audubon. Whereas Audubon was more single-minded,[1] evidence points out that "Thoreau was more intellectualized, more divided, more torn by emotional and philosophical conflicts, but he attained the satis-

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[1] Agatha Boyd Adams, "In the Abutment of a Rainbow," Nature Writers in the United States, p. 13.

faction of living as he wished, in simple integrity."[1]

In a strict sense, the earlier group were naturalists, but mature and conscious naturists. But none of these men knew the interest of the vast number of insignificant things which enlivened the Week and Walden, or Excursions. To them nature was a convention which remained unverbalized.[2] This being true, then, Thoreau the pioneer had a difficult and even an almost impossible task laid upon him. He chose prose as his medium; the few poems show high classic quality, but they do not give the main idea he endeavored to reveal. When not writing what for him was a complete utterance in language, Thoreau was living it in acts on an out-of-door ritual. For him it was much more than mere natural history to participate in the life of the fields, in the water courses, or elsewhere.[3]

> ...the man was a cool or a furtive being who eludes all but the most discerning. He is, and he does--despite the fact that his friends, from Sanborn on wish him thought civil and engaging. That is an indoor Thoreau, who could pop corn for children, fondle kittens, mend the kitchen tap, sing Tom Bowline with hilarious gusto and even shock his staid New Bedford friends with an improvised dance. The outdoor spirit, the quintessential forest creature, the quaint half-ghostly Homo in sylvae radicans escapes them, and can be known only after patient search. Not by all persons; only by those who have a vestige of the nature-root in themselves. That starved, discouraged rudiment his writings coax into throwing new shoots. Much as the wild apple trees he described were pruned down by passing cattle--these will

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[1] Agatha Boyd Adams, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] Tracy, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

[3] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

> be pruned by our various cultures, if not altogether tramped to death. A Thoreau forest gives them air and checks the correct tame plants we otherwise are. That is their best hope still. More urbane, more facile writers have appeared, who offend less and please more our cultured taste. We have one chief complaint about this hermit and forest priest: that he allowed the Massachusetts culture to pervade him as much as it did: that he conceded so much to the accepted wisdoms, philosophies, natural histories (which concerned his direct knowings scarcely at all); to poetry even, as form.[1]

One device a writer can employ is to take an account of an excursion and build the book around it; this Thoreau did, more or less securing an artificial beginning and end. Another method he frequently used was to limit the activities to a unit of time--a day, a week, a season, or year--and thus record the book in narrative form. Quite obviously he used this method for the Week, as well as for some of his other books, following the pattern set by Margaret Fuller, who wrote Summer on the Lakes.

The first step Thoreau took in his preparation of the manuscript of the Week for publication was to disregard a great portion of the diary pertaining to mountain climbing and land travel, which required comparatively few pages for summarization. Then, from Saturday until Friday--beginning August 31, 1839--he used one day for each chapter, his main reason being not to disturb his chain of thoughts any more than necessary. In this way, he thought, there would be no doubt about coherence; and so he printed them in journal form as they really occurred. He wanted

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[1] Tracy, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

to present to his readers all the minute details.

Also intermixed in his narrative were local details secured by extensive reading of town histories, colonial chronicles, and such descriptive books as were available; in addition to these, he collected many anecdotes, statistics, adventures, and such factual materials that he could use in his record from time to time.[1]

In composing a book from his journal entries, he adopted a more successful and more elaborate device than that of printing successively the narratives of his different trips. Using his initial tour as a framework, he used his collected materials and thus fused all he had to say into one unified, enriched narrative. Eventually this device proved a happy consequence (also used for Walden), as he compressed his encounters with people of the region and other incidents of travel around Cape Cod. In this way none of the vividness is lost; at the same time the intervals of factual description are shortened. Certainly it is no accident that readers have found Cape Cod the most human of Thoreau's travel books.[2]

Another characteristic of his prose deserves some discussion. Thoreau was extravagant in his use of analogies and even recommended them to those who were beginning the study of the art of writing.[3] In one place he explained an impressive pond

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1 Whicher, op. cit., pp. 34-36.
2 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
3 Bartholow V. Crawford, editor, Henry David Thoreau, p. 1.

he could often see diecarding its nightly clothing of miet, revealing its smooth surface and soft, eaey ripples; in the meantime, the ghost-like mists were elyly withdrawing in different directione into the woode. Also, he continued, the dew hung upon the trees as on the sidee of mountains.[1]

It hae been said that Thoreau wrote with "the most perfect prose style ever wielded by an American,"[2] and present-day Americans feel that Thoreau--along with Emerson and Whitman--used the epeech and thought characteristically American.[3]

> ...Emerson discerned in Thoreau a genius that wae not awake until he touched it; that he felt an instant responee of like-mindednees, and in hie Olympian way overlooked the differences; that his magnanimity eet about to create a poet, and found unexpectedly an interpreter as Transcendental ae himself and far more sensitive to the realities of the American fielde and woods, which were the vieible face of that nature which he worehipped in spiritual form.[4]

Emerson aleo wrote that Thoreau's writing was not beautiful in the true eenee of the word, but that his thoughts indicated a great amount of truth by the length and strength of what he had to say. Unpolished and wasted expreesions, he said, eeemed to be the main fault.[5]

Continuing, he wrote:

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[1] Thoreau, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

[2] Hoyt H. Hudson, "English Literature," The Popular Educator, Issue No. 37, Vol. VII, 3350.

[3] Ibid., 3351.

[4] Canby, op. cit., p. 94.

[5] Bliee Perry, editor, The Heart of Emerson's Journals, pp. 189-190.

> Henry Thoreau sends me a paper with the old fault of unlimited contradiction. The trick of his rhetoric is soon learnsd: it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical antagonist. He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air; snow and ice for their warmth; villagers and woodchoppers for their urbanity, and the wilderness for ressmbling Rome and Paris. With the constant inclination to dispraise cities and civilization, hs yet can find no way to know woods and woodmen except by paralleling them with towns and townsmen. Channing dsclared the piece is excellent; but it makes me nervous and wretched to read it, with all its merits.[1]

Concerning Thoreau's journal, Emerson was very much aware of the energy of Thoreau's physical powers; for regardless of whsthsr Thoreau was walking, working, or observing, hs apparently wastsd a great deal of strength. And although Emerson had somewhat the same spirit in his literary tasks, he was inclined to disagree with ths constant presentation of Thoreau's activities.[2]

It seems quite certain, too, that Emerson was greatly influenced by Thoreau; for it was Thoreau who opened the eyes of Emerson, who was blind to less obvious processes of nature. And this was true with all who came in contact with this prophet of the fields and woods.[3]

> It had been Thoreau's mission to open blind eyes, to show ths tragedies, the comedies, the things of beauty, the marvels and the mysteries, that lie about each one of us in field and forest, unseen until we learn to sss them. He was the parent of the out-of-door school of writers representsd by John Burroughs, Frank Bolles, Bradford Torrey, Olive Thorne Miller, Maurics

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[1] Perry, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

[2] Ibid., pp. 298-299.

[3] Pattes, op. cit., p. 227.

Thompson, and many others.[1]

Burroughs once wrote:

> Thoreau was not a great philosopher, he was not a a great naturalist, he was not a great poet, but as a nature-writer and an original character he is unique in our literature....He was so much more than a mere student and obeerver of nature, and it is this surplusage that gives the extra weight and value to his nature writing....He was a dreamer, an idealist, a fervid ethical teacher, seeking inspiration in the fields and woods....Thoreau did not give us a philosophy but a life. He gave us fresh and beautiful literature, he gave us our first and probably only nature claseic, he gave us an example of plain living and high thinking that is always in season, and he took upon himself that kind of noble poverty that carries the suggestion of wealth of soul.[2]

Nathaniel Hawthorne was also influenced by Thoreau. Prior to Thoreau's departure for Staten Island, Hawthorne wrote:

> I should like to have him remain here, he being one of the few persons, I think, with whom to hold intercouree is like hearing the wind among the boughs of a foreet tree; and, with all this freedom, there is a high and classic cultivation in him too...[3]

Other references tell of further associations that both Thoreau and Hawthorne cherished dearly--of their walks and vieite together, of trips in Thoreau's boat, the Musketaquid, which Hawthorne eventually bought and rechristened the Pond Lily. The intimacy and the display of Thoreau'e love for the forest apparently deepened Hawthorne's already sympathetic interest in nature and increaeed the number of notebook entries which add an element of observation of detail to the descriptive touch that

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[1] Pattee, op. cit., p. 227.

[2] John Burroughs, The Last Harvest, p. 108.

[3] Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 111.

predominates in Hawthorne. Although this elemsnt did not develop sufficiently to make him a natural history essayist,[1] it did result in his writing the delightful essay, "Buds and Bird Voices,"[2] an essay about the arrival of spring as seen through the eyes of a poet.

Unlike Thoreau, Hawthorne did not diligently search swamp and wood for the first trace of spring, but saw her first peeping brightly into his study window. It was not so much the spring flight of birds as the flight of his own winter thoughts that made him joyful. He noted, however, the green blades of grass on the snowdrifts, and he knew that the willow would be the first to turn green. He observed and later resorted to analogy. This he exemplified by writing about the lilacs beneath his window reminding him that they were like persons who could be graceful and decorative and should die in youth instead of becoming aged,[3] while:

> Apple trees, on the other hand, grow old without reproach. Let them live as long as they may, and contort themselves into whatever perversity of shape they please, and dsck their withered limbs with a spring time gaudiness of pink blossoms, still they are respectable, even if they afford us only an apple or two in a season. Those few apples--or, at all events, the remembrance of the apples in by-gone years--are the atonement which utilitarianism inexorably dsmands for the privilsge of lengthened life.[4]

Finally, then, in the following paragraph, one can see ad-

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1 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mosses from An Old Manse, p. 102.

2 Printed in the Democratic Review, Vol. 12, N.S. 1843, pp. 604-608, but later reprinted in Mosses from An Old Manse.

3 Mosses from An Old Manse, op. cit., p. 174.

4 Ibid.

ditional influence that Thoreau had on Hawthorne's recorded observations:

> The blackbirds--three species of which consort together--are the noisiest of all our feathered citizens. Great companies of them--more than the famous 'four-and-twenty' whom Mother Goose has immortalized--congregate in contiguous tree tops and vociferate with all the clamor and confusion of a turbulent political meeting. Politics, certainly, must be the occasion of such tumultuous debates, but still, unlike all other politicians, they instill melody into their individual utterances and produce harmony as a general effect. Of all bird-voices, none are more sweet and cheerful to my ear than those of swallows in the dim, sunstreaked interior of a lofty barn; they address the heart with a closer sympathy than Robin Redbreast.[1]

Thoreau had such a good opinion of himself that he overlooked peculiarities in his own character. Success meant nothing to him, even though he was persistent and had his purpose well in mind. To him, money was an unmixed evil; he felt that doing good was one of the weakest of superstitions. Generalization was a rarity with him, and his own experiences formed the largest scope in his life. He had little or no imagination; his critical power was limited and inadequate; but his appreciation was of the highest quality. Sometimes he used similes to bring out the superiority of something old to something new. The artistic mastery that controls a great work to completeness was not his; however, he had a pleasing mechanical skill in the shaping of sentences, paragraphs, and short bits of verse for the expression of an image, sentiment, or thought. And even though his writings

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[1] Mosses from An Old Manse, op. cit., p. 174.

occasionally give one impreseive and animated feelinge, it ie rather doubtful that these have any common relation.[1]

Lowell explains further that Thoreau lacked the capacity for organization; however, Walden can well be classified as the masterpiece of an artist. An amazing ingenuity is shown by the scattered and fragmentary obeervations set forth by Thoreau in hie Journal. There are few examples of changes of phraseology, as it seems he was better satisfied with the phrasing of individual sentences than with their arrangement in paragraphs.[2]

The prose of Thoreau ie set apart from that of others in still other ways. For one thing, there can be no question about the high level of hie proee, and thie ie especially true of his nature deecription, which, it is intereeting to note, stande high among all such prose from American authors. It is forceful, delicate, simple, eloquent, colloquial, and austere; and like ite author, it is American in every way one believee the name ehould mean.[3]

Although Thoreau has been rather severely criticized for his love of mannerisms and paradox, he wrote for the pleasure it gave him; he was also a serious craftsman, who possessed a sincere belief about the importance of arrangement and revision of material.[4]

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[1] James Russell Lowell, Selected Literary Essays, pp. 298-300.

[2] Crawford, op. cit., pp. xlix-l.

[3] Ibid., p. li.

[4] Henry D. Thoreau, Thoreau's Complete Works, Excursions, V. 1, p. ix.

> The writer must, to some extent, inspire himself. Most of the sentences may at first be dead in his essay, but when all are arranged, soms life and color will be reflected on them from the mature and successful line.... In his first essay on a given theme, he produces scarcely more than a frame and ground work for his sentiment and poetry....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.[1]

Thoreau was not one to conform to ths formalities of the grammarians, but his instinct for correct writing served to guide him to the proper fundamentals. He was not a hack writer. He advised one to write while still inspirsd by an idea, and illustrated his point by using the comparison of a farmsr who heated a red-hot iron to burn a hole in his yoke. Briefly, Thoreau thought the writer who could not record his thoughts while they glowed had a cold iron with which to impress his audience.[2]

Thoreau's mind was obviously quite active during his walks, for it has been said that the length of his walk made the length of his writing. As for style of writing, Thoreau once stated that if anything was to be said, it would drop as simply as a stone falling to the ground. However, in considering the phrase "if anything was to be said," one should bear in mind a certain amount of supposition. In this connection, it can readily be seen that when sffective expressions are presented in good style with little or no effort, it is because the effort has been made and the work nearly completed before the composition is started.

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[1] H. G. O. Blake, editor, Winter, p. 334.

[2] Ibid., pp. 238-239.

And it is only out of active thinking that effective expreseione result. So when Thoreau wrote so easily, it was becauee he had been active during his walk; for it is very essential that any pereon have a thorough knowledge of, and a good acquaintance with, the subject before he can depict clearness, completeness, and beauty of language.[1]

Thoreau frankly admitted he was an exaggerator--that he even went to extremes. This wae partially due to the fact that he loved the literature of the East, and aleo that he wanted people to understand his writing better. He was near the truth concerning the general question; but, in his own particular method, he seems to have wandered. When thinking of the three arts--literature, painting, and sculpture--one knows that literature is the most exteneive; it is just as much a traditional art ae painting or eculpture. Moreover, it is the leaet striking. Of course, to many people, sound and sight are more significant and more effective than the results produced by writere. It might even be said that many sighte and eounds are sufficient to make one overlook the science in language. And to gain the proper emphaeis, the proper method of literature is by eelection, actually considered a kind of negative exaggeration. Therefore, Thoreau believed it was right that the literary artist could leave out whatever did not suit his purpose. And so there are omiseions, and the well-written story becomes more thrilling to the reader. Thoreau has

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[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, Eesays, p. 152.

gone beyond this and exaggerated directly, leaving the classical tradition and putting the reader on his guard. When this is done, the thoughts are expressed less forcibly than those which are actually the author's own.[1]

Regardless of whatever he tried to do, Thoreau tried to use fair prose, with sentences solidly built. Also, he attempted a more strictly prosaic level. Emerson remarked to Thoreau that it would be fine to be able to write something which everyone could read and enjoy, a story like Robinson Crusoe, and have it widely accepted because of the right materialistic treatment. It is not, however, the right materialistic treatment that delights the world in Robinson; it is the philosophic and romantic interest of the fable. In this connection Thoreau seems to have been influenced either by Emerson's remark or by another similar in meaning. At any rate, he began falling steadily into a detailed treatment of this kind; he worked doggedly; he not only wrote what had been important in his own experience, but also what might have been of much importance in the experiences of other people. In time, then, his writing showed less strength, or perhaps it was that he brought out the improper materialistic treatment to depict his emotions. As a result, his writings contained a great amount of dullness. This, it must be remembered, he confessed quite frankly when he once commented on the idea that dullness could shock a brave man when nothing else could.[2]

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[1] Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

[2] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

Thoreau was well aware of his own chief characteristics, favorable and unfavorable. Because of his study of the Greeke, he had much passion for terse, compact statement, which he achieved by revision.[1] "...seldom have I known an author who made more drafts of what he might sometime print, or more persistently revised what he once composed."[2] The Journal entriee, for example, had been twice revieed. Of some of his own stylistic faults, Thoreau, in the Journal, is critical; fondness for paradox, a devout play on words, and the use of puns were among these. And even though they were used considerably less in later years, they remained highly characteristic of his prose.[3]

Monotony also characterizes Thoreau's writings. He showed much punctuality and conscientiousness of detail in presenting trifling matters. Thirteen times a day he registered the state of his personal thermometer.[4]

> But with every exception, there is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind, that is comparable with it in degree where it ie best; where it disengages itself, that is, from the tangled roote and dead leaves of a second-hand Orientalism, and runs limpid and smooth and broadening as it runs, a mirror for whatever ie grand and lovely in both worlds.[5]

In the "Preview" to hie biography of Thoreau, Canby has indicated the intricate, many-sided nature of this man, who can be thoroughly enjoyed as an observer and unexcelled recorder of New

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[1] F. B. Sanborn, The Life of Henry David Thoreau, p. 55.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Crawford, op. cit., pp. xlxx-l.

[4] Lowell, op. cit., pp. 309-310.

[5] Ibid.

England woods and water. Only Emily Dickinson, in some of her brief poems, has dspicted so prscisely the infinite charms and the clear colors of that countryside; but Thoreau's is the richer picture. Likewiss, Robert Frost has continued the tradition, although in more sophisticatsd terms, but in such a way as to give it a great deal of authenticity. Thus it can be said that for anyons who has known familiarly the little roads and the frisndly woods and lakes of New England, Thoreau ranks high among the writers who are a never-ending source of pleasure.[1]

As is many timss evidenced, Thoreau possessed great ability in being able to writs with an unlimited amount of enthusiasm. His excursion to the Maine woods, for example, shows his narrative is characterized by a gusto which is lacking in the account of his sxcursion to Canada. With each adventure he further investigatsd the forest and continued with its deep mystery. "The superposing of each successive chapter upon the insights that have gone before gives the book as a whole a power of density and depth that is imprsssive."[3] In addition, soms of Thoreau's most extensive entries ars the pages in the appendix of The Maine Woods, where he listed the typical flora of the woods, river, and lake shorss, the watsr, and swamps, along with lists of the typical understory of the woods and the shrubs and small tress of the shores and swamps. Thsse lists are uniformly composed of the

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[1] Agatha Boyd Adams, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] Whicher, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

[3] Ibid., p. 31.

dominant species of those sites.[1]

In The Maine Woods Thoreau clearly recorded the spirit of the wilderness:

> Once, when Joe (an Indian) had called again, and we were listening for moose, we heard, come faintly echoing, or creeping from far through the moss-clad aisles, a dull, dry rushing sound with a solid core to it, yet as if half smothered under the grasp of the luxuriant and fungus-like forest, like the shutting of a door in some distant entry of the damp and shaggy wilderness. If we had not been there, no mortal had heard it. When we asked Joe in a whisper what it was, he answered, 'Tree fall.'[2]

In another area, Thoreau glorified the scenery of Concord River by enthusiastically describing its surroundings:

> What luxuriance of weeds, what depth of mud along its sides! These old antehistoric, geologic, antediluvian rocks, which only primitive wading birds, still lingering among us, are worthy to tread. The season which we seem to live in anticipation of its arrival. The water, indeed, reflects heaven because my mind does; such is its serenity, its transparency and stillness.[3]

> Thoreau could feel as he did, not so much because he was tender toward inferior creatures as because he did not think of them as inferior, because he had none of that sense of superiority or even of separateness which is the inevitable result of any philosophy or any religion which attributes to man any qualitative uniqueness and inevitably suggests that all creatures exist primarily for him.[4]

Thus one finds the secret of Thoreau's originality.[5]

Moreover, the emphasis he placed upon inspiration was not an indication of his lack of appreciation for the technical require-

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[1] Whitford, op. cit., p. 293.

[2] Henry D. Thoreau, Thoreau's Complete Works, The Maine Woods, V.4, pp. 114-115.

[3] Shepard, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

[4] Krutch, op. cit., p. 350.

[5] Ibid.

mente of writing. He observed clearly the reason hie friend Channing once delivered an uneuccessful lecture; Thoreau thought the speech should have shown more talent and lese genius and included fewer witty observations that were not well understood by the audience because of poor organization.[1] In this eame connection, Thoreau believed the following was a cue for his own style in nature:

> Nature never indulges in exclamations, never says ah! or alas! She is not French. She is a plain writer, uese few gestures, does not add to her verbe, uses few adverbs, no expletives. I find that I use many words for the sake of emphasis, which really add nothing to the force of my eentences, and they look relieved the moment I have cancelled these, worde which express my mood, my conviction, rather than the simple truth.[2]

Thoreau was not long in realizing that a contributing factor toward eimplicity and plainness of etyle lay in physical labor. In the Week, for instance, he stated that labor was undoubtedly the most effective method for the removal of nonsense and sentimentality from one'e etyle.[3]

Even if Thoreau was not the first to realize that all living creatures were "fellow-creatures" and needed no one to convince him of the fact, he was original in two respecte. First, probably he realized more than anyone before him how this idea could be accepted and thereby made the fundamental principle of happiness thst a person can be part of an extremely great undertaking.

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[1] Winter, op. cit., p. 257.

[2] Ibid.

[3] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., p. 124.

Sscondly, it is also sven mors definite he pioneered ths perception of how this belisf could serve as the basis for a different sort of descriptive account of nature's phenomena and of man's rslationship to them. Unliks Wordsworth, or the scientist in search of an objectivs purpose, or Ruskin in need of materials suitable for a picture, Thoreau had as his ultimate goal that which had nsver really dominated any nature writing before his--an account controlled by ths sense. He sincerely and joyously bslisved in describing nature with regard to man's aesthetic appreciation, which is the sense characterizing not only his but also a great portion of nature writing since his time. Indesd it can be said that he became the first citizen of the universe, while soms of his contemporaries were attempting to become citizens of ths world.[1]

It has often been said that Thoreau was an ascetic; this is not trus for hs had many companions. During his sojourn at Walden Pond, as he mentioned in Waldsn, he complained about having no ons in Concord with whom hs could discuss Oriental literature; however, living within two miles of his hut was the man who had introducsd him to it. To many, this selfishness becomes almost painful. Thoreau seems to have prizsd a lofty method of thinking, mainly so that fsw could share it with him. This bit of individuality infects his thought and styls; and in rsading Thoreau's books, one cannot help having the feeling he wanted his

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[1] Krutch, op. cit., pp. 350-351.

readers to accept his ideas and feelings as the best yet maintained by any writer.[1]

The fact is brought out in Thoreau's letters that solitude in Nature did not do much in the way of sweetening his character; for as he grew older, he seems to have grown more cynical. While he studied with a great deal of attention the forest animals and his neighbors, he was contemptuous of the dramatic events in his own country. Conversing and associating more with his fellowmen would unquestionably have widened his sympathies and given him greater assurance for producing the effect that would have been better appreciated by his readers. Also, the circle of readers would have been much greater.[2] By the time he realized he could not change his pattern of life, it was too late to alter matters; so he became resigned to his fate of living close to nature.[3]

When Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond a century ago, neither he nor anyone else thought of him as a scientist. Since being graduated from Harvard in 1837, he had thought of himself as a teacher, as an author, and as a land surveyor. Also, he was somewhat accomplished as a carpenter, having helped his father build a home for the family the year before and now building his own house near Walden Pond, in addition to fences and sheds he had built at Emerson's while living there in 1841. He was a gardener but this hardly seemed a likely occupation for a Harvard graduate.

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[1] Lowell, cp. cit., pp. 300-302.
[2] Ibid., pp. 308-309.
[3] Whicher, op. cit., p. 75.

Then, too, he was a pencil-maker, for that wae the source of the family income. He had been a poet and occaeionally etill felt the urge to put his ideae into verse. These, however, were not eci-entific pursuite.

On the other hand, Thoreau possessed eomething of a reputation ae a naturaliet, a term that needs eome qualification. Before 1845 he was a romantic naturaliet, enjoying the impact of nature upon him and writing eo delightfully about hie activitiee that "poet-naturalist" (so called by his good friend Ellery Channing) wae an appropriate name for him during hie first eight or ten years out of college. It eeems that thie name will have to euffice for the deecription of Henry Thoreau during the pre-Walden years.[1]

> With euch meager science, unhelped by hie etudiee at Harvard from 1833 to 1837, an indifferent observer (miseing especially many common birde), without binocu-lare or epyglass (he bought a epyglaes as late ae 1854, near the end of his life, and never owned binoculare), with eurprisingly crude toole, and eatisfied with the current vogue for classification and lieting, Thoreau went to live at Walden an indifferent man of ecience, though a good poet-naturaliet....Thoreau took up hie abode in the little house beside the pond for several reasons, to straighten out hie own thinking after two fearful loeees (the death of his beloved brother and the failure to win Ellen Sewall), to write a book in tribute to his brother and in furtherance of his ambi-tione toward authorehip, to teet an economic theory, and to find a philoeophy of life. We begin now to eee ecientific method emerging. Hie teeting of his economic theory, regardleee of what we may think of the theory, wae a scientific teeting, an experiment. Hie driving life into a corner and examining it was an application of the scientific method also, for he ieolated his ma-terial firet and then teeted it. The material happened to be hie own life; but the method was more ecientific

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[1] Raymond Adams, op. cit., p. 379.

than his method had usually been.[1]

Thoreau was not a scientist, and his persistent measuring of the girth of trees, the height of floods, the thickness of ice, and so on would be dismaying in their clumsiness if regarded as attempts to collect scientific data. But probably they were not that. They were the awkward caresses that Thoreau lavished on the one consuming love of his life. He simply could not know enough of the world around him. If he was at rare intervals a visionary, he lived most commonly in the almost savage delicacy of his senses. He guarded them carefully from blunting by overstimulation. Fair Nature, which demanded no hard service, smiled upon him and he responded by recording in innumerable pages every least shade of expression on her countenance. He found his true vocation in being the enamored prose-poet of the countryside.[2]

Thoreau's place in the literature of this country is frankly resultant from one book (Walden) securely placed on the shelf of classics. As is often the case, this means general disregard of other works which round out the picture and give the full palette of the author's colors. But Cape Cod and The Maine Woods and the other pieces of travel literature will never have wide reading. They have no great narrative appeal, and their subject matter is not timely....No borrower, like some of his contemporaries, from foreign literatures, he wrote strictly his own kind of book, about the things nearest home. Sensitive in his youth to the ideas and personalities of a great contemporary, he nevertheless, once he had reached intellectual maturity, cut himself loose, and thought vigorously along his own lines; and the frequent mention of him in Emerson's Journals is precisely because the sage of Concord found Thoreau the most stimulating and unexpected man he knew. In short, although no skulker and no hermit, Thoreau had enough confidence in the wisdom Nature gave him, in his own ideals, and in his own manner of life, to be simply and sufficiently himself.[3]

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[1] Raymond Adams, op. cit., p. 381.

[2] Whicher, op. cit., p. 79.

[3] Crawford, op. cit., pp. lvi-lvii.

SOURCES IN NATURE

Walden Pond

Early in life Thoreau, having full knowledge that the tract of land north of Concord was not very well settled, spent considerable time exploring the ponds and streams for wild animals and roaming the woods for various kinds of nuts and berries.[1] "Few writers have ever studied the countryside about them with more devoted interest than Thoreau lavished on the woods, meadows, and streams around Concord.[2]

To supplement his own observations of nature, Thoreau browsed through all natural histories and herbals he could possibly find: Topsell's History of Four-Footed Beasts; Gerard's Herbal; Evelyn's Sylva; Josselyn's New England's Rarities; and White's Natural History of Selborne. In addition, he used modern scientific books and government reports on animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, and plants.[3]

In Thoreau's time many people migrated to the cities, leaving Walden and White Pond and the surrounding areas to berry pickers, fishermen and hunters, and grazing cattle. Here could be found peace and quiet only two miles from home and the aquatic flora and fauna of marshes that were replaced by the American

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[1] Whicher, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 15.

woods, which extended to the wilderness of Maine.[1]

"Country Concord was an ideal land for a naturalist and geographer, a poet and a solitary."[2] It is to be remembered, however, that "Thoreau will be remembered as a geographer rather than as a naturalist, as a maker of magnificent prose but scarcely as a poet, and as a protagonist of men against the state as often as a historian of the environment of the genus homo in Concord."[3]

Why did Thoreau move to Walden Pond? In his own words, here was his real purpose:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.[4]

Solitude in Nature offered Thoreau one of his greatest delights,[5] and he sincerely believed there could be no really serious melancholy so long as he lived in Nature.[6] Also, he wrote that the pill assuring good health and happiness was Nature with

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[1] Canby, op. cit., p. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. xiii.

[4] Walden, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

[5] Ibid., p. 140.

[6] Ibid., p. 142.

all of her wonderful offerings.[1] Health, he said, could not be found in society, but rather in Nature. If people were not an actual part of Nature, he continued, they became pale and sickly; for society, especially the best society, was always diseased. He felt that wholesome, fragrant, and penetrating health could always be found among the pines or in pastures.[2]

Thoreau, who was a nonconformist,[3] had reached this conclusion:

> The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amuseemente of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.[4]

From Thoreau's second publication, Walden or Life in the Woods, which is commonly regarded and classified as one of the greatest books of the nineteenth century,[5] one can learn much of his life as he actually lived it.

At Walden Pond he cared little how time passed, for he had a feeling of deep contentment. To him, his life was dramatic without end.[6] He commented on the fact that he was no more lonely than Walden Pond, or than the hideously laughing loon which fre-

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 150.

[2] Excursions, op. cit., p. 105.

[3] Paul F. Runge, "Diecover Your Own Walden," Audubon Magazine, 51(May, 1949), 143.

[4] Walden, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

[5] Whicher, op. cit., p. 15.

[6] Walden, op. cit., p. 122.

quented the pond.[1] He also declared:

> I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a bumble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weathercock, or the north star, or the south wind, or an April shower, or a January thaw, or the first spider in a new house.[2]

Landscape. Time after time he wrote about his intense interest in landscape; and although Thoreau usually is depicted as being a man of the woods, probably he was more of a riverman, for many of his Concord descriptions were of riverbanks and water.[3] Especially helpful to him was a near-by lake, which he enjoyed in the intervals of gentle August rain storms.[4] As the forest animals were his neighbors, so was this lake, which he described as casting light and reflections of a celestial nature.

Of almost equal importance to him was a hill top from which he could see such beautiful sights as coin-like meadows in the valley; green-covered hills; blue-tinged hills, more distant and higher in the horizon; and the thin crust of earth which wrapped the area beyond the pond.[5]

Included in the many objects of Nature which fascinated him was a beautiful rainbow he once chanced to see as he was leaving the home of some friends. In pointing out the fact that it inspired him beyond ordinary means, showing him a good evening was

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1 Walden, op. cit., p. 148.
2 Ibid., p. 149.
3 Canby, op. cit., p. 6.
4 Walden, op. cit., p. 94.
5 Ibid., pp. 94-95.

in store for him,[1] he wrote:

> ...as I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from which I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say,--Go fish and hunt far and wide day by day,--farther and wider,--and rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving.[2]

Cold, bitter days offered Thoreau many opportunities for exploring the ice of ponds and rivers. In fact, so extensive and minute were his studies, that on one occasion he proudly asserted a great amount of the phenomena written by Kane in Artic Explorations could also be observed in Concord.[3]

For a long time there had been a great amount of conjecture concerning the true depth of Walden Pond,[4] only one-half mile long, one and three-quarters miles in circumference, and extending over an area of only sixty-one and one-half acres.[5] So, early in 1846, before the ice broke up, determined to discover how deep it really was, Thoreau first surveyed it with a compass, chain, and sounding line. Then, he explained, taking a one and one-half pound stone and a cod-line, so that he could tell exactly when the stone left the bottom, he soon discovered the greatest depth was one hundred and two feet. Later, however, the Pond rose five feet higher, incredibly deep for so small a body of water. Whereas he had little difficulty in making his discovery,

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1 Walden, op. cit., p. 223.

2 Ibid., p. 224.

3 Herbert W. Gleason, "Winter Rambles in Thoreau's Country," National Geographic, 37 (Feb., 1920), 169.

4 Walden, op. cit., p. 306.

5 Ibid., p. 191.

others had attempted similar experiments before, unsuccessfully using a wagon load of inch rope. Thoreau also referred to some people who half-heartedly attempted to learn more about its true depth by lying flat on the ice to see enormous holes spacious enough for storing a large quantity of hay. Then, too, there were those who thought the Pond had no bottom.[1]

Thoreau told about a factory owner, a man very familiar with dams who could not quite bring himself to the realization that Thoreau's measurement was accurate, as he felt sure sand would not long remain at such a steep angle. However, Thoreau explained that the deepest ponds were not nearly so deep according to the amount of ground they covered as many people were led to believe. If completely drained, he continued, they would not leave any unusual valleys; most valleys were not unusual, for their width and length were comparatively great. And so, he concluded, if most ponds were emptied, the hollows would be no greater than those often observed.[2]

In actually learning the true depth of Walden Pond, Thoreau still was not satisfied; so he carried the investigation even further. Since the water was completely frozen over, he was much more successful than if it had not been frozen. He was frankly amazed to observe the general regularity of the bottom, for in the deepest part there were several acres more level than nearly

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 306-307.
[2] Ibid., pp. 307-308.

any field. On one particular line the depth did not change more than one foot in thirty rods; and near the center to one hundred feet in any direction, there was not a variation of more than three or four inches.[1] This was his explanation:

> Some are accustomed to speak of deep and dangerous holes even in quiet sandy ponds like this, but the effect of water under these circumstances is to level all insqualities. The regularity of the bottom and its conformity to the shores and the range of the neighboring hills were so perfect that a distant promontory betrayed itself in the soundings quite across the pond, and its direction could be determined by observing the opposite shore. Cape becomes bar, and plain shoal, and valley and gorge deep water and channel.[2]

After the final investigation, then, he made a map of the pond, using ten rods to an inch for his scale; and having made more than one hundred findings, he noticed one outstanding coincidence: in the center of the map was an indication of the greatest depth. Measuring the map both lengthwise and breadthwise, Thoreau was surprised to learn the longest line crossed the line showing the greatest breadth exactly at the point showing the greatest depth. According to this experiment, he dscided this could also be true of an ocean or for the height of a mountain. As an example, he cited a hill which was not necessarily highest at its narrowest part.[3]

Here, then, in Thorsau's final product of his Walden experience, Walden, one can rsadily see another scientific quality, in

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 309.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 309-310.

that an excellent bit of limnology has been included. In making the map and including it as the only plate in Walden, he himself, of course, realized the significance of the limnology.[1]

> The map contributes almost nothing to an understanding of Walden as a work of art nor to appreciation of the nature lore presented so attractively in the text. One can think of half a dozen other maps that Thoreau could have drawn more helpfully. But for supplementary use with a scientific account of the lake the map is very valuable indeed, giving directions, soundings, profile cross sections, sand bars, area, and such items of data....But the limnology of Walden leaves man out; for once, and almost for the first time, Thoreau leaves romantic concerns behind and deals with nature objectively.[2]

Thoreau constantly kept in mind the fact that anyone who carefully familiarized himself in studying nature could also reap many advantages in studying mankind.[3] He followed this practice regularly, and one of his very excellent examples can be seen in reference to man and Walden Pond, which are analogous. Intersections of man's behaviors, he wrote, would seem to indicate the depth or height of his character. Whereas man proved victorious, suggesting his true depth, when confronted with almost overwhelming circumstances, defeat could prove his shallow depth under similar conditions. Also, he told about a bar across the entrance of a cove, which could be comparable with man's inclination; and with an increase of storms, tides, or currents, there was a process of change. In other words, an individual lake resulted.

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[1] Raymond Adams, op. cit., p. 381.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Shepard, op. cit., p. 63.

He believed it could well be said that with an increase of life's storms, tides, or currents, man frequently becomes isolated, like the bar, with little or no individuality.[1]

Vegetation. Thoreau wrote that some of his happiest hours were spent in his house, either in the autumn or in the spring, during severe rain storms, when he had a great amount of time for reflective thinking.[2] Being a sincere believer in the idea that one who lived in Nature could not be melancholy, he explained how, if a person showed courage and ingenuity, he could not be compelled to the state of sadness. The gentle rain, he felt sure, was good for him and furnished him with a true association, as did the expanding pine needles swelling with sympathy and friendship.

During one heavy thunder shower a sharp bolt of lightning struck a large pitch-pine tree across the pond. Later, in viewing the damage, which some would have considered a near tragedy, Thoreau was awed by the obvious and perfect groove from top to bottom, a groove similar to one in a walking-stick.[3]

Many people have called Thoreau a hermit, but in the true sense of the word Thoreau thought differently about the matter; for even though he associated only frequently with other people, Nature gave him many companions. He explained once how his sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves left him

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 311-312.
[2] Ibid., pp. 143-144.
[3] Ibid., pp. 142-144.

almost breathless. However, he was not completely overcome by such a view. He was comparable with Nature's watchmen (the wildest animals) in that he did not seek inactivity. His process of observation and learning was constant.[1]

Thoreau described his visits to trees of special interest as being journeys to summer and winter shrines. These he often visited instead of some scholar; and he could be found sitting in a pasture, a wood or swamp, or on the top of a hill. He wrote of having two fine specimens of the black-birch two feet thick and the yellow-birch, a cousin, dressed in a vest of loose gold. He continued by stating the yellow-birches were reportedly planted by pigeons having secured beech nuts near by. In splitting this wood, Thoreau was frankly amazed to see the sparkle of the silver grain.[2]

One day, Thoreau wrote, when he was digging for fish-worms, he came upon the Apios tube-rosa (better known as the ground-nut), with which he doubted he had become familiar in childhood; anyhow, he could not remember having eaten it without being aware of what it really was. He observed, too, that the land being cultivated had practically ended its growth. As for its taste, Thoreau enjoyed it better boiled than roasted, because it seemed unusually sweet, somewhat like that of a frostbitten potato.[3]

Gathering chestnuts afforded Thoreau considerable excitement.

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 140.
[2] Ibid., pp. 217-218.
[3] Ibid., p. 257.

Because of his invading the food of the red-squirrels and jays, he was criticized severely by these animals. Explaining how chestnuts also grew near his shack, he spoke of one tree as being like a bouquet offering a pleasing fragrance to the entire neighborhood. These nuts, moreover, were good to use instead of bread.[1]

The lilac also was of much interest to Thoreau; each spring it produced flowers and outlived many, many other things. He was fascinated by the lilac's cheerful, beautiful colors.[2]

Gradually, by the first part of September, he had had the opportunity to see a few of the maples turn scarlet; this, he emphatically related, told many stories. Each tree, carefully admiring itself in the mirror of the lake, attained certain characteristics.[3] "Each morning the manager of this gallery substituted some new picture, distinguished by more brilliant or harmonious coloring, for the old upon the walls."[4]

Sometimes Thoreau delighted in tramping to the Baker Farm, where he could witness some of Nature's most beautiful handiwork. Standing like proud temples, or perhaps appearing like full-rigged ships at sea, the pine groves always were objects for his speculation and admiration. The wavy, light, soft and green, shady boughs rippled so flawlessly, he thought, that perhaps the Druids would have worshipped them instead of their own oak trees.

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1 Walden, op. cit., pp. 256-257.
2 Ibid., p. 283.
3 Ibid., p. 258.
4 Ibid.

Beyond, the cedar trees that reached high into the sky were dressed carefully with large blue berries; and almost, Thoreau thought, as a carpet, the creeping juniper covered the ground with an abundance of fruit. And farther ahead, he observed the toadstools standing proudly and abundantly, like the swamp gods' circular tables; something like butterflies or shells, the gorgeous fungi bedecked the tree stumps; the red alder-berry glowed like the eyes of imps.[1]

Standing on the side of a hill, Thoreau's house was surrounded by plants, trees, and shrubs of various kinds: pine, hickory, strawberry, blackberry, johnswort, goldenrod, shrub-oaks, sand-cherry, and blueberry. Late in May the sand-cherry (cerasus pumila) lined the path, showing Thoreau its delicate flowers which finally, when overburdened by large, beautiful cherries, dropped on every side. Once Thoreau learned for himself that they were hardly palatable. Continuing, he mentioned the sumach which flourished around the house, extending five or six feet the first season. Thoreau's reaction to the large, broad leaf was strange though pleasant. Finally, the sumach, having borne much fruit, bent over like one overcome by weariness.[2]

With regard to Thoreau's more specific interests in ecology, it seems that after the period in which he was primarily interested in the transcendental implications of nature, there was a

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 217-218.

[2] Ibid., pp. 124-125.

long period that served as a time of survey, or orientation. During this time, Thoreau devoted himself to identifying plants and observing their habitat groups. The Journals are the record of his study--not the product of an accomplished naturalist--and even though he was more successful in recognizing and naming plants than birds, he used an abundance of question marks after the plant denominations. It should be remembered, though, that it is to Thoreau's credit as a scientist that he placed such marks after species of which he was not absolutely certain; also, it is to be noted the greater number of question marks appear after the names of grasses, rushes, and sedges, after which many modern ecologists not working specifically with those families are content to indicate in some other way that the species are not identified. As a matter of fact, even today many of these species can be identified only after careful study under a microscope, and only when fruits are present. Thus, Thoreau's question marks in many cases are an indication of his integrity rather than showing he was not adept at identification.[1]

Thoreau was once inspired by his farmer neighbors, who constantly questioned him as to why when they cut off a stand of hardwood in a woodlot, it was replaced by pitch pine; and when they cut a pine stand, the same ground usually came up to the hardwoods. So he began his intensive study of the woodlots of the Concord region, much of the background material having already

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[1] Whitford, op. cit., p. 292.

been gathered in his years of daily walks in all the Concord region; and in his analysis of tree growth he could draw upon this reserve of knowledge of the region's history and habitat differences. For example, he was cognizant that the huge cheetnuts he obeerved in some of the woods and pastures were undoubtedly relics of the most ancient Concord woods, and he made liete of the eites which eeemed moet favorable to the common tree species. Having different ideas from those of many of his contemporariee, he then turned his attention to seeding, in epontaneous generation or in special creations to account for the world's dietribution of speciee.

Thoreau alao enthusiaetically rejected the theory that eeeds lay in the ground for many years awaiting germination and growth, and thus he deducted that only two obvious methods of reproduction remained--eeede of comparatively recent origin and stump sprouts around recently cut treee. He started to observe eproutings from etumps and came to the realization that he could occasionally detect a wood which had been cut three times by the positions of trees that apparently were old stump eprouts.

Thie concern with stumpe and etump sprouts, in connection with his knowledge of the cheetnuts, for a while led him to contemplate whether or not he could work out the hietory of the woods and perhaps map them by his knowledge of growth methode and the successional pattern of the region. This plan failed badly, as his early death gave him no opportunity to expand the design. However, his observation of stump sprouts led him to con-

clude that, though a woodlot reforested by stump sprouts was a faster and much easier source of wood for the farmer than one produced from seed, the result would be inferior; for the new trees were more subject to the diseases of the old trees.[1]

From his study of cutover land and the occurrence of stump sprouts, there developed in Thoreau an interest in stump rings, stimulated largely through his concern for proper woodlot management. He wondered at what age it would be most profitable to cut trees, and so he turned to his measurements of pine stumps and analyzed them. At the time of Thoreau's death the stump-ring counts and analysis were in progress; in fact, by kneeling in wet snow to count stump rings, he caught the lingering cold which hastened tuberculosis. These notes were not included among those which Thoreau spent the final months of his life arranging for publication, mainly because he knew no source that would publish them, whereas there was already a market for some of his other essays. For this reason this material remained hidden in the Journals until 1906 when they were published.[2]

> ...that Thoreau 'tried to see with the inside of his eye too often' loses weight when it is set against the evidence of his researches, and Thoreau is seen as a naturalist who, in a day that was predominantly interested in the discovery and naming of species, was making an effort to synthesize and apply his knowledge of one small area of the country. The lack of statistical analysis, which is the quality a modern ecologist would criticize first, was a lack shared by all biological sciences in Thoreau's day. It is probably this lack that has caused Thoreau to be accepted slowly as a scientist, for, though

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[1] Whitford, op. cit., pp. 293-294.

[2] Ibid., p. 295.

> his work was done before 1862, much of it was not known until the Journals were published in 1906, and by that time the concept of science had undergone the radical changes which brought increasing emphasis upon statistical analysis of vegetation. It is interesting to note, moreover, that the men of literature who as a group who have made the most exhaustive studies of Thoreau have been the last to accept him as a man of science. He has been claimed as one of the first conservationists; he has been claimed as a limnologist, and as the 'father of American phenology;' his essay on the 'Succession of Forest Trees' has been accorded a place in the Bibliography of North American Forestry, but only Raymond Adams and Joseph Wood Krutch in the field of American literature have applied to him the term 'ecologist,' and then only in the most general terms.[1]

Wildlife. In the days of Thoreau one of the most popular sports was hunting. Moreover, it was the main amusement for ten-year-old and fourteen-year-old boys, who hunted often and long. Perhaps their intentions were somewhat different from those of Thoreau, who related that the hunter was the best friend of the hunted animal; this, he continued, did not exclude the Humane Society. In explaining that he sold his gun before going to Walden Forest, Thoreau stated it was not so much that he was any less humane than others, but rather that his feelings were greatly affected. During the years he carried a gun while fowling, he used it as an excuse that he was studying ornithology, and was seeking only new or rare birds. With a gun in hand he could better study the habits of birds. Thus, one could say that Thoreau's interests were strengthened in earlier years by his being armed while hunting.[2]

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[1] Whitford, op. cit., p. 296.

[2] Walden, op. cit., pp. 227-228.

Someone once said that a home without birds was like eating meat without the propsr seasoning. Thoreau's dwelling was certainly not without birds, for he had them as his neighbors, in addition to many othsr forest game he called his friends. And being nearer to birds, Thoreau found many opportune moments to study the wood thrush, the veery, the scarlet tanager, the field-sparrow, the whippoorwill, and a host of others. Such were the birds that a villager seldom had a chance to see or be thrilled by ths songs made outstanding by some of Nature's most wonderful citizens.[1]

Thoreau wrote of the silence of the hooting owl in winter;[2] but he thought its serenades at close distance afforded a very melancholy sound. From a much greater distance, howevsr, more pleasing associations were to bs found, regardless of the time of day or the season of the year.[3] He classified the screech owls as another very melancholy part of nature, their screeching reminding him of the sounds emanating from moaning women. Even so, he enjoyed their doleful songs, because they gave him another idea of the variety of lifs.[4]

Sitting at his window one summer afternoon, he enjoyed watching ths hawks circling about. The pigeons, either flying in two's or three's, immediately attracted his attention. Farther

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 93.
[2] Ibid., p. 275.
[3] Ibid., p. 136.
[4] Ibid., pp. 135-136.

in the distance, he observed how a fishhawk dived into the pond and brought up a fish.[1]

In winter, Thoreau heard the screaming jays long before their arrival in Walden. He described them as thieves, sneaking from tree to tree, and finally grasping the kernels rightfully belonging to the ambitious squirrels. Then, Thoreau observed, they perched themselves on the limb of a pitch-pine tree and hurriedly attempted to swallow the kernels much too big for their throats.[2]

The chicadees arrived at Walden in flocks and immediately started retrieving crumbs dropped by the squirrels. Frequently flying to nearby twigs, they continued hammering away at the particles until they could be reduced to the size suitable for their small throats.[3]

With the arrival of winter, Thoreau found contentment listening to the many geese landing in Walden; others, he said, although flying low, were headed in the general direction of Mexico.[4]

Thoreau became very familiar with the habits of the whip-poorwills. With clock-like precision, they came to his hut at seven thirty every evening and sang for thirty minutes. He also enjoyed their songs during the night,[5] especially as they were

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1 Walden, op. cit., p. 125.
2 Ibid., pp. 295-296.
3 Ibid., p. 296.
4 Ibid., p. 267.
5 Ibid., p. 135.

being carried on the wind over the water.[1]

Many times, in fall days, Thoreau whiled away many happy hours watching the ducks slyly and swiftly maneuvering on the pond, well out of reach of enthusiastic hunters. When they found it necessary to take flight, they rose to a considerable height and circled the pond numerous times, as if to survey other ponds for enjoyment and protection. On many occasions, though, they very ably, and seemingly with little effort, landed on a less disturbing section of Walden. Thoreau wondered what other reason besides safety they had for remaining there, unless they loved the water for the same reason he did.[2]

Thoreau felt it would be worthwhile to keep a cockerel mainly for his music, that which was sung by the most remarkable of any bird. He went on to say that if one could naturalize cockerels without domesticating them, soon the woods would be filled with the most pleasant sound, even climaxing the music of the goose and the owl. Such pleasure, he believed, would make nations more alert and cause a person to rise earlier each day; the results would be great. He recalled how poets of nearly every country celebrated this bird, along with their own native songsters. Since all climates seemed agreeable with the chanticleer, his health, lungs, and spirits always appeared unquestionably sound. And although sailors on the Atlantic and Pacific could be easily awakened by the presence of a cockerel, Thoreau,

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 140.

[2] Ibid., pp. 254-255.

while slumbering, was never roused by his shrill voice.[1]

Of rabbits and partridges, Thoreau wrote:

> They are among the most simple and indigenous animal products; ancient and venerable families known to antiquity as to modern times; of the very hue and substance of Nature, nearest allied to leaves and to the ground,--and to one another; it is either winged or it is legged. It is hardly as if you had seen a wild creature when a rabbit or a partridge bursts away, only a natural one, as much to be expected as rustling leaves. The partridge and the rabbit are still sure to thrive, like true natives of the soil, whatever revolutions occur. If the forest is cut off, the sprouts and bushes which spring up afford them concealment, and they become more numerous than ever. That must be a poor country indeed that does not support a hare. Our woods teem with them both, and around every swamp may be seen the partridge or rabbit walk, beset with twiggy fences and horse-hair snares, which some cow-boy tends.[2]

Certainly, then, the hares (Lepus Americanus) were not strangers to Thoreau. All one winter a hare lived under his house, waking him every morning as it struck its head against the floor. The hares had formerly reached his door around dusk to relish Thoreau's potato parings. As they remained perfectly still, he could hardly see them, since they were so much the color of the ground. He also had difficulty seeing them in the evenings as he sat viewing them from his window. Upon opening his door, however, he saw them make their rapid departure. During an evening's entertainment, while Thoreau was sitting by his door, one appearing more feeble and more shy remained only a few paces from him. Thoreau took a step in its direction, and all pretension immed-

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

[2] Ibid., p. 302.

iately vanished as the little animal hastily shot toward the forest.[1]

In June, Thoreau recalled, the shy bird (Tetrao umbellus), much better known as the partridge, led her young past the hut, clucking and calling to them like a hen, proving in all her actions to be the hen of the woods. At the first indication of Thoreau's approach, the young partridges suddenly disappeared, as if caught in a whirlwind; then they immediately became a natural part of the woods. Thoreau mentioned the fact that travellers had stepped in the midst of some of these birds at times and then heard the hen flying off, shouting explicit directions to her young. They were also just as careful following out the parent's orders, for they lay still and flat, many times putting their heads under leaves. One's approach could not make them betray themselves, either. Thoreau sometimes held them in his open hand, always noticing the obedience to their mother; so carefully had they been trained that not the slightest sign of fear or trembling could be observed. Then, being put back down, they would resume the same position as before. With interest Thoreau noted they were unlike most birds in that they developed more rapidly and perfectly; the intelligence reflected in their eyes suggested a wisdom made even better by experience. Thoreau earnestly believed it was a pity that many sportsmen shot the parents while the young were unable to care for themselves, but such was the case; then the innocents easily fell prey to a beast

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 301-302.

or bird, or finally became inactive with the leaves or twigs which they so greatly resembled.[1]

In Thoreau's opinion the wildest sound made in all of Walden was the laugh of the loon, a graceful, cunning bird which arrived in the fall to enjoy the surroundings of the woods. Many mornings before rising, Thoreau could hear the woods ringing with the wild, almost hideous, laughter. Thoreau, of course, was by no means the only one who knew about the loon's presence, for no sooner had nearby sportsmen heard of its arrival than they shouldered arms and went forth to try their success. However, they were often handicapped because of weather conditions and also because of the cunning maneuvering of the much-sought-after bird. Even Thoreau, touched with the fever, made a number of attempts to overtake him, but with no success. On the surface the loon was too sly for the "sage of the woods"; the crazy bird was so swift and so cunning that he could dive and swim so rapidly that Thoreau, many times believing victory was within easy reach, found it necessary to admit defeat. But so far as Thoreau was concerned, he enjoyed competing with one of Nature's most unique offspring.[2]

Nearly every day in midsummer, Thoreau went to sit near the well of clear water he had constructed. Often times the woodcock and her family appeared in search of worms in the mud. Or perhaps the turtle-doves sat over the spring or fluttered briefly over-

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 243-245.

[2] Ibid., pp. 251-254.

head. Many times, too, the familiar, inquisitive red squirrel visited the spot. Thoreau wrote that all he had to do wae eit long enough in some attractive spot and gradually all the wood's inhabitants would show themselves to him.[1]

To many students and scholars of Thoreau's writings, perhaps the battle of the ante is best known. One day Thoreau had just gone out to his pile of stumps when he noticed two large ante--one black and the other red--fighting with all the strength and courage they could muster. After carefully observing the duel for a few minutes, he realized it was more than a duel; it was a battle between two armies. The ground, now covered with the dead and dying, was the ecene of the only battle Thoreau had ever witneseed. He believed no human soldiere ever fought more fiercely or with any more courage. Finally, after the campaign had progressed to some length, Thoreau saw a lone red comrade coming to the front, to fight with the smaller contestant, perhaps a new replacement or one that had been hospitalized, now ready for front-line duty. Watching for a good opportunity, it sprang into action.[2] Thoreau wrote:

> I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, at least, if in the hietory of America, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

[2] Ibid., pp. 246-247.

> for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden. Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard wounded! Why her every ant was a Buttrick,--'Fire! for God's sake fire!' and thousands shared the fate of Davis and Hosmer. There was not one hireling there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of Bunker Hill, at least.[1]

Mice were not strangers to Thoreau at Walden, for he had some under his house as it was being built. He thought they were the wild native kind found in the country, but not in the village. At regular intervals, during the construction of his house, Thoreau observed one of them coming out at lunch time to pick up crumbs. Apparently the creature had never before seen a man; soon it became very bold, as it started running over Thoreau's shoes and up his clothes. Thoreau realized its motions resembled those of a squirrel, as shown by the way it ascended the walls. Then, one day when Thoreau leaned on the bench, it ran up his clothes and along his sleeve. Instead of arousing Thoreau to anger, he was greatly appreciative of its attention. He played bo-peep with it and let it nibble the cheese which he held in his hand. Finally, feeling completely satisfied with itself, it cleaned its face and paws and walked away.[2]

Early in October wasps came by the droves to live with Thoreau, who warmly welcomed them; he felt complimented that they

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[1] Walden, op. cit., pp. 247-248.

[2] Ibid., p. 243.

considered his house desirable shelter. Although they never seriously harmed him, they also slept with him; eventually they disappeared.[1]

Early morning bathing in the pond was one of Thoreau's most religious exercises. This, he felt, was the best form of motivation for the remainder of the day. It would seem very strange to many people that he was almost equally affected at dawn by the hum of a mosquito diving and swerving its way, unharmed, through his cottage with opened door and windows. To him, the mosquito's music was as beautiful as the tone of any trumpet which ever made its way to fame. The effect of the buzzing insect was to Thoreau as Iliad and Odyssey in the air; it was Homer's great hymn or song. There was something harmonious about it, as if it were an advertisement of the world's lasting vigor and fertility.[2]

As for squirrels, Thoreau described them as being shy at first, but eventually taking what rightfully belonged to them. So familiar did they become, in fact, that, if Thoreau happened to be in their way, they stepped upon his shoe.[3]

Usually the red squirrel waked him at dawn, running over the roof and up and down his house; and so once Thoreau threw out one-half bushel of unripened sweet corn. All day the squirrels came and went, affording much entertainment; at first one approached warily through the shrub oaks, running fitfully like a

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 258.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

[3] Ibid., p. 296.

leaf blown by the wind with wonderful speed, and then pausing with a ludicrous expression of gratitude. Thoreau thought its motions were similar to those of a dancing girl; never did he see a squirrel walk. Suddenly at the top of a pitch-pine, it chided all imaginary spectators; finally reached for the corn and selected a suitable ear, and threw half-naked cobs about and played with the food.[1]

Thoreau spent a great deal of time observing and also writing about another one of the watchmen of Nature,[2] the fox, whose tracks, on more than one occasion, Thoreau followed in an attempt to learn more about its wanderings. Even today, these sly creatures still linger within the precincts of Concord, and it seems they are hardly less numerous than they were in the days of Thoreau.[3]

Especially during the winter season, Thoreau was greatly fascinated by the activities of the fox, sometimes following the tracks himself or watching hunters in pursuit of the much-wanted animal. At times, on moonlight nights, he could distinctly hear the foxes running over the snow crusts, searching for partridges or other game, howling furiously, as if bothered greatly by some anxiety. Often times, attracted by Thoreau's light, one would advance near his window and bark ferociously at him; then it would retreat rapidly.[4]

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1 Walden, op. cit., pp. 293-295.
2 Ibid., p. 140.
3 Gleason, op. cit., 172.
4 Walden, op. cit., p. 293.

Thoreau was not long in learning the ways of this animal. For example, he soon discovered that if the fox remained near the frozen earth, or if it ran in a straight line, it would be safe; too many times, however, a circular route proved its downfall; sometimes it leaped a great distance so as to throw the hounds off the scent; and the scent being lost, could not be picked up again for a considerable length of time. This was one of the best tricks the fox had, as nearly as Thoreau could observe.[1]

Canada

Even though geographically the travels of Thoreau, one of the most observant and entertaining travelers America had produced, covered a comparatively small field, it is still interesting to note his interest in various sections of the United States and Canada, in addition to those found in his own native state. Canada, one learns, afforded him many enjoyments.

Landscape. As he traveled northwest in the direction of Canada, Thoreau thought the Westmoreland country was very attractive, especially the approach to Bellows Falls, just below a tall cliff rising from the Connecticut River; he was disappointed in this river, however, as it apparently had shrunk more to the size of a mountain stream. He noticed the water appeared to be extremely low, and was frankly amazed to see traces of recent over-

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[1] Walden, op. cit., p. 297.

flows which had wrecked the railroad and carried away bridges.[1]

At Vergennes, Thoreau had his first impressive view of a lake--impressive not because of anything unusual or peculiar about it, but rather from past association with such an act of nature. It was very small,[2] "but beautifully quiet, like a picture of the Lake of Lucerne on a music-box, where you trace the name of Lucerne among the foliage; far more ideal than ever it looked on the map."[3]

Thoreau painted a good word picture about his entrance into Canada when he told of a number of the French-speaking passengers who indicated the proximity of the train to a foreign country. After leaving Rouse's Point and entering the Sorel River, they paseed the unseen barrier between the United Statee and Canada. The flat, reedy shores of the Sorel, Richelieu, or St. John's River came as a surpriee to Thoreau, ae he had anticipated eomething more rough and mountainous for a natural boundary between two nations. However, by observing the few huts, the canoes on shore, and the shore itself, he immediately saw a difference between Canada and the States. He was quite definitely interested in such ecenery, ae well ae pleaeed to eee the shallow water which claimed the reeds or rushee, and also the swamps from which the tree-tope extended. Then, too, he viewed in the distance two or three blue mountains of New York and Vermont, by thie time far to

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1 Excursions, op. cit., p. 5.
2 Ibid., p. 7.
3 Ibid.

the rear. About nine o'clock in the morning the cars finally arrived in St. John's, an old frontier post. Boston was now three hundred and six miles away; Montreal, twenty-four. At this point Thoreau came to the realization he actually was in a foreign country.[1]

To Thoreau, the fifteen-mile journey from St. John's to La Prairie, over unusually level country, was much like a prairie in the West. Although the scenery became somewhat monotonous to him, he was, nevertheless, excited. From here, he said, Mount Royal in the rear of La Prairie and the island of St. Helen's just across from it were clearly visible. Five miles up the river he witnessed the Sault St. Louis, said to be the most significant rapids in the St. Lawrence River. Reaching Montreal, the cars neared the harbor, where Thoreau observed the St. Lawrence to be two miles in width.[2]

It was evening, Thoreau recorded, when the party finally departed for Quebec, one hundred and eighty miles by the river. After the boat had sailed past Longueuil, Boucherville, Pointe aux Trembles, and Bout de l'Isle, Thoreau's enjoyment was interrupted by darkness. Therefore, he more or less talked himself into believing he did not miss seeing a great deal, since the shores were low and unattractive, anyhow. He thought the river was a much more interesting object for observation,[3] it (the

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1 Excursions, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
2 Ibid., p. 11.
3 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

St. Lawrence) being his idea of Canada's richest gem.[1]

Daybreak found Thoreau again on deck eagerly observing higher and more interesting banks, as well as the thickly populated areas on shore. Quebec, he explained, was now only thirty or forty miles away and good time was being made.[2] He continued by saying:

> Ere long we passed Cape Rouge, eight miles above Quebec, the mouth of the Chaudière on the opposite or south side; New Liverpool Cove with its lumber-rafts and some shipping; then Sillery and Wolfe's Cove and the Heights of Abraham on the north, with now a view of Cape Diamond, and the citadel in front. The approach to Quebec was very imposing. It was about six o'clock in the morning when we arrived. There is but a single street under the cliff on the south side of the cape, which was made by blasting the rocks and filling up the river. Three-story houses did not rise more than one fifth or one sixth the way up the nearly perpendicular rock, whose summit is three hundred and forty-five feet above the water. We saw, as we glided past, the sign on the side of the precipice, part way up, pointing to the spot where Montgomery was killed in 1775. Formerly it was the custom for those who went to Quebec for the first time to be ducked, or else pay a fine. Not even the Governor-General escaped. But we were too many to be ducked, even if the custom had not been abolished.[3]

In describing his surroundings from his position atop the citadel, some time later, Thoreau wrote of his carefully examining the silver-like harbor far below; the highlands of Point Levi on the southeast; Cap Tourmente in the northeast; Lorette and Charlesbourg--both villages--on the north; Val Cartier far to the west; and a few blue mountains along the horizon far to the west.[4]

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[1] Excursions, op. cit., p. 89.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

Thoreau was soon to learn more about Canada's obviously being the country for waterfalls;[1] for at mid-afternoon the same day the boat pulled into the harbor, he and some of his companions hastened in the direction of the Falls of Montmorenci, eight miles down the St. Lawrence River, on the north side. During the journey, they crossed Dorchester Bridge, spanning the St. Charles River, and soon found themselves on an unusually good road.[2]

Thoreau declared that even though the United States had its Niagara Falls, falling one hundred and sixty-four feet from the St. Lawrence, Canada with her Montmorenci Falls, standing simple and noble, could proudly boast of a waterfall falling perpendicularly nearly two hundred and fifty feet. He was enthusiastic in explaining that the Montmorenci, which contributed a great deal to the sights of visitors arriving in Canada by way of the St. Lawrence, was a splendid introduction to the scenery of Quebec.

Some cities, he continued, had an artificial fountain in their squares, but not so with Quebec, which possessed this magnificant natural waterfall to adorn its harbor. And although the fall was nearly eight miles from the city, the citizens sometimes heard the rumbling, offering a good indication of a northeast wind. Thoreau believed one of the most unforgettable features of the scene was the side of the chasm, composed of soft, crumbling slate too steep to be climbed.[3]

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[1] Excursions, op. cit., p. 58.
[2] Ibid., pp. 29-30.
[3] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

One rainy forenoon Thoreau and his companions made their way along the north bank of the St. Lawrence, walking northeast, toward the Falls of St. Anne, nearly thirty miles from Quebec.[1] Nearing this scsnic beauty of Nature, they found it necessary to follow a foot-path up the east bank of the river; they lost all sense of direction but finally came within hearing distance of the roaring water which tumbled rapidly down from the St. Anne River, one or two hundred feet in width. Flowing over a precipice in three different channels, the water descended to great depths. Thoreau could not hope to estimate its exact distance. He explained how hs crossed ths main channel over the fall, by using two dead trees--one for a bridge and the other for a handrail. Thsn, oblivious of all danger, he paused to look a hundred or so feet below into the mist and foam. This brief experience, he declared, gave him a really true feeling of freedom.

As he stood there, he observed in those fleeting moments a rock carefully dressed with close-hugging, various colored plants, kept fresh by the moisture. Still deeper, he noted, the second and third channels fell into an enormous circular basin worn in the stone; and apparently jarring the rocks, the water sesmsd to increase its roaring flight into space. A sharp angle prevented his seeing to the bottom of the fall, but he noticed the downstream fell through a deep and narrow cleft in the mountain; so he returned to shore, detsrmined to see how far the fall extsnded,

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[1] Excursions, op. cit., p. 40.

and how the river fared the adventure. He also observed how the east side clambered along the dangerous mountain-side of loose mossy rocks which were covered almost completely with a damp and primitive forest. It finally ended at the bottom of an abrupt precipice above the stream. Still not completely satisfied, he worked his way down to still water, from where he could see a perpendicular wall standing proudly for hundreds of feet. He said it was the highest wall of its kind he had ever seen. Immediately before him tumbled what appeared to be a black streak caused by the watery highway of depth and darkness. He described it as a beautiful cascade from a tributary stream, approaching from the summit of the cliff.[1] "Take it altogether, it was a most wild and rugged and stupendous chasm, so deep and narrow, where a river had worn itself a passage through a mountain of rock, and all around was the comparatively untrodden wilderness."[2]

Leaving the Fall of St. Anne, he told about how they began retracing their steps, only to learn they could not return by the Isle of Orleans, as the wind was too severe. Arriving at the bridge between St. Anne and Chateau Richer, Thoreau became intensely curious about the name of the river they were crossing; and so, hastening back to a man who was working in a field, he found out it was called La Rivière au Chien, or the Dog River, quite a unique name, he thought.[3]

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[1] Excursions, op. cit., pp. 52-55.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

On the way back to Quebec, they also had an opportunity to visit the falls of the Rivière du Sault à la Puce, which they passed in their haste to reach St. Anne. Thoreau believed these were as beautiful as any of the others.[1]

But the largest waterfalls Thoreau saw in Canada were the Falls of the Chaudière, on the south side of the St. Lawrence River. Since these were of little interest to him, however, he did not bother to give a description. At this same place, though, he had the unusual pleasure of seeing the most beautiful rainbow he had ever imagined.[2] He gave a very clear, accurate delineation when he wrote:

> It was just across the stream below the precipice, formed on the mist which this tremendous fall produced; and I stood on a level with the keystone of its arch. It was not a few faint prismatic colors merely, but a a full semicircle, only four or five rods in diameter, though as wide as usual, so intensely bright as to pain the eye, and apparently as substantial as an arch of stone. It changed its position and colors as we moved, and was the brighter because the sun shone so clearly and the mist was so thick. Evidently a picture painted on mist for the men and animals that came to the falls to look at; but for what special purpose beyond this, I know not.[3]

Concerning all the numerous waterfalls on the St. Lawrence--those he had seen or those he had neither seen nor heard of--Thoreau was firmly convinced that Niagara Falls, about which he had heard, was the best of them all. He truly believed the St. Lawrence offered more falls than did any other river in the

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[1] Excursions, op. cit., p. 58.

[2] Ibid., p. 71.

[3] Ibid.

world.[1]

Thoreau returned to his native Massachusetts, after being gone just one week, traveling a total of eleven hundred miles, and spending only twelve dollars and seventy-five cents.[2] In conclusion, he stated:

> I do not suppose that I have seen all British America; that could not be done by a cheap excursion, unless it were a cheap excursion to the Icy Sea, as seen by Hearne or Mackenzie, and then, no doubt, some interesting features would be omitted. I wished to go a little way behind the word Canadense, of which naturalists make such frequent use; and I should like still right well to make a longer excursion on foot through the wilder parts of Canada, which perhaps might be called Iter Canadense.[3]

The Concord and Merrimack Rivers

Although they consisted mainly of walks in familiar countryside or boating trips on the nearby rivers, Thoreau's limited travels brought much more fame to his name than others have obtained by traversing the far corners of the earth.[4] If he had decided to travel abroad, readers would not have his unsurpassed word-picture of New England outdoor life which to this day is still affording much entertainment and inspiration to many people.[5] There is no doubt that his trip up the Concord and Mer-

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1 Excursions, op. cit., p. 59.
2 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
3 Ibid.
4 Gleason, op. cit., 165.
5 Ibid., p. 169.

rimack rivers furnished him with an abundance of material to further his readers' interest in the wonders of nature.

Landscape. Thoreau noted with considerable interest how the Merrimack River rose to the same height as did the Connecticut River; however, in reaching the sea, one would have to travel only half the distance on the Merrimack as would be necessary on the Connecticut. In contrast to the Connecticut, the Merrimack possessed no wide, rich meadows; rather it flowed more rapidly as if eager to accomplish its mission with little waste of time. He seemed positive that, because of its precipitous banks, there was no overflow from the Merrimack, a fact much appreciated by the farmers. Between Chelmsford and Concord, Thoreau declared, its width showed a certain amount of variety--from twenty to seventy-five rods. He went on to say that in many places it had undoubtedly increased its width over former years, on account of the timber having been removed, resulting in crumbling banks.[1]

Whereas the Concord was an inactive stream, the Merrimack was quite lively, although it had fewer fishes and quadrupeds; its banks also showed less activity. Thoreau wrote about its bottom of clay, with very few weeds.[2]

One day while still enjoying the peaceful river as the sun bade farewell, Thoreau could not help being thrilled to realize that anyone on the water could enjoy a better twilight than could a person on land, for the atmosphere and water obviously absorbed

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., p. 88.
[2] Ibid., p. 90.

and reflected light; and the day eeemed to sink quietly into the waves. And, as he wrote, veepers in the watery chapel far below had already been rung for all inhabitants.[1]

To Thoreau, a fog enhanced the enjoyment of an early voyage and seemed to create an indefinitely broad body of water. He marveled at the mist, through which objects were hardly visible, and he was left with the feeling that ordinary streams expanded enormously. And before long, he continued, the heavy atmoephere wae ae fragrant, enjoyable, and invigorating as earlier sunshine or other light.[2]

One of Thoreau's statements revealed the fact he believed fogs and clouds which concealed overshadowing mountains lent more breadth of plains to mountain valee. Also, small-featured country acquired grandeur in stormy weather when clouds were seen drifting between the obeerver and the neighboring hille. In his own mind he was sure the actuel breadth and height of a waterfall or mountain alwaye appeared exceedingly emall, and that only the imagined left contentment.[3] And continuing: "We piouely exaggerate her wonders, as the scenery around our home."[4]

Thoreau finally caught a glimpse of the Goffstown mountain rieing ahead on the west side. A calm and beautiful day had arrived with only slight ripples of wind to mar the water and near-

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., p. 113.

[2] Ibid., pp. 200-201.

[3] Ibid., pp. 201-202.

[4] Ibid., p. 202.

by woods. And as he expressed it, a sufficient amount of warmth had been supplied by Mother Nature to prove her kindly disposition in providing complete serenity for her children to observe. With buoyant spirits and vigorous impulses, Thoreau and his brother John, his companion on this journey, tossed their boat rapidly along.[1]

Thoreau revealed the interesting fact that the Merrimack River's course could be easily traced from the nearest mountain by yellow sand banks, of which the river itself was most conspicuous. He was enthralled to note the extensive desert by the side of the road in Litchfield, easily seen from the bank of the river. Sand had been blown off in places to a depth of ten or twelve feet, leaving hillocks of the same height where a clump of bushes had been firmly rooted. There also were several other sandy tracts during the voyage.[2]

Moreover, on Plum Island at the mouth of the river, Thoreau had an opportunity to observe a desert of drifting sand of various colors which had been blown into graceful curves by the wind. It stretched nine miles parallel to the coast and hardly ever reached a width of more than one-half mile. Obviously it was not very suitable for habitation, as only six houses could be seen. With the exception of vegetation partially buried in the sand, it was virtually bare. However, the beach plum, from which

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., p. 205.

[2] Ibid., pp. 208-209.

the island received its name, grew only a few feet high and so abundant that parties of one hundred or more from the mainland frequently made visitations to gather the plums for preserves. Continuing, Thoreau soon learned the island was comprised of low hills not more than twenty feet in height. Except for a faint trail at the edge of the marsh, Thoreau believed it was as trackless as the Sahara. He later learned that boats from Boston frequented the island to get sand for the masons' uses, all traces being obliterated in a short time by the wind. As much as Thoreau loved his native Massachusetts, he sincerely believed Plum Island, in New Hampshire, afforded the most grandeur--for music, beach-birds, and surf.[1]

Piscataquoag (Indian name for sparkling water) was soon visible as it emptied into the Merrimack on the left; the Falls of Amoskeag could be heard from above. Thoreau brought out the fact that the Merrimack could boast of many fine mill privileges, as large quantities of lumber still floated down the Piscataquoag to the Merrimack.

Just above the mouth of the river, Thoreau was an eye-witness to some artificial falls near which the Manchester Manufacturing Company operated. Fascinated by the spectacle, he believed these falls were striking enough to be named and visited from far and wide. Falling from thirty or forty feet over seven or eight narrow and steep stone terraces, which Thoreau believed had been

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

constructed to break the force, the swirling water formed into a gigantic mass of foam. This canal water hs compared with rsckless, impressive mountain torrents.[1]

Early one morning the two brothers broke camp and started ths limit of their voyage on foot to Agiocochook Mountain. They continusd slowly along a bank, each feeling his way with a stick and buoyantly climbing ovsr slippery logs through a rainy, foggy day. Thoreau expressed his plsasure in scenting the fragrant pines and wet clay under foot, as well as being cheersd by ths tones of invisible waterfalls. He had blurrsd visions of frogs, toadstools, moss hanging carelsssly from spruce trees, and thrushss flitting silently above. Although the weathsr was bad, thsre were occasional brightenings in mist when the trill of a tree sparrow ssemed to be ushsring in sunny hours.[2]

Evsn as Uncannunuc Mountain was the best vantage point from which to view the Merrimack Valley, so did a small wooded hill rising abruptly some two hundred feet near Hooksett Falls afford the best view of the Msrrimack Rivsr. Thoreau had previously sat upon ths summit of a precipitous rock only a few rods long in fairer weather when the sun was setting and flooding the valley with light. Several miles each way he had bssn able to see the broad, straight Merrimack dancing with all ths zest it could muster, with foaming and sparkling falls. The village of Hook-

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

[2] Ibid., pp. 318-319.

sett was almost directly below, so near, in fact, that he said he could converse with the inhabitants or throw stones into the yards. Thoreau related how a woodland lake at the western base and mountains to the north and northeast created such a picture of rare beauty and completeness, that any traveler should take extra time to pause for the sake of a wonderful experience.[1]

Over a period of several days they followed the meandering, damp path which reminded Thoreau more of an otter's trail than anything else. Progress became slower as a steeper part of their journey was reached. Nevertheless, the two nature lovers plodded onward through notches made by busy mountain streams; to the side and over hills and mountains; across a landscape clearly marked by rocks, stumps, forests, and pastures; and finally they once again breathed free air after crossing prostrate trees over the Amonoosuck River.

Enjoying fair days along with those which were unpleasant, Thoreau and his brother frequently had the pleasure of observing the leaping and untamed Pemigewasset River as it roared by them on its way to the Merrimack River. Later, Thoreau said, they were enabled to cross the tiny channel of the Amonoosuck in one stride, finally reaching their destination, the summit of Agiocochook.[2]

One week later they returned to their boat and found it safe,

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

[2] Ibid., pp. 333-335.

in the harbor under Uncannunuc Mountain; and promptly at noon they began their homeward voyage with little left to be desired, since the wind and current were in their favor. Sitting silently at ease or conversing with his brother, Thoreau became enthralled in watching the last trace of each reach in the river as a bend concealed it from view. When the sun was further advanced, the wind blew steadily from the north, and they sailed rapidly down the river, enclosed by two mounds of earth. Only the crashing of timber rolling down the bank enhanced the silence of the day.[1]

Thoreau was sincere in his belief that works of man were everywhere overshadowed by the tremendous beauty of nature, feeling also that the wildest scenes possessed an atmosphere of homeliness and domesticity. To him, even a flicker's cackle was reminiscent of civilization's being little changed. Science, he stated, always was given a hearty welcome in the deepest parts of the forest, where nature responded to the same old laws. Continuing, he said nature was always prepared to accept into her scenery even the finest work of human art, even though it would fall below the standards of Nature's handiwork. Art, he added, was not tame, nor was nature wild in the ordinary sense; however, perfect work of man's art was wild or natural in a good sense. Thoreau thought man apparently tamed Nature only in the respect he could give her more freedom than he had found her with, al-

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 335-336.

though this had never been quite accomplished.[1]

One night Thoreau awoke to hear the wind breathing unusually hard and discourteously requesting entrance into their canvas abode with its vibrating cords. Lying quietly, he detected the wicked Merrimack in its swirling, sucking downward plunge as it slapped the shore. Occasionally it made only a trickling sound, appearing as if a pail had sprung a leak and were dripping monotonously into the nearby grass. Almost like a wakeful, inconsiderate person up at midnight, he continued, the wind increased in a gallant attempt to arrive on the scene where a hasty preparation had been made throughout Nature to welcome a most distinguished guest. And so it was that Henry and John, awake long before daybreak suspecting a radical change in weather, voiced their anxiety as to the direction of the wind for their homeward voyage. Roaring with ever-increasing velocity, the wind now sounded like an incessant waterfall.[2]

Thoreau received unexpected pleasure while viewing the most familiar body of water from a new hilltop. Also, he realized after traveling a few miles, it was difficult for him to recognize the profiles of hills overlooking his native village of Concord. Perhaps no man, he contemplated, could be quite familiar with an horizon as seen from the nearest hill, but could distinctly recognize it when in the valley. As for himself, he commonly did

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 336-337.

[2] Ibid., pp. 354-356.

not know beyond short distance which direction some of the hills ranged. To him, Nature was everywhere continuous and always an event of great importance when he could travel occasionally to view objects and activities from an entirely different aspect, affording sufficient evidence that matters could occur in a variety of ways. In addition, Thoreau had sometimes enjoyed through a clear atmosphere the works of a farmer actively engaged in reaping and plowing. In all probability, however, the same beauty to Thoreau could not be appreciated by the farmer, who was actually a poor rich man because all he had was what he had bought; whereas Thoreau classified himself as a large owner of the Merrimack region, in that all he saw was actually his.[1]

Vegetation. Starting down the Concord River that last day in August, Thoreau thought the banks of the river were not nearly so beautiful as they had been earlier in the season, as evidenced by the fact that some of the brighter flowers were now very much faded.

In addition to the enjoyment he had observing the light green, narrow-leaved willow lying at the surface of the water with the balls of the button-bush, he noted with special interest the white blossoms of the arrowhead in the more shallow parts of the water. In meadows nearby were the soapwort gentian with their bright blue flowers. At this time, however, Thoreau missed seeing the white water-lily, which he thought surpassed in beauty all the

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 372-373.

other flowers of the river. This flower, he commented, commonly had its habitat in Concord water, but did not last so late in the season as did other flowers.[1] In specifically outlining his appreciation, he continued:

> I have passed down the river before sunrise on a summer morning, between fields of lilies still shut in sleep; and when, at length, the flakes of sunlight from over the bank fell on the surface of the water, whole fields of white blossoms seemed to flash open before me, as I floated along, like the unfolding of a banner, so sensible is this flower to the influence of the sun's rays.[2]

Thoreau explained the delight he and John had in naming the different islands as they glided along. Fox Island became their name for the one on which they spent the first night. Farther down, they came to an island not very well covered with trees, but completely bordered by deep water. Because it possessed a great many grape-vines, they named this one Grape Island. Pressing onward, they enjoyed the thickly populated river banks now covered by willows, bulrushes, and climbing mikania.[3] Thoreau said the bulrushes "straightly bounded the water as if clipped by art, reminding us of the reed forts of the East-Indians of which we had read; and now the bank, slightly raised, was overhung with graceful grasses and various species of brake, whose downy stems stood closely grouped and naked as in a vase, while their heads spread several feet on either side."[4]

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

[2] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] Ibid.

Thoreau's expression of interest in the climbing mikania was made with the more scientific terminology--Mikania scandens--which somewhat served as an ornament to the dead willow limbs; also, he told about its filling completely all the crevices in the bank.[1]

Thoreau was convinced that the water willow in its entirety was the most graceful of trees. When grown, it stood twenty or thirty feet in the air; its masses of light-green foliage apparently floated on the surface of the water, while the slight gray stems and the shore were hardly visible. He thought no other tree was so wedded to the water and harmonized so well with still streams. It was even more graceful than the weeping willow or any other trees which dipped their branches into the stream instead of being supported by it.[2]

Thoreau explained that the witch-hazel, which blossomed late in October and November, was well named because it was witchlike in appearance; its blossoming irregularly at this time of year, when other shrubs had already lost their leaves and blossoms, appeared to be a complete fairy land on all surrounding hillsides.[3]

Sitting briefly to rest, Thoreau observed on all sides the glossy leaves of the red variety of mountain laurel, just above the head of Wicasuck Island. On a nearby farm he could see an abundance of wild peach plum, together with peaches and large

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., p. 43.

[2] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[3] Ibid., p. 379.

patches of melons that had been cultivated for market; to him, the color of the bark and the setting of the branches of the blood peach tree were very similar to those of an oak tree; and because of the firm structure, he was sure it would be less likely to break down under the weight of fruit, or snow, than other varieties.[1]

Still farther downstream, Thoreau became aware that the western bank became lower and that only a few trees remained to fringe the water's edge, whereas the eastern bank rose abruptly into some wooded hills fifty or sixty feet in height. A tree completely unfamiliar to him until this time, the bass (Tilia Americana), hung over the water showing its broad, rounded leaf with clusters of small and hard berries now rarely ripe. He thought this would be a most agreeable shade for sailors such as he and his brother John.[2]

As far as Thoreau was concerned, there was something about the sight of a tree which served as a reminder of strange land, and on every side appeared something to refresh and sooth this sense. Looking at the tree-tops, he saw what a splendid feat Nature had accomplished, especially in view of the fact that the pines spired higher and higher, apparently without ending and resulting in a graceful fringe to the earth. He counted many cobwebs soaring and floating away from what he said were leaves

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit. p. 381.

[2] Ibid., pp. 165-166.

of more various forms than alphabets of all languages combined. Thoreau thought every oak tree had different traits, each expressing its own character.[1]

Thoreau became convinced of the comparison between vegetation and man, in that just as an acorn came from the oak so could a poem spring from man.[2] Also, he reasoned that since the earth was cultivated for such crops as wheat and potatoes, so might there be a definite cultivation of literature and a yield of natural harvest by an author.[3] In other words, he concluded, the flow of thought was a tidal wave, not a prone river. Many books rippled like a freshet, reached greener ground, and brought about greater strength and depth of soil; good sentences indicating as much verdure as flowers could span the page and refresh the reader, but poor sentences could well be classified as vegetation without sap or roots.[4]

Wildlife. While on the Concord River, Thoreau was interested in seeing an occasional pickerel, a bittern sluggishly sailing away from its habitat on shore, or the tortoise swiftly returning to the water as the surface in the willows was disturbed by the boat.[5]

This lover of the great out-of-doors believed whole-heartedly

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

[3] Ibid., p. 100.

[4] Ibid., pp. 105,107.

[5] Ibid., p. 17.

in the idea that regardless of where one lived, one should have an extensive knowledge of the nature of fishes, especially since they were to be found in many different localities. And contrary to what many believed, he said, the waters of Concord contained nearly a dozen different species of minnows.[1]

In great detail Thoreau wrote of the Pomotis vulgaris as being nature's true representative of the fresh-water sunfish. On many occasions he had studied them carefully, finding them inoffensive, ambitious, fearless, beautiful, compact, graceful, and expressive. On every youth's string, he continued, they would be the most common. He observed that their sand-hollowed nests were numerous along the shore, frequently twenty or thirty in a very small area, where they remained during the spawning season, courageously defending their spawn against any would-be invaders--birds and other fishes. Thoreau told of his petting them, raising them out of the water with his hand, and even allowing them to nibble his fingers.[2] His description of this fish was:

> a perfect jewel of the river, the green, red, coppery, and golden reflections of its mottled sides being the concentration of such rays as struggle through the floating pads and flowers to the sandy bottom, and in harmony with the sunlit brown and yellow pebbles.[3]

Thoreau called the common perch one of the most beautiful and regularly formed of fishes, and also one which was caught when not yet half grown. Another kind, although lighter in color and more

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

[2] Ibid., pp. 24-26.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

slender, swam in many different sections of shallow water, along with the shiner, which was no longer than six or seven inches. In great depths of water, of course, there were larger specimens which frequently attacked the weaker species. At evening, Thoreau many times influenced the smaller perch to shore, by merely making the water ripple with his fingers. Occasionally, Thoreau wrote, he was able to catch them as they tried to pass inside his hands. In characterizing the perch, he called it tough and indifferent, as well as the Perca flavescens, so called because of the reflections of shining gold thrown off by its scales upon being taken from the water.[1]

Thoreau called the white and red Leuciscus pulchellus (often called the chevin, dace, roach, and cousin trout) a prize worthy of receiving because it was seldom caught. He continued by saying the name of this fish was reminiscent of his numerous fishing trips along rapid waters which resulted in no success for the fisherman, after being disheartened by the rising wind. From Thoreau's description, one learns it was a silver fish having soft scales, and that it was graceful and possessed a classical, scholarly look. Its favorite habitat was a rapid current and a sandy bottom. Thoreau thought anyone was not a skilled angler until he had landed a red chevin, which fought ferociously upon being hooked and pulled in. Once while fishing from the Aboljacknagesic River near Mount Ktaadn, in Maine, Thoreau had caught enormous white chevin, having

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

been unsuccessful landing any of the red ones.[1]

At one point in the journey, the Thoreaus went ashore for a night that was memorable to Thoreau. Occasionally they heard foxes crossing the dead leaves and prowling close to the tent; from a distance, then, adding to the novelty, came the voices of the owl and the sparrow. Finally the cock made his contribution.[2]

The little infant of the river was the descriptive phrase Thoreau used when he wrote about the shiner, a more delicate fish possessing soft scales, a fish which could be found in nearly all kinds of water. Many times falling prey to the larger fish, it was commonly the first to seize the bait; it was not easily caught, however, because of its small mouth. It was gold or silver in color. Being occasionally frightened after hearing an object strike the water, it leaped high onto a floating plank and damaged itself.[3]

It was Thoreau's belief that the common horned suckers were the largest fishes and could be seen in many different shoals, often resisting the current. In smaller streams they could often be caught by hand. Thoreau learned they were hardly known to average fishermen; and regardless of who was fishing, they seldom offered to strike the bait. In spring they could be speared.[4]

Thoreau wrote about the horned pout--a sluggish, awkward,

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

[2] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[3] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[4] Ibid., p. 30.

fearless, dangerous, and mud-loving fish--which frequently was called Minister because of its strange, squeaking objection to being removed from the water. At night it could be easily lured by numerous worms on a string. Thoreau depicted it as being so fond of life that even thirty minutes after its head was cut off, the mouth could be seen gasping. He also observed it was always ready to battle a neighbor.[1]

In shallow water the current was rapid and the bottom pebbly, as well as being inhabited by the curious circular nests of lamprey eel, or the American stone-suckers. As large as a cart-wheel and one or two feet in height, these nests sometimes rose a half foot above the water's surface. The eels ascended falls by clinging to stones; and as they could not be seen on their way downstream, fishermen thought they never would return, but waste away and die. Thoreau explained they were rarely seen in American waters because of dams, although they were taken in great quantities at the mouth of the river in Lowell, Massachusetts. Their conspicuous nests looked more like art to Thoreau than anything in the river.[2]

The two men reached a peaceful part of the river, pitched their tent, and retired for the night near unusually active neighbors: minks, muskrats, meadow mice, woodchucks, skunks, squirrels, rabbits, foxes, and weasels.[3]

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] Ibid., pp. 118-119.

One day a fish hawk sailed and screamed high overhead; a striped squirrel sat upon the end of a fence extending over a stream, twirling a green nut with one paw. It reminded Thoreau of an independent russet leaf as it rustled back and forth, peeping at the voyagers and playing hide-and-seek. Beyond, a larger red squirrel, sometimes called a Hudson Bay squirrel, gave warning of the approaching men; Thoreau explained the signal as being much like the winding of a clock coming from the top of a pine tree. While it dodged behind a stem, leaped from tree to tree with much caution and adroitness, and ran along the pine boughs sometimes twenty rods to the side, it appeared to Thoreau as though this were a well-traveled path for this wonderful little creature. Thoreau finally cut off some pine cones and compelled it to fall to the ground.[1]

Once during the heat of day, Henry and John rested on a large island one mile above the mouth of that part of the river pastured by a herd of cattle. The forest on a neighboring shore was alive with pigeons moving south, but now enjoying the noon hour in the shade. Thoreau heard a slight, wiry flapping of wings as they changed roosts, and also a gentle cooing that resulted in his declaring they were even greater travelers than he and John. A single pair of pigeons on some lower branches of a white pine tree in the depths of the wood were silent and solitary, reminding Thoreau of the actions of a hermit.[2]

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

[2] Ibid., p. 235.

While shoving away from a rocky coast one morning, Thoreau observed a bittern--he called it the genius of the shore--that was moping along the shore or stood probing mud for food, constantly eyeing the two adventurers or running over the wet stones like a wrecker in a storm coat on the lookout for wrecks of snails and cockles. Then it departed with limping flight, destination unknown until clear sand in the distance might seem inviting to its feet. Thoreau explained how his and John's approach compelled the retreat of the bittern which obviously loved water more than any of the other elements. To Thoreau, there was something venerable in this contemplative, melancholy race of birds that never anticipated sympathy from man, and very worthwhile to look into the open yellowish, greenish eyes of a bittern and imagine its having soared over many pools and through numerous night fogs.[1] Here, Thoreau classified himself and John in a category similar to that of the bittern, pursuing the wrecks of snails and cockles.[2]

One morning Thoreau awoke to hear faint, deliberate, ominous raindrops above him, or, as he stated, the whole country wept in the river, on the alders, and in the pastures. All morning could be heard the trill of a hare-bird, whose cheery faith atoned for the melancholy silence of the whole woodland. Early in the day Thoreau found a flock of sheep rushing down the ravine in the rear with heedless haste and unreserved frisking, as if unobserved by man; they had spent the night in a pasture in the hills and were

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

[2] Ibid., p. 255.

now on their way to enjoy picking the herbage near the river. Suddenly they were faced with disappointment, however, ae they caught eight of the white tent; bracing their fore feet, the entire flock jarred themselves still and endeavored to solve thie myetery. Finally they spread out quietly over the field.[1]

It wae Thoreau'e opinion that the worm was as good a traveler ae the graeehopper or cricket, and a much wiser eettler; because of pressing activities, it wae unnecessary to hop away from the drought and forward to the eummer season. After all, Thoreau continued, a pereon cannot eecape evil by fleeing from it, but rather by rising above or going below its plane, as a worm escapes unpleaeant conditions by boring a few inches deeper.[2]

Cape Cod

Desirous of getting a better view of the ocean and learning more about it, Thoreau visited Cape Cod on three occasions: October, 1849; June, 1850; and July, 1855. Altogether he epent nearly three weeks on the Cape, walking from Eastham to Provincetown twice on the Atlantic eide and once on the Cheeapeake Bay side except four or five miles; he crossed the Cape six times during thie time.[3]

To one like Thoreau, who was well acquainted with the com-

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[1] A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, op. cit., pp. 317-318.

[2] Ibid., p. 323.

[3] Henry D. Thoreau, Thoreau's Complete Works, Cape Cod, V. 4, p. 3.

munity of Concord, Cape Cod--like the wilds of Maine--was very strange. When he wrote of it, though, he utilized notes or observations he had made at various times.[1] In order to gain a better understanding of New England history, he had read and studied carefully Barber's Historical Collections, as well as town and state histories. Before visiting Cape Cod or Plymouth, he studied histories of discovery and settlement; for Cape Cod, voyages of Archer, Captain John Smith, Gilbert, Gosnold, Brereton, and Pring; and for Plymouth, the chronicles of Bradford and Winslow; Mourt's Relation and journal of Boston's Governor Winthrop; Edward Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence; and Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana.[2]

Landscape. Thoreau described Cape Cod as the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts, with its shoulder at Buzzard's Bay, its elbow at Cape Mallebarro, its wrist at Truro, and its sandy fist at Provincetown; Massachusetts, he wrote, stood proudly behind with her back to the Green Mountains.[3]

Thoreau enjoyed the sea bathing at a place called Cohasset Rocks; in fact, it was perfect as the water showed more purity and transparency than any he had ever seen. Since the bottom was comprised entirely of sand, one did not have to worry about slime or mud. Smooth and fantastically worn were the rocks which he pictured as being much like tawny, couchant lions that dared to defy

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[1] Whicher, op. cit., p. 31.

[2] Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[3] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 4.

the mighty Atlantic as she constantly dashed against and scoured them with vast amounts of gravel. On one of the hottest days in the year he found the water so icy that he could muster only one or two strokes before withdrawing so as to avoid the danger of chilling to death. This, Thoreau believed, could be classed among the most perfect seashore, especially in view of the fact that the larger hollows in the smoothed rocks formed convenient seats and dressing rooms for all who cared to participate.[1]

Continuing, Thoreau noted that the Cape extended from the town of Sandwich eastward thirty-five miles and north and northwest thirty miles, with an average breadth of five miles. The interior, composed almost entirely of sand, rose to two hundred feet and sometimes three hundred feet above sea level; large blocks of stone formed here and there the first half of the Cape, whereas in the last thirty miles boulders and gravel were rarely encountered.[2]

Thoreau spent one night in a tavern in Orleans, feeling as if he were on a sand-bar in the ocean and not knowing whether land or water lay ahead through the extremely heavy mist.[3] Early the next morning he proceeded on foot up the shore on the Atlantic side to Provincetown in a heavy rain. He found walking was good on the sides of roads but not so good in the middle. It was indeed a strange shore; the road was a mere lane, the land was bleak and barren looking, and the houses were few and far between

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
[2] Ibid., pp. 19-20.
[3] Ibid., p. 29.

and small and rusty, though in good repair and tidy. To Thoreau's eyes it was a dreary yet beautiful landscape; everything told of the sea, even when not seen or heard.[1]

All morning Thoreau heard the sea roaring on the eastern shore several miles ahead; the sea dashing against land was invigorating to him, because he had the opportunity to see ths mighty ocean in her angriest mood. Eventually he left the road and started across country until he came to a boundless plain, without tree or fence and only one or two houses. Making it even more desolate were the wind and rain; there were no hills, but only a few dry hollows in segregated places.[2]

Reaching what had appeared at a distance to be an upland marsh, Thoreau learned that it proved to be dry sand covered with various types of vegetation. He crossed a belt of sand on which nothing grew and stood on a bluff overlooking the Atlantic; here the roar was scarcely louder than before. Far below was a beach from one-half to one dozen rods in length, with long lines of breakers rushing in. Rain was still falling and so the sea was exceedingly dark and stormy, and the sky was completely overcast. Waves broks on bars some distance from the shore and curved green or yellow ten or twslve feet high, which Thoreau said were like one thousand waterfalls, finally rolling in foam to the sand. Nothing lay between him and Europe but ths gigantic, ferocious

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[2] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Atlantic.[1]

From there Thoreau walked up the beach in a northwesterly direction toward Provincetown, twenty-five miles away. He admired in silence the great force of the ocean.[2] Describing this picturesque sight, he wrote:

> The breakers looked like drovee of a thousand wild horsee of Neptune, ruehing to the shore, with their white manes etreaming far behind; and when, at length, the sun ehone for a moment, their manee were rainbow-tinted. Also, the long kelp-weed was tossed up from time to time, like the tails of eea-cows sporting in the brine.[3]

Thoreau was grateful for the chance to walk on a sand-bank which rose one hundred feet or more from the ocean. Below, on the right, he observed a beach of smooth, gently-sloping eand he judged to be a dozen rods wide, as well as an endless series of white breakers; and beyond, the unwearied and illimitable ocean. On the left, from the edge of the bank, he could see a perfect desert of ehining sand thirty to eighty rods in width, skirted in the distance by emall sand-hills fifteen or twenty feet high. Farther ahead lay the waters of the bay and a pure eand plateau, known to sailors as "Table-Lands of Eastham" because of its appearance as seen from the ocean, and also because it once made part of the town of Eastham. Thoreau was certain the plateau was at least fifty rode in width and in many places much more and sometimes one hundred fifty feet above the ocean. Almoet as level

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 57.

[2] Ibid., p. 58.

[3] Ibid.

as a table, it stretched away northward from the southern boundary of town, without a particle of vegetation for two and one-half or three miles, as far ae the eye could see, slightly rising toward the ocean, and then stooping to the beach by as steep a slope as sand could lie on and as regular ae a military engineer could desire. As Thoreau traveled acroes the desert enjoying the autumnal landscape of extraordinary brilliancy, he believed it to be a Promieed Land on one hand and an ocean on the other. Moreover, with the desert and ocean combining forces, he earnestly realized one thoueand men could not have interrupted it, but rather they would have been lost in the vastnese of scenery as their footsteps would aleo be loet in the sand.[1]

Continuing leisurely, first on the beach and then on the bank, Thoreau gazed steadily at the ocean. The bank was eo steep that, where there was no danger of caving, he eat on the edge and found it difficult to look out over the Atlantic without imagining land in the horizon; and yet, clouds appeared to hang low and reet on water as on land.

The breakers daehed and roared endlessly with such tumult that one's voice could not be heard. Wholly absorbed by this spectacle and tumult, Thoreau concluded that the eea never found time to rest.[2] Furthermore, he told how thoee who frequented camp-meetings at Eastham said their attention was divided between the preaching of Methodists and preaching of billows on the back

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 61-63.

[2] Ibid., pp. 65-66.

side of the Cape.[1]

Thoreau entertained the idea that the loud, weird sounde must have been very eignificant and interesting to people living near the ocean.[2] Early one morning he ran over to the beach to eee what had come out of the ocean[3] and found the air beautifully clear and the sea no longer dark and etormy, though the waves were still breaking with foam along the beach but sparkling and full of life.[4]

Near Truro he joyfully traversed the new reaches of the shore. He thought the sea ran hardly lees than the previoue day, even though with every wave it seemed to be subsiding; but a lapse of hours made no difference and each wave left the sand all braided or woven. So Thoreau made no haste, as he wanted to see the ocean at leieure. Anyhow, he declared, soft sand wae no place in which to be in a hurry, for one mile there was as good as two elsewhere; also, he frequently found it neceesary to empty his shoes of eand.[5]

Thoreau became aware of the fact that objects on the beach looked exceedingly groteeque, larger, and more wonderful than they actually were. Walking close to the water's edge one day, he saw a large black object waves had cast up on the beach; yet he was too far off to dietinguish what it was. Human beinge

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1 Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 67.
2 Ibid., p. 97.
3 Ibid., p. 98.
4 Ibid., p. 104.
5 Ibid., p. 106.

seemed to appear suddenly; the object took the form of a huge fish, a drowned man, a sail or net, and finally a mass of tow-cloth. Another time as he approached a seashore, several degrees south of this, he saw about one-half mile in the distance what appeared to be bold and rugged cliffs on a beach, fifteen feet high and whitened by the sun and waves. It proved to be low heaps of rags from a wrecked vessel.[1]

Occasionally Thoreau became quite fascinated by the variety of colors cast off by the Atlantic. One day it was purple, with distinct patches of the color of purple grape as if the bloom had been rubbed off. In calm weather, he explained, for one-half mile from shore, where the bottom tinged it, the sea was green, or greenish; then blue for many miles, often with purple tinges, bounded in the distance by a light, almost silvery stripe; beyond was a dark-blue rim like a mountain ridge in the horizon; on another day it was marked with long smooth and rippled streaks, light-colored and dark, even like inland meadows in a freshet and showing which way the wind set.[2]

Early one afternoon Thoreau reached Highland Light, whose white tower he had seen rising out of the bank in front of him for the last mile or two. It was located on what was named Clay Pounds, so called because of an immense bed of clay abutting on the Atlantic and stretching across the Cape. Immediately Thoreau

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

[2] Ibid., pp. 119-120.

noticed a difference in the soil, for there was no interruption of the desert and there was also a slight appearance of sod such as had not been seen for the last two days.[1]

Upon arrival, he arranged to lodge at the lighthouse and then rambled across the Cape to the Bay, over bleak and barren-looking country, consisting of rounded hills and hollows, which reminded Thoreau of a chopped sea. Southward from the lighthouse the Cape appeared much like an elevated plateau, sloping regularly, though slightly downward from the edge of the bank on the Atlantic side, about one hundred fifty feet above the ocean, to the Bay side. Going farther, Thoreau found it was interrupted by broad valleys or gullies that became hollows in the bank as soon as the sea had worn up to them. They were commonly at right angles with the shore and often extended across the Cape. Some valleys, he continued, were circular, one hundred feet deep, without any outlets, as if the Cape had sunk in those places, or its sands had run out. The few scattered houses along the way had been built at the bottom of the hollows for the sake of shelter and fertility; for the most part, they were concealed entirely, as much as if they had been swallowed up in the earth. Evan a village, a stone's throw behind, had sunk into the earth. Thoreau described his approach to the village as being very cautious because he thought perhaps he might just tumble in.[2]

Thoreau believed that what the Atlantic took from one part

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 132.

[2] Ibid., pp. 132-134.

of the Cape it gave to another. On the eastern side the sea appeared to be everywhere encroaching on land. Not only was the land undermined and the ruins carried off by currents, but sand was blown directly from the beach up a steep bank one hundred fifty feet high and covered the original surface there many feet deep. Thus, the bank preserved its height as fast as it had worn away.[1]

On still another occasion, before leaving the lighthouse, Thoreau anointed his shoes with tallow, for walking on the beach in salt water and sand turned them red and crisp. However, he was not long in learning that the seashore was fairly clean even when muddy; for example, his trousers retained neither stain nor dirt such as he had encountered before in other sections of the country.

Back at the beach for another day of sight-seeing, Thoreau could not help being desirous of associating with the ocean until it lost its pond-like appearance which it wore to a countryman. The surface he found more sparkling than the day before; he beheld the smilings of the ocean waves; the wind blew and billows broke in foam along the beach.[2]

To Thoreau, the seashore was a sort of neutral ground and the most advantageous point from which to contemplate a world filled with countless activities.[3] Furthermore, he said it was

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 153.

[2] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

[3] Ibid., p. 186.

Nature in the nude, a wild, rank place containing no flattery whatsoever; rather, it was strewn with whatever the sea cast up.[1]

One day the wind was blowing so hard from the northeast that Thoreau decided to see the breakers on the Atlantic side, whose din had been heard all morning. Although the day was quite cold, he continued eastward through the desert until he struck shore northeast of Provincetown, where he exposed himself to the full force of the piercing blast. He was greatly impressed by the extensive shoals over which the sea broke with great forces; for one-half mile from shore it was one mass of white breakers, which, with a wind, made such a noise that nothing else possibly could have been heard.[2]

The day Thoreau departed from Cape Cod, the morning broke beautifully mild and calm, both on land and water, and he seemed sure a smooth passage across the Bay could be anticipated. In the few remaining hours he took a seat upon the highest sand-hill overlooking Provincetown and remained the rest of that forenoon, looking out over the peaceful harbor[3] and recalling how it (the Provincetown harbor) was deservedly famous; it had been known to navigators several years before the settlement of Plymouth.[4] Also, he remembered, it was November 11, 1620, when the Pilgrims sailed into this same harbor in their little "Mayflower"; they thought it to be a harbor wherein one thousand ships could safely

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 186-187.
[2] Ibid., p. 209.
[3] Ibid., p. 217.
[4] Ibid., p. 251.

ride.[1]

Thoreau wrote about having gone to see the Atlantic Ocean and Cape Cod because this was unquestionably the best place to go. Also, he felt it was a better experience going by boat in that he would know the feeling involved in approaching and leaving the shores. Of all the beaches in the Atlantic States, he concluded, he did not know of any other that was so long, straight, and comparatively uninterrupted by creeks, coves, and other similar places.[2]

These were Thoreau's final words concerning Cape Cod:

> The time must come when this coast will be a place of resort for those New-Englanders who really wish to visit the seaside. At present it is wholly unknown to the fashionable world, and probably it will never be agreeable to them. It is merely a ten-pin alley, or a circular railway, or an ocean of mint-julep, that the visitor is in search of,--if he thinks more of the wine than the brine, as I suspect some do at Newport,--I trust that for a long time he will be disappointed here. But this shore will never be more attractive than it is now. Such beaches as are fashionable are here made and unmade in a day, I may almost say, by the sea shifting its sands. Lynn and Nantasket! this bare and bended arm it is that makes the bay in which they lie so snugly. What are eprings and waterfalls? Here is the spring of springs, the waterfall of waterfalls. A storm in the fall or winter is the time to visit it; a lighthouse or a fisherman's hut, the true hotel. A man may stand there and put all America behind him.[3]

Vegetation. Near the town of Orleans Thoreau was amazed to learn about trees being rarer than houses, excepting apple trees, and that there were few small orchards in the hollows. Having

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

[2] Ibid., p. 261.

[3] Ibid., pp. 272-273.

lost their side branches, these apple trees were either narrow and high with flat tops or like huge plum bushes; some of them were dwarfed and branched immediately at the ground. Later on the Cape he saw many full-grown apple trees no higher than a man's head; there was even one whole orchard where the fruit could have been gathered by one man on the ground. Thoreau estimated some of the trees were twenty years old and only three and one-half feet high, spreading at six inches from the ground five feet each way, and surrounded with tar boxes to catch the canker-worms. He thought they looked like flower-pots. A few trees were not much larger than currant bushes but had borne one and one-half barrels that fall; one ten-year-old tree was eighteen inches high and spread nine feet with a flat top and had borne one bushel of apples two years before; another was twenty years old, five feet high, spread eighteen feet, and bore one barrel of apples two years before. The largest tree of this kind in the neighborhood was nine feet high, spread thirty-three feet, and branched at the ground five ways.[1]

A high sand-bank extending all along the coast led through patches of bayberry bushes, which straggled into sand. Next to shrub oak, Thoreau thought this was the most common of all the shrubs on the Cape. Especially appealing to him were its odoriferous leaves and small gray berries which clustered about short twigs, the berries offering a venerable appearance and a very spicy smell, like small confectionery.[2]

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

[2] Ibid., p. 102.

Continuing across the Cape, Thoreau seldom saw a cultivated field or even one that was worthy of being cultivated. More and more, however, he became fascinated by the appearance of the valleys and shrub-covered hills, now dressed with all the autumnal colors. The pitch pines commonly were not more than fifteen or eighteen feet in height, with the larger ones covered with lichens. The small rustling groves of oaks, locusts, and whispering pines on perfectly level ground formed a little paradise; of the three, the locusts appeared to flourish better than any other tree.

Careful, constant study of both oaks and pines resulted in Thoreau's declaring that they often had the same flat look as did the apple trees. He believed the oaks were at least twenty-five years old, even though they were mere scraggy shrubbery; also, they extended into the air nine or ten feet. So far as woodbine was concerned, it flourished only among patches of shrub oak, beach plum, bayberry, and roses. Blooming roses intermixed with the aroma of bayberry stimulated him to exclaim no Italian or any other artificial rose garden could equal such a sight. This he declared to be perfect and even his personal opinion of a genuine oasis in the desert. He observed an abundance of huckleberry bushes which the following summer provided a fantastic quantity of fruit. The only disadvantage he found with this type of shrubbery, however, was that at times it was invaded by such troublesome parasites as wood ticks.[1]

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

Many inhabitants of Cape Cod had a high regard for the tree, though their standard for one was neither large nor high. When they told of large trees once growing there, Thoreau interpreted they were not absolutely large, but large compared with thoee of the present generation. Their courageous old oake, of which they spoke with great respect, and which they pointed out to Thoreau as relics of the primitive forest, had a ridiculously dwarfish appearance that excited a smile in the Concord naturalist. The largeet and most venerable which they ehowed him were not more than twenty or twenty-five feet high. He was especially amused by one old oak in the south part of Truro. To Thoreau'e experienced eye, which appreciated only its proportions, it might have appeared as large as many othere; but measured accurately, it proved dwarfed to the eize a deer might eat in one morning.[1]

The highest and eandieet portion next to the Atlantic was thinly covered with beach-grass and indigo-weed. Near this the surface of upland generally coneieted of white eand and gravel, like coaree salt, through which ecanty vegetation found its way up. The upland produced cladonia lichens, poverty-grass, savory-leaved aster, mouse-ear, and bear-berry. On a few hilleidee the savory-leaved aster and mouse-ear made what Thoreau described as a dense sward. In some sectors two speciee of poverty-grass (Hudeonia tomentosa and ericoides) reigned for milee in tufts or islets, like mose, ecattered over waste. These, Thoreau learned, lingered in bloom until the middle of July. Occasionally near the

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 130.

beach these beds filled with sand within an inch of their tops and were hard like ant-hills while the surrounding sand was soft. Poverty-grass in many places was esteemed an ornament, but despised by many on account of its association with barrenness. Here and there tracts of beach-grass mingled with seaside goldenrod and beach pea, reminding Thoreau still more forcibly of the ocean.[1]

Thoreau told how the place called Clay Pounds was a more fertile tract than usually found on the Cape; many fine patches of roots and corn could be seen. As was generally true on Cape Cod, the plants had little stalk or leaf but ran remarkably to seed. The corn was hardly more than one-half as high as in the interior, yet its ears were large and full. Here Thoreau described how one farmer could raise forty bushels on an acre without fertilizer and sixty bushels with fertilizer. The heads of rye were remarkably large. The shad bush, beach plums, and blueberries were like apple trees and oaks in that they were very dwarfish and spread over the sand; but at the same time they were very fruitful. The blueberry was an inch or two high, and the fruit often rested on the ground, and so the presence of bushes was not suspected, even on bare hills, until someone walked on them. Thoreau thought the fertility was excellent because of an abundance of moisture in the atmosphere, for he observed the small amount of grass was remarkably laden with dew on summer days. He mentioned that the dense fogs frequently lasted until midday, wet-

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

ting beards and making one lose his way. A brick house attached to the lighthouse was exceedingly damp at that season and writing paper lost its stiffness, together with the fact it was impossible for one to dry a towel after bathing. The air was so moist he rarely wished a drink.[1]

Once just before sunset Thoreau left the seashore north of Provincetown and made his way across the desert to the eastern extremity of town. He ascended the top of the first high sand-hill covered with beach-grass and bushes and overlooked the shrubby hill and swamp country surrounding Provincetown on the north. He reveled in the beauty of a scene such as he had never before seen. He called it the richest rug imaginable spread over an uneven surface, comprised of the incredibly bright red of huckleberry; the reddish brown of bayberry, mingled with bright and living green of small pitch pines; duller green of bayberry, boxberry, and plum; yellowish green of shrub oaks; and the various golden and yellow and fawn-colored tints of the birch, maple, and aspen, each making its own figure, and in the midst, the few yellow sand-slides on the sides of the hills looked like a white floor seen through rents in a rug. Since this was the most novel and remarkable sight Thoreau had witnessed on the Cape, he earnestly believed the brightness of the tints was enhanced by contrast with the sand--part of the Cape Cod furniture--which surrounded this tract.[2]

Thoreau was aware of the peculiarity of the autumnal land-

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 165.

[2] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

scape consisting no less in the lowness and thickness of shrubbery than in the brightness of the tints. He described it as if it were thick worsted or fleece that a giant could take by the hem and shake. Pursuing the idea a bit further, he contemplated whether or not such a landscape as this might have been the pattern from which high-colored rugs and carpets had first been made. In the future, he continued, while observing an extraordinary rug, he would think of the huckleberry hills, and there the denser swamps of boxberry and blueberry; the shrub oak patches and the bayberries; the maples and the birches and the pines. After all, he queried, could any other dyes be comparable to these? Certainly they were warmer colors than he had previously associated with the New England coast.[1]

Thoreau wrote of the sea-green, world-known beach-grass which stood between two and four feet high. In some parts of the world it was used for mats, pack-saddles, bags, and hats; paper had been made of it at Dorchester, Massachusetts, and cattle enjoyed it when it was tender. Its heads were somewhat like those of rye.[2] Beach-grass spread rapidly, because the seeds when ripe bent and dropped directly and thus began their vegetation. In this way, he explained, the Cape between Truro and Provincetown had been built up where the sea at one time had broken over.[3]

Of this same sector, Thoreau told how the Pilgrims thought

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 194-195.
[2] Ibid., p. 201.
[3] Ibid., p. 207.

thie part of Cape Cod was well wooded becauee of its deep and excellent soil; but they had hardly mentioned the word eand. Now the voyager Thoreau encountered vast barrennese and deeolation. He commented on how he did not see enough black eoil in Provincetown to fill a flower-pot, unless in ewampe. The Pilgrime had found it thoroughly covered with oake, pines, eassafras, juniper, birch, holly, vines, aeh, walnut; the wood for the most part open and without underwood, fit either to enter or ride in. However, Thoreau eaw ecarcely anything high enough to be called a tree, except a little low wood at the east end of town, and a few ornamental trees in yards,[1] "but it was all thick ehrubbery, without any large wood above it, very unfit either to go or ride in."[2] Thoreau thought allowances should be made for the Pilgrims' exaggeration and lack of knowledge.[3]

Wildlife. All one day while Thoreau wae walking along the beach, numerous mackerel gulls flew high overhead, sometimes two white ones pursuing a black one. Alwaye they appeared much at ease during a storm, although, ae Thoreau hastened to add, they were very delicate birds; however, he thought they had adapted themselves well to their circumstances by their spirits rather than with their bodies. He brought out the fact that the nature of theee birds was much less human than that of robins and larks. The notes emanating from their throats sounded like vibrating

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1 Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 253-254.
2 Ibid., p. 254.
3 Ibid., p. 255.

metal which added greatly to the harmony of the scenery and the roar of the surf.[1] To Thoreau, it was like the "ragged shred of ocean music tossed aloft on the spray."[2]

Thoreau was interested in noting the curious habits of the gull. In summer especially it anxiously pursued a traveler, frequently diving close to his head with a squeak; or, like swallows, decided to go after a crow which might be feeding on the beach, almost across the Cape.[3]

In Boston Harbor Thoreau had once seen many of what he classified as the lowest forms of animal life, sea-jellies, that discolored the water far and wide. Now at Cape Cod, he witnessed a beach strewn with their beauty, some white and others wine colored and one foot in diameter. His first thought was that they were a tender part of some marine monster which the storm or some other foe had mangled.[4] To emphasize further his point, he continued:

> What right has the sea to bear in its bosom such tender things as sea-jellies and mosses, when it has such a boisterous shore, that the stoutest fabrics are wrecked against it.[5]

Once in July Thoreau walked on the bank a quarter of a mile parallel with a fish he estimated was about six feet in length; possibly it was a shark prowling slowly along within two rods of the shore. It was pale-brown and indistinct in water. Finally it entered a little cove or bathing-tub in which Thoreau himself

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1 Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 71.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 66.
4 Ibid., p. 70.
5 Ibid.

had been bathing, where the water was only four or five feet deep at that time; after a brief exploration, it slowly swam out and continued its journey. Not completely afraid, Thoreau continued to bathe there, observing first from the bank to see if the cove were occupied. He thought the water was fuller of life, like soda-water, and the expectation of encountering a shark did not subtract anything from its life-giving qualities.[1]

Occasionally Thoreau sat on the wet beach and watched beach-birds, sandpipers, and others trotting along close to each wave, waiting for the turbulent Atlantic to case up their breakfast. The beach-birds ran with great rapidity and then stood stock-still, remarkably erect and hardly to be distinguished from the beach. A portion of their meal consisted of small skipping sea-fleas, which Thoreau called the scavengers of the beach; they were so numeroue that in a very short time they could devour large fishes. Thoreau enjoyed watching one little bird not larger than a sparrow alighting on the turbulent surface where the breakers were five or six feet high and floating buoyantly like a duck, cunningly taking to ite wings and lifting itself a few feet through the air over the foaming crest of each breaker, but sometimes outriding safely a considerable billow which hid it some seconds when instinct told it that it would not break. Even though Thoreau was quick to admire such a creature that dared to sport with the ocean, he felt it was as perfect a success in its

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

way as the breakers were in theire.[1]

Of birds not found in the interior of Massachusetts (at least not in Thoreau's neighborhood), he heard the black-throated bunting (Fringilla Americana) in the shrubbery, and in open land the upland plover (Totanus Bartramius), whose quivering notes almost constantly prolonged into a clear, somewhat hawk-like scream which sounded at an indefinite distance. One bird in a nearby field sounded at least one mile away.[2]

Thoreau had heard that in summer, and sometimes in fall, hundreds of blackfish were driven ashore in a single school. One afternoon he witnessed such a scene. Looking up and down the shore, he could see large black masses on the sand. They were smooth, shining black--like india-rubber--and had forms remarkably simple and lumpish for animated creatures; he observed their blunt, round snouts or whale-like heade and their simple, stiff-looking flippers. The largest was approximately fifteen feet long, whereas one or two were only five feet long and without teeth.[3]

On his way back to the lighthouse where he was staying, Thoreau encountered a large, plump, shaggy fox, almost like a yellow dog, with a white tip to his tail; he looked as though he had fared well on the Cape, as he apparently lived on whatever the sea had to offer, as well as on birds and their eggs. He canter-

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 113.

[2] Ibid., pp. 131-132.

[3] Ibid., pp. 142-143.

ed away into the shrub oake and bayberry buehes, hardly high enough to conceal him, and Thoreau eaw him no more.[1]

In a bank above some clay Thoreau counted two hundred holes of bank ewallows within a epace eix rods long and at least one thousand old birde within three timee that distance twittering over the surf. Never before had he associated them in his thoughts with the beach. On the clay beneath were also many birds which had tumbled out and died. There were many crow blackbirds hopping about in dry fields and upland plovere breeding close to the lighthouee, whoee keeper once cut off one's wing while he wae mowing, ae ehe sat on her egge. This, Thoreau added, was a favorite resort for gunners in search of the golden plover.[2]

Nearby he aleo eaw the tender young of a piping plover, like chickens just hatched, running in troops with faint peepe along the edge of the waves.[3] The dreary peep of a piping plover (Charadrius melodue) that practically haunted the beach wae Thoreau's idea of that which most perfectly revived the impressicn made by the beach.[4]

A short distance from Provincetown on the desert, Thoreau saw a vaet number of epiders that he eaid could be found anywhere at any seaeon. He was surpriaed, however, to see epider-holes in that flowing eand with an edge ae firm ae that of a etoned well. Later in the year, in practically the same place, he witneesed

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[1] Cape Cod, op. cit., pp. 148-149.
[2] Ibid., p. 164.
[3] Ibid., pp. 184-185.
[4] Ibid., p. 71.

the sand having bsen scored heavily with the tracks of large and small turtles, leading to and from the swamps. Many toads were also seen in areas where nothing was present but sand and beach-grass. In Truro, Thoreau was amazed at the number of large, light-colored toads everywhere hopping over dry and sandy fields, their color corresponding to that of sand. Snakes were also common on the pure sand beaches, and never before had he been so much troubled by mosquitoes as in such localities as this.[1]

Maine

It had long bsen Thoreau's desire to go to Maine to see what Nature had to offer; more specifically, he wanted to penstrate the forest to Mount Ktaadn,[2] the second highest mountain in Nsw England.[3] So with this in mind, he left Concord on August 31, 1846, by way of railroad and steamboat. Thus began his first experiences in the uncivilized wilds.

As planned, he met a cousin in Bangor, Maine. From there they departed for the dam on the West Branch of the Penobscot River, one hundred miles by river above Bangor and five miles beyond the last log hut. The lumbering operations had ceased for the season in one camp, and so the services of a guide and a boating crew were easily obtained. Soon all members of the party were

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1 Cape Cod, op. cit., p. 202.

2 The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 28.

3 Ibid., p. 3.

in their boat and headed for the lakes of the Penobscot, thirty miles away, to begin ascending Ktaadn. Thoreau wrote that Ktaadn could be approached more directly and easily on horseback and on foot from the northeast side, by following the Aroostook road and the Wassataquoik River; in that case, however, Thoreau would have been deprived of seeing less of the wilderness, none of the glorious river and lake scenery, and the experience associated with the life of a boatman.[1]

Landscape. Near the town of Milford, they rode along on the east side of the Penobscot, having more or less a constant view of the river and Indian islands in it; for the Indians had retained all the islands as far up as Nicketow, at the mouth of the East Branch. Thoreau noted that the countryside was generally well-timbered and comprised of better soil than were the neighboring shores. He enjoyed the shallow and rocky river that frequently was interrupted by rapids, rippling and gleaming in the sun. Later they traveled the Houlton road, over which troops were once marched, and the only road in that part of Maine; it was as straight and well made and in as good repair as almost any road anywhere. They crossed the Sunhaze, Olemmon, Passadumkeag, and other streams which Thoreau declared made a greater show on a map than on a road.[2]

Soon they were in the smooth water of Quakish Lake, where everyone took his turn rowing and paddling across. Thoreau de-

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 28.

[2] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

scribed it as a small, irregular, but handsome lake, shut in on all sides by the forest, and showing few traces of man. Joe Merry Mountain appeared in the northwest, as if it were especially looking down on the lake. At this point Thoreau had his first but partial view of Ktaadn, its summit veiled in the clouds, like a dark isthmus in that quarter, connecting the heavens with the earth. After two miles of smooth rowing across the lake, they once more reached the mighty Penobscot, which was a continuous rapid for one mile, requiring all the strength and skill of the boatmen to pole it up.[1]

Since they encountered a full moon and a warm and pleasant evening, they decided to row five miles by moonlight to the head of North Twin Lake, just in case the wind should rise the following day. After one mile on the river, or what the boatmen called the thoroughfare, they entered the lake just after sundown and steered across for four miles. As far as Thoreau was concerned, this was a noble sheet of water where one could get an impression which only this new country and lake of the woods could possibly create. There was smoke of neither a log hut nor a camp to greet them; still less was any lover of nature or musing traveler watching from the distant hills. In fact, nothing welcomed them except the fine fantastic sprays of free and happy evergreen trees, waving one above another among what Thoreau said was their ancient home. At first, he noticed the red clouds dangling over the western shore as gorgeously as if over a city, and the lake

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

lay open to the light with even what appeared to be partially civilized. Farther ahead Thoreau distinguished the inlet to South Twin Lake, said to be the larger, whose shore was misty and blue. It was worthwhile for him to be able to look through the narrow opening across the entire expanse of concealed lake to its own yet more dim and distant shore. The shores rose gently to ranges of low hills covered with forests; and although Thoreau was soon to learn the most valuable white-pine timber had been removed, he was sure most voyagers would never have suspected this. One lasting impression made upon him was as if this party were upon a high table-land between the States and Canada. This was no bold, mountainous shore as he had expected, but only isolated hills and mountains rising here and there from the plateau. He defined this sector as a country with an archipelago of lakes--the lake country of New England.[1]

Ambejijis impressed Thoreau as the most beautiful lake they had seen. According to reliable sources, it also was one of the deepest. From its surface he had a grand view of the mountains called Joe Merry, Double Top, and also Ktaadn. From such a great distance the summit of Ktaadn had a flat, table-like appearance, almost like a short highway.[2]

Early the following morning they started for the summit, which one guide judged to be nearly four miles away. Thoreau's estimation of fourteen miles proved more nearly correct. Being

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 38-40.

[2] Ibid., p. 49.

the more experienced mountain climber, Thoreau took the lead. Quickly scanning the woody side of the mountain, he decided to steer directly for the base of the highest peak, a course he was sure would lead them parallel to a dark seam in the forest, which marked a bed of torrent and over a slight spur extending southward from the main mountain, from whose summit they would have an opportunity to get an outlook over the country and climb directly up the peak that would then be close at hand. Seen from a bare ridge of open land, Ktaadn presented a much different aspect from any other mountain Thoreau had ever seen, mainly because of a greater proportion of naked rock rising abruptly from the forest. Glancing upward at the blue barrier, Thoreau compared it favorably with some fragment of a wall which anciently bounded the earth in that direction. He set his compass for a northeast course, the bearing of the southern base of the highest peak, and a short time later they were all buried in the woods.[1]

Thus they proceeded for seven or eight miles until frequent pauses became necessary to refresh the weary ones. Eventually they crossed a considerable stream they thought to be Murch Brook. All this time they had never left the woods, and so they had not once seen the summit; still rising gradually, the boatmen began to fear they were leaving the mountain on one side of them, for they had little faith in the compass. One man climbed a tree, from the top of which he could see the peak; ranging his arm toward the summit, he learned from the men below that Thoreau's

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 61-63.

compass pointed in the same direction. A little later the entire party stopped beside a mountain stream, refreshed themselves, and retired for the night.[1]

As they continued their journey early the next morning, Thoreau was not long in outdistancing his companione, who were soon lost to his sight behind the ridge in the rear. A mile or more he climbed alone over huge rocks that were loosely poised, still edging toward the clouds; although the day was clear elsewhere, the summit was concealed by mist. It seemed to Thoreau that the mountain was a vast aggregation of loose rocks, ae if some time they had fallen from the sky like rain and lay as they fell on the sides, nowhere fairly at rest, but leaning on each other, all rocking etones, with cavities between but scarcely any soil or emoother shelf. He described them as being much like raw materials of a planet dropped from an unseen quarry of nature that would soon work up or down into the emiling and verdant plaine and valleys of the earth.

At length he entered within the ekirts of a cloud which seemed forever drifting over the summit and yet would never be gone; however, it was generated out of the pure air as fast as it flowed away. A quarter of a mile later he reached the summit of the ridge, which, according to those who had seen it in clearer weather, was approximately five miles long and contained one thousand acres of table-land. Now deep in hostile clouds, all objects were obscured and the wind blew out a yard of clear sun-

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

light where Thorsau stood; then gray, dawning light was all it could accomplish, the cloud-line constantly rising and falling with the wind's intensity. Sometimss it seemed to Thoreau as if the summit would be cleared in a few moments and smile in sunshine, but what was gained on one side was lost on another. He thought it comparable to sitting in a chimney and waiting for the smoke to blow away. In short, it was a cloud-factory.[1]

The name Ktaadn, Thoreau explained, meant highest land and was first ascended by white men in 1804; visited by Profsssor J. W. Bailey of West Point in 1836; Dr. Charles T. Jackson, State Geologist, in 1837; two young men from Boston in 1845. All gave accounts of their expeditions. Then, after Thoreau's expedition, two or three other parties made their excursions and related their activities. Besidss these, very few--even among backwoodsmen and hunters--had ever climbed it; and Thoreau declared it would be a long time before ths tide of fashionable travel set that way.[2]

In his capacity as geological surveyor of Maine, Jackson had accurately measured Ktaadn and found the altitude to be 5300 feet, or a little more than one mile above sea level. From this the geologist concluded it was obviously the highest point in the State of Maine; furthermore, he concluded, it was the most abrupt granite mountain in New England.[3]

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1 The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 69-70.
2 Ibid., p. 4.
3 Ibid., p. 72.

Thoreau remained on the summit a while longer; everything around him, including the remarkable semicircular precipice or basin on the eastern side, was all concealed by mist. Since he had led the entire party up Ktaadn, and not knowing whether he would have to make his descent to the river and possibly to the settled portion of the state alone, and by some other route, he wished to have the complete outfit with him. At length fearing his companions would be anxious to reach the river before night, and knowing the clouds might rest on the mountain for daye, he was compelled to descend. Occasionally, as he proceeded very cautiously, he could see the country eastward: boundless forests, lakes, and streams gleaming in the sun, some of them emptying into East Branch. Also he could see new mountains in that direction. Now and then some small bird flitted away before him, unable to command its course, like a fragment of the gray rock blown off by the wind. He finally reached his companions and they all descended together.[1]

About four o'clock in the afternoon they commenced their return voyage, which required little if any policy. In shooting the rapids, the boatmen used large, broad paddles instead of poles to guide the boat. Though they guided swiftly and often smoothly where it cost no slight effort to get up, the present voyage was attended to with far more danger. For, Thoreau said, if they had struck fairly one of the thousand rocks by which they were surrounded, the boat would have been swamped in an instant. Under

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 72.

such circumstances, boatmen commonly found no difficulty keeping afloat at first, for the current kept them and the cargo up for a long way down stream; if they could swim, they had only to work their way gradually to shore. The greatest danger lay in being caught in an eddy behind larger rocks, where the water rushed up stream faster than elsewhere, and being carried round and round under the surface until they were drowned.[1]

After such a voyage, Thoreau explained, the troubled and angry waters, which once had seemed terrible and not to be trifled with, appeared tamed and subdued; they had been worried in their channels, pricked and whipped into submission with spike-pole and paddle, gone through and through with impunity, and all their spirit and danger taken out of them; and the most swollen and impetuous rivers seemed but playthings afterwards. It was here that Thoreau began to understand a boatman's familiarity with, and contempt for, the rapids.[2]

To conclude his adventurous journey, Thoreau wrote:

> We have advanced by leaps to the Pacific, and left many a lesser Oregon and California unexplored behind us. Though the railroad and the telegraph have been established on the shores of Maine, the Indian still looks out from her interior mountains over all these to the sea. There stands the city of Bangor, fifty miles up the Penobscot, at the head of navigation for vessels of the largest class, the principal lumber depot on this continent, with a population of 12,000, like a star on the edge of night, still hewing at the forests of which it is built, already overflowing with the luxuries and refinement of Europe, and sending its vessels to Spain,

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 81.

[2] Ibid., p. 85.

> to England, and to the West Indies for ite groceriee--and yet only a few axemen have gone up river, into the howling wilderness which feeds it.[1]

Vegetation. Thoreau emphasized how the mountainous region of Maine stretched northeasterly one hundred sixty milee from near the White Mountains to the head of the Aroostook River, and that it was about sixty miles wide. Since he was deeiroue of penetrating the wild or unsettled region which wae far more exteneive, he realized only a few hours traveling would lead to the verge of the primitive forest; thie, he thought, would offer far more interesting activitiee than could be encountered a thousand miles westward.[2]

Within only a dozen miles of Bangor he paesed through the villages of Stillwater and Oldtown, built near the falls of the Penobecot River which furnished the chief power by which the Maine woode were converted into lumber. The mills had been conetructed directly over and across the river. Thoreau contemplated that here the once green tree, now long since white ae a driven log, became mere lumber. Indeed, it eeemed as if the Maine forest were an intricate puzzle ae it was relentlessly sifted from Mount Ktaadn and the Chesuncook River, until it came out boards, clapboards, lathe, and ehingles, still, perhaps, to be slit and slit again, until men obtained the size that would be most suitable. Thoreau imagined how once the white pine trees proudly graced the shores of the Chesuncook, their branchee moan-

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 91.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

ing with the four winds and every individual needle trembling in the sunlight; and now they lay, probably already sold to the New England Friction Match Company. In 1837 he had read about two hundred fifty sawmills on the Penobscot and its tributaries above Bangor, the greater portion of which was in this immediate neighborhood, where two hundred million feet of boards had been sawed annually. Added to this had been the lumber of the Kennebec, Androscoggin, Saco, Passamaqueddy, and other streams. He decided it was small wonder, then, that vessels were surrounded a week at a time by floating lumber from the Maine woods. To him, the mission of men there seemed to be comparable to that of so many other demons, to drive the forest all out of the country, from every solitary beaver swamp and mountain-side, as soon as possible.[1]

Finally Thoreau left the river road a while to make better time; going by way of Enfield, where he stopped for the night, he noticed quite an orchard of healthy and well-grown apple trees in the process of bearing. However, this natural fruit was almost entirely worthless for want of a grafter. It would have been a good speculation, he mused, as well as a favor to the settlers, for a Massachusetts boy to go there in the spring with a trunk full of choice scions and grafting apparatus.[2]

Continuing his journey early the following morning with a cousin who had joined him, he found the beauty of the road re-

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 4-6.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

markable. Many of the various evergreens were a rarity with them. Thoreau delighted in observing closely the delicate and beautiful specimens of the arbor-vitae and ball-spruce trees, and the fir balsam, which varied from a few inches to many feet in height. In some places the sides of the road were lined like a long front yard, springing up from smooth grass plots which uninterruptedly bordered it and made fertile by its wash. He believed no front-yard plot anywhere could produce more perfect specimens. In contrast, he described their nearness to the grim, untrodden wilderness, whose tangled labyrinth of living, fallen, and decaying trees only the deer, the moose, the bear, and the wolf could easily penetrate.[1]

Once the two men crossed a fence into a new field planted with potatoes, where logs still burned between the hills. Pulling up vines, they found good-sized potatoes, growing like weeds, intermixed with turnips. Thoreau explained that the farmer's mode of clearing and planting was to fell trees and immediately burn what would burn and then cut them into suitable lengths, roll into heaps, and burn again. Then with a hoe he planted potatoes where they could come through the ground between stumps and charred logs; for a first crop, he continued, ashes apparently sufficed for manure, and no hoeing became necessary the first year. In the fall, the burning process was followed again, until the land was cleared, and soon the soil was ready for grain to be

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

planted.[1]

Another point in their journey found them mounting packs and preparing for a tramp up the West Branch of the Penobscot River. They began by following an obscure trail up the northern bank of the river, which eventually became the only highway. Only a half dozen log huts confined to the banks were seen for thirty miles; on each side and beyond was a wholly uninhabited wilderness stretching all the way to Canada. Thoreau wrote that neither horse nor cow, nor vehicle of any kind, had ever passed over this ground, the cattle and bulky articles used by loggers having been gathered in winter on ice and taken down again before it broke up. The evergreen woods, decidedly sweet and bracing, contained for Thoreau a fragrance he called a diet-drink. Continuing buoyantly, he felt he could no longer accuse institutions and society, but rather he would have to face the true source of all evil.[2]

Ten miles farther found their course coming to an abrupt end at the mouth of the East Branch of the Penobscot, and so they crossed and followed the southern bank. Here it was a very large and rapid stream and much deeper than it appeared. With some difficulty they discovered the trail again and continued on the south side of the West Branch, or main river. Passing by some rapids called Rock-Ebeeme, whose roar they had heard through the woods, the came to the thickest part of the forest where still stood the camps of loggers which apparently had been occupied the

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 15.

[2] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

prsvious winter. Not far away, men wsre obtained to act as guides and boat crew to take them to the limit of their journey, Mount Ktaadn.[1]

Thoreau was ever aware of ths fact that the primitive wood was always and everywhere damp and mossy, so that he traveled constantly with the impression he was in a swamp; and only when remarks were made that this or that tract (judging from the quality of timber on it) would make a profitable clearing, was he reminded that if the sun were let in, it would at once become a dry field, like few he had seen. Although he was well prepared, for the most part he traveled with wet feet. Since the ground was this wet and spongy in the driest part of the dry season, he wondered what it must be like in spring.

In this particular section the woods abounded in beech, some very large specimens of yellow-birch, spruce, cedar, fir, and hemlock. Only stumps of white pine could be seen, some of great size, having been culled out, being the only tree much sought. In addition, only a little spruce and hemlock were loggsd here. Or, as Thoreau wrote, it was chiefly the white pine that ever tempted anyone but hunters to precede him and his companions on this route.[2]

One night Thoreau was entertained by the sound of rain drops on cedar splints which covered his protective roof; the nsxt morning he awoks with a drop or two in his eyes. A storm had set

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 20.

[2] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

in, and eo the entire party waited for fair weather. When the storm abated, Thoreau strolled up and down the bank and gathered the harebell and cedar berries. Though potatoes had been one of his main crops, he observed here that there had been a eevere potato rot, enabling the farmer to gather only one-half or two-thirds of his crop. Other chief crops Thoreau had alwaye been fortunate in raising were oats, graes, corn, melone, carrote, turnips, squashee, sweet corn, beans, and tomatoes; these, however, could not poseibly be ripened in the damp, mossy wilderness of Maine.[1]

At various intervals, as they continued their journey by boat, were small meadows of a few acres on the sides of Katepskonegan Lake, waving with uncut grass, that greatly attracted the attention of the boatmen, who regretted they were not nearer to their own clearings and calculating how many etacke they might cut. Two or three of these men sometimes spent the entire eummer by themselves, cutting grase to sell to loggers in winter, eince it would bring a much higher price on the spot than any market in the etate would pay.[2]

Thoreau wrote that the forest on Ktaadn was chiefly yellow-beach, spruce, fir, mountain-ash, and moose-wood. He believed that this was about the woret kind of traveling. In abundance were the bunch-berries and moose-berriee. Blueberries were distributed along the whole route; in one place bushes drooping with

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

the weight of fruit were still as fresh as ever. Thoreau commented how such patches afforded a grateful repast and served to bait the tired party forward. When anyone lagged behind, the cry "blueberries" was the most effective device to urge him onward.[1]

At one point in his ascent of Ktaadn, Thoreau observed that he was hemmed in by walls of rock, which were at first covered with low trees, then with impenetrable thickets of scraggy birches and spruce trees, and with moss, but at last bare of all vegetation but lichens, all of which was continually draped in the clouds. Following the course of the torrent, Thoreau used the roots of firs and birches to pull himself up by the side of the perpendicular falls of some twenty or thirty feet; then, walking a short distance in the thin stream, ascending by huge steps, he soon cleared the trees and paused to look back over the country. Leaving this, he began to work his way up the highest peak, at first scrambling on all fours over the tops of ancient black spruce trees (Abies nigra), which he stated were as old as the flood. He judged them to be from two to ten or twelve feet in height; their tops were flat and spreading, their foliage blue and nipped by the cold, as if for centuries they had ceased growing upward against the bleak sky. Thoreau walked some distance erect upon the tops of trees that had long since been overgrown with moss and mountain cranberries. To him, it seemed that in due course of time they had filled the intervals between huge

[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

rocks, and the cold wind had uniformly leveled them. Here, he agreed, the principal vegetation found it hard to exist. He thought a belt of this kind extended around a good portion of the mountain, though, perhaps, nowhere so remarkable as here. Once, slumping through, he looked down ten feet into a dark and cavernous region and saw the stem of a spruce, on whose top he stood, as if on a mass of coarse basket-work, fully nine inches in diameter at the ground. For one-eighth of a mile, then, he seemed to be making his way over some sort of garden, at the risk of treading on some of the plants and not seeing any path. With no hesitation, he concluded that this certainly was the most treacherous and porous country he had ever traveled.[1]

The most striking aspect of the Maine wilderness was the continuousness of the forest, with fewer open intervals than he had ever suspected. Excluding the few burnt lands, the narrow intervals on the rivers, the bare tops of the high mountains, and the lakes and streams, the forest was totally uninterrupted. It was even more harsh and unruly than he had imagined, a wet and complicated wilderness, in the spring everywhere wet and miry. But for the pleasant views of the woods from hills and the lake prospects, which were mild and civilized to a certain degree, Thoreau's only conclusion of what he saw was that Maine was universally savage and stern. Also, he believed these were not at all like the artificial forests of an English king; instead, here

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

prevailed no other forest laws but those of nature.[1]

Wildlife. In his journey to Mount Ktaadn in 1846, Thoreau was not so much interestsd in wildlife as he was in the vast expanss of wildsrnsss, and so he did not greatly smphasize it. He fslt fortunats, however, in making thie sxcursion in late summer, for myriads of black flies, mosquitoes, and midgss would havs made travsling in the woods almost impossibls; now thsir reign was nearly over.[2]

Shortly aftsr beginning his journey propsr, he paused a moment to sse a fieh hawk dive for a fish, down straight as an arrow from a grsat height, missing his prey.[3] Then, walking up to ths nearest houss to ssek the services of an Indian guide, hs was suddenly confrontsd by a dozen wolfish-looking dogs, which appsarsd to him as being linsal descendants from ancisnt Indian dogs.[4] Hs notsd with special intersst how chickens wers protected by such dogs. As ons man told him, the oldest dog started this practice; thsn she taught the pups until they all learned it was dsfinitely not good to have any kind of bird on the premises. This was evidsncsd by ths fact that a hovsring hawk was not allowed to alight, but barked off by dogs circling undsrneath; a pigson on a dead limb or stump was instantly reminded to find peace elsswhsre. And so this was the main businsss of the day for the dogs and they wsre kspt constantly coming and going. One would rush out of a

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 88-89.
[2] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[3] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[4] Ibid., p. 10.

house on the least alarm given by another.[1]

Thoreau described how one might daily witness the tyranny of the bald eagle over the fish hawk. Across Shad Lake--the scene of such an unpleasant activity--he observed a bald eagle's nest that was plainly visible more than a mile off; on a pine high above the surrounding forest, it was frequented from year to year by the same pair, and held sacred by a man named Fowler, who lived in that vicinity. Continuing on a small, shallow, sandy stream, known as Millinocket River, he saw on the banks what he thought were nests of either lamprey-eels or suckers; likewise, the banks were lined with musquash cabins, free from rapids excepting the outlet from the lake. Flattened places in the grass on either side indicated where moose had bedded the night before. Thoreau later learned these same meadows were literally frequented by thousands of moose.[2]

Forenoon on serene and placid Katepskonegan Lake afforded an atmosphere similar to that of a summer day he had so often enjoyed in Massachusetts. Occasionally the travelers were startled by the scream of a bald eagle, sailing over the stream in front of their boat, or by the sound of fish hawks. On a small island covered with cut-grass, on which they landed to consult about their further course, they noticed fresh moose tracks--large, roundish holes in soft, wet ground--displaying the enormous size and weight of the animal that made them. Since moose were very fond of

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 27.
[2] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

water, Thoreau wrote, they frequently visited all these island meadows, swimming as easily from island to island as if they were making their way through thickets on land.[1]

One member of the party, McCauslin, who was familiar with the important streams of Maine, said trout were plentiful in Aboljacknagesic Lake; so the men baited their hooks with pork (later with trout they caught) and cast their lines into the mouth of the clear, swift, shallow stream coming in from Mount Ktaadn. Instantly a shoal of large and small white chivin (Leuciscus pulchellus) seized the bait and one after another landed among the bushes. These Thoreau called the true trout. Speckled trout and silvery roaches likewise swallowed their bait as fast as it could be thrown in. Thoreau enthusiastically declared these were the finest specimens he had ever seen, the largest one weighing about three pounds. While still alive, before their tints faded, they glistened like fairest flowers, or, as Thoreau described them, the products of primitive rivers. He called them bright fluviatile flowers, seen only by Indians and made beautiful to swim in such waters.[2]

Ascending Ktaadn, they met with traces of bears and moose; those of rabbits were everywhere visible. Emphasizing the tracks of moose, which were more or less recent, Thoreau noticed they covered every square rod on the sides of the mountain, since these animals were probably more numerous there now than ever before,

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., p. 56.

[2] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

having been driven into the wilderness, from all sides, by the settlements. Thoreau compared the track of a full-grown moose to that of a cow, or larger, and of the young, like that of a calf. Sometimes the mountain climbers found themselves traveling in faint paths which the moose had made, like cow-paths in the woods, only far more indistinct; they were more like openings than trodden paths, affording imperfect vistas through the dense underwood. Everywhere twigs had been browsed by them, clipped as smoothly as if by a knife; the bark of trees had been stripped to a height of eight or nine feet, in long, narrow strips an inch wide, still showing distinct marks of their teeth. The party fully expected to meet a herd of them any moment, and so their marksman held his gun in readiness. They did not go out of their way to look for them, and though numerous, moose were so wary that an unskilled hunter might range the forest a long time before he could get sight of one. Sometimes they were dangerous to encounter; they would not turn out for a hunter, but would furiously rush upon him and trample him to death, unless the hunter were lucky enough to avoid them by dodging around a tree. The largest were usually about as large as a horse, Thoreau continued, and frequently weighed one thousand pounds; they could step over a five-foot gate in an ordinary walk and were exceedingly awkward-looking animals, with long legs and short bodies, creating ludicrous figures when in full run, but, nevertheless, making great headway. It seemed a mystery to Thoreau and his companions how they could thread the woods, requiring all their suppleness

to accomplish, by dropping their long, branching horns (usually spread at five or six feet) on their backs and making their way easily by the weight of their bodies. Thoreau was interested to learn their flesh, which was more like beef than venison, was common in the Bangor market.[1]

Thus Thoreau found Maine diversified with innumerable lakes and rapid streams, inhabited by trout, salmon, shad, pickerel, and other fishes; the forest resounding at different intervals with the scream of the fish hawk, the eagle, and other numerous wonders of nature along solitary streams; at night, with hooting of owls and howling of wolves; in summer, swarming with myriads of black flies and mosquitoes, more formidable than wolves to the white man. Such was the home of the moose, the bear, the caribou, the wolf, the beaver, and many others.[2]

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study has been to investigate as specifically as possible how Henry David Thoreau became classified as one of the world's outstanding Nature essayists. Since he did live close to the many wonders of Nature, he was enabled to pass on to future generations a type of style and interest that has long since been of considerable significance. Likewise, many of

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[1] The Maine Woods, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

the topics about which he wrote afforded a great deal of speculation.

Thoreau's early interest in this direction was enhanced by the members of his family, especially his mother and his brother John. He was further influenced throughout his lifetime by such men as the following: Agassiz, Emerson, Wordsworth, the Bartrams, Audubon, Whitman, Channing, Hawthorne, DeCandolle, Torrey, Darwin, and Gray. Then, too, had it not been for the surrounding possibilities presented by his own native village of Concord, he might never have developed such an avid desire to understand better the fascinating world in which he lived.

Thoreau has been called the father of present-day nature writers because he utilized a unique emphasis to set the pattern followed by many of his successors. Instead of viewing the world as an objective reality, as it is with children, Thoreau first made nature articulate. Also, he felt that in pioneering an entirely different kind of description, he would be writing according to aesthetic appreciation.

As an essayist, Thoreau's influence upon the attitude, content, and spirit toward the nature of the essays succeeding him is more important than his influence upon their form. This was especially shown in Walden, which actually is a book rather than a series of essays. However, his contribution to the specific form of the natural history essay is an important portion of his work. Thoreau was the first American writer to put natural history observations into the form of separate essays that were viewed as possible literary considerations. This was best exemplified by

"Natural History of Massachusetts," based on four scientific books and many passages from his journal. Another method he frequently used was to limit the activities to a unit of time--a day, a wsek, a season, or year--and thus record the book in narrative form. Obviously ths Week is an example of this method.

Thoreau also can be ranked as a journalist. Concerning total spacs, the Journal exceeds the material he took to put in mors definite form. Moreover, it should be rsmembered that hs considered the Journal as a store house for literary aspirations, and thsrefore was always aware of its intended uss. On ths other hand, Thoreau has been called a naturalist who lacked scientific knowledge; and although a keen observer, he had no logical system of organizing disorganized facts. Howsver, hs showsd great interest in science even before the time he sent marins specimens to Agassiz at the Swiss-born scientist's request. The three essays--"Natural History of Massachusetts," "A Winter Walk," and "A Walk to Wachusett"--ars clearly natural history and may have scientific content. Although indifferent to many technical phases of science, he did make application of the scientific method, for he isolated his material first and then tested it.

The secret of Thoreau's originality lay in his fellowship with various forms of wildlife. His prose has been characterized by an abundance of analogies and similes, and it was once said that Thoreau wrote with the most perfect style ever used by an American and that his thought and spesch were characteristically American; also, that no one had ever surpassed him in the use of

minute description, his patience in observation, and his love of nature and solitude, all of which were added to his individuality of style. Thoreau's appreciation of nature was of the highest quality, and he possessed a pleasing mechanical skill in shaping bits of verse, sentences, and paragraphs. In contrast, Emerson criticized him by saying his main fault was his wasted and unpolished expressions, even though there was a strong indication of truth in the strength and length of what he had to say. As for Thoreau's journal, Emerson was very much aware of the energy of Thoreau's physical powers.

Burroughs thought Thoreau was not a great philosopher, poet, or naturalist, but that he was a most unique character and nature writer. In short, he thought Thoreau gave to the world some of its freshest and most beautiful literature. Hawthorne, with whom Thoreau had frequently visited nature and upon whom Thoreau had exerted a certain amount of influence, thought Thoreau was very stimulating. This influence is definitely brought out in Hawthorne's writings.

Lowell also had his opinions. He thought Thoreau was so conceited that he completely overlooked any eccentricities in his own character; this opinion was expressed because Thoreau did not glorify in becoming successful, and that performing a good deed was only superstitious. Furthermore, generalization was a rarity with him. He had little or no imagination, and his critical power was limited and inadequate. However, his appreciation was of the highest quality; and he had a pleasing mechanical

skill in the shaping of sentences, paragraphs, and short bits of verse for the expression of image, sentiment, or thought. Still another writer, Crawford, states that there can be no question about the high level of Thoreau's nature prose, for it was forceful, delicate, simple, eloquent, colloquial, and austere.

Although Thoreau has been rather severely criticized for his love of mannerisms and paradox, he wrote for the pleasure it gave him. He possessed a sincere belief about the importance of arrangement and revision of material. He was not one to conform to the formalities of the grammarians, and his instinct for correct writing served to guide him to the proper fundamentals. His advice was that one should write while still inspired by an idea. Thoreau's mind was obviously quite active during his walks, for it has been said that the length of his walk made the length of his writing.

Thoreau frankly admitted he was an exaggerator, this being partially due to the fact that he loved the literature of the East. He has gone beyond omission and exaggerated directly; for regardless of whatever he tried to do, he tried to use fair prose, with sentences solidly built. Also, he attempted a more strictly prosaic level, and he had a great amount of ability in being able to write with unlimited enthusiasm. Moreover, the emphasis he placed upon inspiration was not an indication of his lack of appreciation for the technical requirements of writing. Thoreau had as his ultimate goal that which had never really dominated any nature writing before his--an account controlled by the sense.

It has often been said that Thoreau was an ascetic; this is not true for he had many companions. But he seems to have prized a lofty method of thinking, mainly so that few could share it with him. This individuality infects his thought and style. The book Walden secured Thoreau's place in the literature of this country. Through established faith in Nature's wisdom, his own ideals, and in his pattern of living, Thoreau became simply and sufficiently himself--an individual.

At his peak, Thoreau traveled widely and made extensive notes of his observations of landscape, vegetation, and wildlife. Later, thsn, he set them down in narrative form and thsy were published. His chief sources of Nature were many--namsly, Walden Pond, Canada, the Concord and Msrrimack rivers, Cape Cod, and Maine. Of these, Walden, which he even frequented as a boy, afforded him the most enjoyment.

To supplement his own observations of nature, Thoreau browsed through all natural histories and herbals he could possibly find: Topsell's History of Four-Footed Beasts; Gerard's Herbal; Evelyn's Sylvia; Josselyn's New England's Rarities; and White's Natural History of Selborne. In addition, he used modern scientific books and government reports on animals, birds, rsptiles, fishes, insects, and plants which referred to the particular region he planned to observe and study.

While at Walden, Thoreau worked on the only books published before his death: A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; and Walden: or Life in the Woods. Walden is critically regarded

as one of the greatest contributions to literature.

Of Canada, which appealed less to him than did his other sources, he emphasized the City of Montreal, the waterfalls, and the scenery along the St. Lawrence River.

As a resident of Concord, Thoreau had often peered into the Concord River and contemplated the mysteries that lay beyond. Plans formed in his mind until finally he set out with his brother John. There is no doubt that his trip up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers furnished him with an abundance of material to further his readers' interest in the wonders of nature.

Cape Cod was the result of three different journeys that Thoreau made to get a better view of the ocean and to learn more about it. Altogether he spent about three weeks on the Cape, during which time he crossed it six times. This book many readers have the most human, for his collected materials were fused into one unified, enriched narrative.

Thoreau's desire to penetrate the wilderness to Mount Ktaadn in Maine was finally realized after a most arduous excursion. Certain The Maine Woods has much to offer in the way of new and thrilling experiences which the Concord naturalist constantly encountered.

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THOREAU AS A NATURE ESSAYIST

by

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The purpose of this study has been to investigate as specifically as possible how Henry David Thoreau became one of the world's outstanding Nature essayists. Living close to Nature practically all his life, he was enabled to provide future generations with a style, an interest, and various topics that have long since been of considerable significance. Likewise, they have afforded a great deal of speculation.

For centuries man has endeavored to understand better the phenomena of Nature. Thoreau, of course, was only one of many who observed, studied, recorded, and later put into writing the vast number of fascinating ideas and activities. Had it not been for his family--especially his mother and brother John--and such men as Agassiz, Emerson, Wordsworth, Audubon, the Bartrams, Whitman, Channing, Hawthorne, DeCandolle, Torrey, Darwin, and Gray, he might never have had the desire to understand better the fascinating world in which he lived. Equally important were the surrounding possibilities presented by his own beloved village of Concord.

In actually making nature mean something, Thoreau utilized a unique emphasis that resulted in his being classified as the father of present-day nature writers. He sincerely believed that a much different kind of description would appeal more to aesthetic appreciation. He had as his ultimate goal that which had never dominated any previous nature writing--an account controlled by the senses. As an essayist, however, Thoreau exerted more influence upon the attitude, content, and spirit of succeed-

ing essays than he did upon their form. This was well shown in Walden, which is a book rather than a series of essays. One should remember that Thoreau's contribution to the specific form of the natural history essay is an important portion of his work. Thoreau, who was the first American writer to use natural history observations as separate essays for possible literary considerations, best exemplified this with "Natural History of Massachusetts," based on four scientific books and many passages from his journal. The Week, an example of another method he used, was to record the book in narrative form after limiting the activities to a unit of time--a day, a week, a season, or a year.

Thoreau also has been classified as a journalist. He was constantly aware that his ultimate use for the Journal would be to realize certain literary aspirations; and so far as total space is concerned, the Journal exceeds the material he took to put in more definite form. On the other hand, Thoreau was very studious of natural facts, although he was indifferent to technical and textual science. Even before sending specimens to Agassiz, he had shown much interest in science. In addition to "Natural History of Massachusetts," two of his other essays are natural history and include scientific content: "A Winter Walk" and "A Walk to Wachusett." It has been indicated that he did apply the scientific method, for he first isolated his material and then tested it.

For one thing, Thoreau's originality lay in his fellowship with different forms of wildlife. In other words, Thoreau made

nature more articulate by frequently referring to animals as "fellow-creatures." Also, many similes and analogies have characterized his prose. It was once said that Thoreau wrote with the most perfect style ever used by an American, and that his thought and speech were characteristically American; likewise, that no one had ever excelled him in the use of detailed description, his patience in observation, and his love of nature and solitude, all of which were included in his individuality of style. In expressing his sincere appreciation of nature, Thoreau often revised, but he did possess a pleasing mechanical skill in shaping verses, sentences, and paragraphs. In contrast, Emerson once criticized Thoreau by stating his chief fault lay in his wasted and unpolished expressions, although there was a strong indication of truth in the strength and length of what he had to say. Moreover, Emerson was well aware of Thoreau's physical powers in his journal.

Burroughs thought Thoreau was not so much a great philosopher, poet, or naturalist as he was a unique character and nature writer. He explained that he thought Thoreau contributed some of the world's freshest and most beautiful literature, and that he gave the world a life more than a philosophy. Hawthorne, with whom Thoreau had frequently visited and studied nature, thought Thoreau was very stimulating. Although Hawthorne did not develop into a proficient natural history essayist, the intimacy and the display of Thoreau's love for the great out-of-doors apparently deepened Hawthorne's already sympathetic interest in nature and increased

the number of notebook entries which add an element of detailed observation to the descriptive touch that predominates in Hawthorne.

Because Thoreau did not glorify in becoming successful and because he thought performing a good deed was superstitious, Lowell believed Thoreau was so conceited that he overlooked any peculiarities in his own character. Furthermore, Lowell wrote that generalization was a rarity with him, he had little or no imagination, and his critical power was limited and inadequate. With regard to more favorable aspects, Lowell said that Thoreau's appreciation was of the highest quality. Still another writer, Crawford, stated that there could hardly be any doubt about Thoreau's nature prose, because it was forceful, delicate, simple, eloquent, colloquial, and austere.

Thoreau has been severely criticized for his love of mannerisms and paradoxes, but he wrote for the pleasure it gave him. His advice was that one should write while still inspired by an idea. Thoreau's mind was obviously very active during his walks, for the length of his walk made the length of his writing. The emphasis he placed upon inspiration was not an indication of his lack of appreciation for the technical requirements of writing, and he was not long in realizing that a contributing factor toward simplicity and plainness of style lay in physical labor. He once wrote that labor was undoubtedly the most effective method for the removal of nonsense and sentimentality from one's style.

Thoreau admitted that he was an exaggerator. If sculptors

and paintere could omit and exaggerate in producing more concrete objecte, he reasoned that he could do likewise in completing verbal pictures. However, he went beyond omiseion and exaggerated directly.

The statement about Thoreau's being an aecetic ie not true, for he had many companions. But he eeeme to have taken pride in a lofty method of thinking, so that few could share it with him. This individuality infected his thought and style. Through eetabliehed faith in Nature's wisdom, in his own ideals, and in his daily pattern of living, Thoreau became simply and sufficiently himeelf--an individual.

During his lifetime Thoreau traveled widely and made extensive notes of hie observations of landscape, vegetation, and wildlife. He later wrote about them in narrative form and had them publiehed. Hie chief eourcee were Walden Pond, Canada, the Concord and Merrimack Rivere, Cape Cod, and Maine. Of these, Walden, which he even frequented ae a boy, afforded him the moet enjoyment.

To eupplement hie own knowledge and observations, Thoreau browsed through all natural histories and herbale he could possibly find: Topeell's History of Four-Footed Beaets; Gerard's Herbal; Evelyn'e Sylvia; Josselyn's New England'e Rarities; and White's Natural Hietory of Selborne. In addition, he ueed modern ecientific booke and government reports on animale, birde, reptiles, fiehee, ineects, and plante which referred to the particular region he planned to observe and etudy.

Thoreau believed in living for the present, not for yesterday or tomorrow; and although criticized by many people, he seemed the only man of leisure in Concord, always prepared for well-promised excursions or prolonged conversation. He was very secure of his leisure, and his main calling seemed to be the art of living well. A strong, healthy young man, he was at one time surrounded by companions who were choosing their professions. It would have seemed natural for him to do likewise, but he was prone not to follow the customary paths; his choice was that of solitary freedom at the cost of disappointment to his family and friends. He was never idle but he was an ardent believer in the faith of his own convictions. Among other things, Thoreau had a great amount of skill in woodcraft, and he was very capable of living anywhere. This, too, would enable him not to be duty-bound to any long engagements which he could forsee in other professions or employment.

In 1845 Thoreau decided upon an idea which, to many people, seemed very peculiar; for it was then that he moved to Walden Pond, where he lived by himself for two years, working, observing, studying, and recording the many activities that Nature so kindly offered him. Finally, in 1847, having exhausted the advantages of solitude, he abandoned it.

While at Walden, Thoreau also worked on the only books published before his death: A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; and Walden; or Life in the Woods. Walden, which is critically regarded as one of the greatest literary contributions,

firmly established Thoreau's place in the literature of this country.

Of Canada, which appealed less to Thoreau than did his other sources, he emphasized the City of Montreal, the waterfalls, and the scenery along the St. Lawrence River.

As a resident of Concord, prior to his experiences at Walden, Thoreau had often peered into the Concord River and contemplated the mysteries that lay beyond. Plans formed in his mind until finally he set out with his brother John. There seems to be little doubt that this trip up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers furnished him with an abundance of material to further his readers' interest in the wonders of nature.

Cape Cod was the result of three different journeys that Thoreau made to get a better view of the ocean and to learn more about it. Altogether he spent about three weeks on the Cape, during which time he crossed it six times. This book many readers have found the most human, for he fused his collected materials into one unified, enriched narrative.

Thoreau's desire to penetrate the wilderness to Mount Ktaadn in Maine was finally realized after a most arduous excursion. Certainly The Maine Woods has much to offer in the way of new and thrilling experiences which the Concord naturalist constantly encountered.