

*Editor's Notes*

The document also contains material from a Journal entry dated September 5, 1851, that T used in a lecture he was writing in November 1854, "What Shall It Profit." An essay version of this lecture, "Life without Principle," was published in the October 1863 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* (see *Reform Papers* 1973, pp. 155-179).

PE supplies the date "November 1854?" following Bradley P. Dean's suggestion that T recycled Channing's note to him for his writing project. In addition, Dean notes that in a Journal entry for November 10, 1854, T records a boat excursion with Channing to Ball's Hill, which would have involved sailing around Holt's Point (see "Channing's Note to T" 1984, pp. 3-4). Presuming that this was the excursion Channing had in mind when he issued the invitation, he would have written his note to T on either November 1 or November 8, both Wednesdays in 1854.

*To Charles Sumner*

December 5, 1854

Concord Mass Dec 5<sup>th</sup>  
1854

Mr Sumner,  
Dear Sir,

Allow me to thank you once more for the Report of Sittgreaves,<sup>1</sup> the Patent Office 2<sup>d</sup> Part,<sup>2</sup> and on Emigrant Ships.<sup>3</sup>

At this rate there will be one department in my library, and that not the smallest one, which I may call the Sumnerian—

Yours sincerely  
Henry D. Thoreau.

*Correspondent:* See p. 76.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of an Expedition down the Zuni and Colorado Rivers*, written by Captain L. Sittgreaves.

<sup>2</sup> Volume 2 of the *Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the Year 1853* focused on agriculture. The intent of the report was to "promote, as far as practicable, the paramount interests of the farmers and planters of the United States in the improvement of their crops and live stock" (p. v). By the time of this letter T was well into his phenological studies, and the section on climatology,

which takes up about a quarter of the report, would have been of particular interest to him.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Select Committee of the Senate of the United States on the Sickness and Mortality on Board Emigrant Ships.*

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*To Harrison Gray Otis Blake*

*December 19, 1854*

Concord Mass. Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> 1854.

Mr. Blake,

I suppose you have heard of my truly providential meeting with Mr Brown<sup>1</sup>—providential, because it saved me from the suspicion that my words had fallen altogether on stony<sup>a</sup> ground,<sup>2</sup> when it turned out that there was some Worcester soil there. You will allow me to consider that I correspond with him thro' you.

I confess that I am a very bad correspondent, so far as promptness of reply is concerned, but then I am sure to answer sooner or later. The longer I have forgotten you, the more I remember you. For the most part I have not been idle since I saw you. How does the world go with you? or rather, how do you get along without it? I have not yet learned to live, that I can see, and I fear that I shall not very soon. I find however, that in the long run things correspond to my original idea—that they correspond to nothing else so much,—and thus a man may really be a true prophet without any great exertion. The day is never so dark, nor the night even, but that the laws, at least, of light still prevail, and so may make it light in our minds if they are open to the truth. There is considerable danger that a man will be crazy between dinner and supper—but it will not directly answer any good purpose that I know of, & it is just as easy to be sane. We have got to know what both life and death are before we can begin to live after