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“I think I could write a poem to be called Concord”: Thoreau Expresses the Inexpressible
Beth Witherell
Concord Free Public Library, September 16, 2017

2017 has been a great year for Thoreau and for Thoreauvians—wonderful books, conferences, exhibitions, and especially the encouragement to spend some time thinking about Henry. I’m just delighted to be able to be in Concord during this anniversary year—you all are so lucky to live in or near the place where Thoreau was so firmly rooted. As Laura Dassow Walls writes in her introduction to the catalog of the wonderfully rich exhibition that Leslie has created, “No American writer is more place-centered than Henry David Thoreau, and the place that mattered more to him than any other was Concord, Massachusetts” (*Thoreau: A Life*, p. 9).

I’m going to talk this evening about two of the products of Thoreau’s deep love for and involvement in this town. Both are poetic:

the earlier one is literally poetry—written in stanzas, rhyming

the later one is based on the seasonal repetition with variation of the phenomena of nature—the poetry that nature writes and that Thoreau transcribes, so to speak.

I have lots of images of Thoreau’s MSS to show you. The quality varies, and I’m using many of them only to give you a feel for what Thoreau is doing, not because I want you to read them from the screen. I’ll read you a few examples of the literal poetry, and some much more interesting passages from the Journal.

Thoreau believed poetry to be inherently the most heroic and beautiful form of language, the highest form of expression, and it’s no surprise that he would choose the form, early in his writing career, to describe his home town.

Here is his own statement of his project, set down in a Journal entry of September 4, 1841:

I think I could write a poem to be called Concord— For argument I should have the River—the Woods—the Ponds—the Hills—the Fields—the Swamps and Meadows—the Streets and Buildings—and the Villagers. Then Morning—Noon—and Evening—Spring Summer—Autumn and Winter—Night—Indian Summer—and the Mountains in the Horizon. (*Journal 1*, p. 330)

The argument is a summary that precedes the work itself—a prologue. Thoreau suggests here that the argument for his poem will cover the natural and man-made features of Concord, along with the people themselves. The poem proper will deal primarily with the daily and seasonal cycles as they affect the town and its inhabitants. The hills and mountains that make the far horizon to the north and west of Concord, especially Wachusett and Monadnock, will also be part of the poem.

When Thoreau wrote this outline, he was living with the Emerson family. He thinks he is able to write this poem at this time because he has been preparing for such a task since he moved into the Emerson household in April 1841. Emerson invited him after he and John had to close their school because tuberculosis was sapping John's strength. Henry was 24, he had been out of college for four years, and he needed to support himself: Emerson, writing to his brother William, says he offered Thoreau "his board &c for what labor he chooses to do." There were advantages for Emerson in this arrangement, as he tells William: he writes that Thoreau "is thus far a great benefactor & physician to me for he is an indefatigable & a very skilful laborer & I work with him as I should not without him. and expect to be suddenly well & strong though I have been a skeleton all the spring until I am ashamed." He describes Thoreau as "a scholar & a poet & as full of buds of promise as a young apple tree" (*RWE Letters*, 2:402). Surely Emerson's desire to encourage his protege figured into the offer: Thoreau would be freer than he had been in his parents' home to try to establish himself as a writer.

Ensnared at Emerson's, Thoreau begins his writer's work by copying his Journal, started in October 1837, into new manuscript volumes. He edits as he goes, and in the process he re-reads the fifty or so poems he had completed over the previous four years. He also reads, for the first time, Sir William Jones's translation of *The Institutes of Hindu Law: or, The Ordinances of Manu . . . Comprising the Indian System of Duties, Religious and Civil*. This book codifies the teachings of Brahma that are basic to Hinduism; it is described in a 1991 translation as "an encompassing representation of life in the world—how it is, and how it should be lived" (*Laws of Manu*, p. xvii). Thoreau is enraptured—the book lifts him to a higher plane of existence, and he sees Concord and its surroundings in a new and sacred light. The style of the writing affects him deeply: in Journal entries for August 1841, he writes, "it has such a rythm as the winds of the desert—such a tide as the Ganges" (August 6, 1841; *Journal 1*,

p. 316), and says each sentence “opens unexpensively and almost unmeaningly—as the petals of a flower” (August 30, 1841; *Journal 1*, p. 325).

The poetry Thoreau finds in the laws of Manu, which come to him from the “remote years of the gods,” the “habitation of the morning” (May 31, 1841; *Journal 1*, p. 311), sets a new standard, and by comparison the poetry he knows lacks vigor and strength. Again in August he writes,

The best poets . . . exhibit only a tame and civil side of nature— They have not seen the west side of any mountain.

Day and night—mountain and wood are visible from the wilderness as well as the village— They have their primeval aspects—sterner savager—than any poet has sung. It is only the white man's poetry—we want the Indian's report. Wordsworth is too tame for the Chippeway. (August 18, 1841; *Journal 1*, p. 321)

And in September:

When I observe the effeminate taste of some of my contemporaries in this matter of poetry—and how hardly they bear with certain incongruities, I think if this age were consulted it would not choose granite to be the back bone of the world—but Bristol spa—or Brazilian diamonds. (September 1, 1841; *Journal 1*, p. 326) [These are not close-grained, stable rock, like granite, but crystalline ones, prone to fracture into pieces with shiny surfaces.]

Inspired by his reading of Manu, buoyed by his review of what he had accomplished as a writer in the previous four years, and energized by the approaching fall, Thoreau sets to work. In a few months, from mid-summer until mid-autumn 1841, he writes more lines of poetry than he has altogether up to that period, and more than he will write in the rest of his career.

Emerson writes to Margaret Fuller on September 13, “H. T. is full of noble madness lately, and I think more highly of him than ever” (*RWE Letters*, 2:447). This madness is going on right under Emerson's nose, and his journal for September contains a description that doesn't name Thoreau but that matches Thoreau's own account of his mood very closely (a slightly revised version appears in his essay, “The Poet”):

I was astonished one morning (Emerson writes) by tidings that genius had appeared in a youth who sat near me at table. He had left his work, he had gone rambling none knew whither, he had written hundreds of lines, but he could not tell whether that which was in him was therein told, he could tell nothing but that all was changed, man, beast, heaven, earth, & sea. How gladly we listened!

Here's Thoreau's own description, fairly bursting from the pages of a letter he wrote on September 8 to Lucy Jackson Brown, Lidian Emerson's sister (both women were muses of sorts to Thoreau):

Dear Friend

Your note came wafted to my hand, like the first leaf of the Fall on the September wind, and I put only another interpretation upon its lines, than upon the veins of those which are soon to be strewed around me. It is nothing but Indian summer here at present—I mean that any weather seems reserved expressly for our late purposes, whenever we happen to be fulfilling them. I do not know what right I have to so much happiness, but rather hold it in reserve till the time of my desert. What with the crickets, and the lowing of kine, and the crowing of cocks, our Concord life is sonorous enough. Sometimes I hear the cock bestir himself on his perch under my feet, and crow shrilly long before dawn, and I think I might have been born any year for all the phenomena I know.

...

Just now I am in the mid-sea of verses, and they actually rustle round me, as the leaves would round the head of Autummus himself, should he thrust it up through some vales which I know,—but alas! many of them are but crisped and yellow leaves like his, I fear, and will deserve no better fate than to make mould for new harvests. I see the stanzas rise around me, verse upon verse, far and near, like the mountains from Agiocochook, not all having a terrestrial existence as yet, even as some of them may be clouds, but I fancy I see the gleam of some Sebago lakes and Silver Cascades, at whose well I may drink one day. I am as unfit for any practical purpose, I mean for the

furtherance of the world's ends, as gossamer for ship timber— And I who am going to be a pencil-maker to-morrow, can sympathise with god Apollo, who served king Admetus for awhile on earth— But I believe he found it for his advantage at last—as I am sure I shall—though I shall hold the nobler part at least out of the service.

Dont attach any undue seriousness [to] this threnody—for I love my fate to the very core and rind, and could swallow it without paring I think

You ask if I have written any more poems—excepting those which Vulcan is now forging, I have only discharged a few more bolts into the horizon, in all three hundred verses, and sent them as I may say over the mountains to Miss Fuller. . . .
(*Correspondence 1*, pp. 79-80)

ones. Just now I am in the mid-see of
verses, and they actually suit the sound
and as the leaves would be round the
head of Antinous himself & he
be thrust it up through some rules
which I know, but alas! many
of them are but crisped and yellow
leaves like his, I fear, and with de-
serve no better fate than to make
snowd for new harvests. I see the
stanzas and around me, rise upon
verse, far and near, like the moun-
tains from Agioschook, not all
having a terrestrial existence as yet.

Even if some of them may be clouds,
but I fancy I see the gleam of some Sebaste
Lake and blue Boreades, at whose well
I may drink one day. Even as unfit for
my practical purpose, I mean for the fu-
ture of the world's ends, as Governor
for ship timber - And I who am going
to be a penit-ment tomorrow, can sympathize
with god Apollo, who send King Ad-
metus for awhile on earth - But I be-
lieve he found it for his advantage at
last - as I am sure I shall - though
I shall hold the noble part at least
out of the service.

And now to the poem itself. When you see these manuscripts, you'll understand exactly what Thoreau means by the leaves rustling around him—there are pages and pages of poetry! Here again are his proposed subjects, underlined.

Sat Sept. 4th 1841.

I think I could write a poem to be called Concord– For
argument I should have the River–the Woods–the Ponds–the
Hills–the Fields–the Swamps and Meadows–the Streets and
Buildings–and the Villagers. Then Morning–Noon–and
Evening–Spring Summer–Autumn and Winter–Night–Indian
Summer–and the Mountains in the Horizon.

He had already written the final segment—in July 1841 he had composed “The Mountains in the Horizon,” incorporating into it a revised version of a shorter poem titled “Wachusett” that appears in a Journal entry for May 2, 1841. This is a shorter version of the poem he sent Fuller—this one has only 158 lines. The manuscript is at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The Mountains in the Horizon
With portent strength ye stand your ground -
With grand content ye circle round -
Terminations silence for all round,
Ye springing masses of hills,
From Adirondack and the Peterborough hills,
Staid argument that never stirs,
Outvailing the philosophers.
While ye enjoy a lingering ray,
Ye still outstep the western day,
Reposing yon on God's croft
Like solid stacks of hay.
The iris of the sky,
Ye see
Round the horizon of its eye
Whose pupil is the sun.

Upon a perch and any day,
When on globe plang'd it say
In rather seas of light,
Right opposite the bright
Of some Elysian bay,
Ye are its dorsal fin,
Crossing the ethereal spray
With breezy din.

From an Ocean Queen's pier,
For many a year,
I've seen ye westward bound,
Without a sound,
Like some vast fleet
Sailing through rain and sleet,
Through winters cold and summer's heat.
Ships of the line each one
That westward run,
Always before the gale,
Under a press of sail,
Conveying clouds
Of white cluster in your shrouds
With your stout masts to rizes and screens
Prove that ye rake the heavens,
So near the edge ye go;
Under the roof so low;
With weight of metal all untold,
I seem to feel ye in my firm seat here,
Of immeasurable depth of hold,
And breadth of beam, and length of running
year.

The vessels on the sea
Are relative to ye,
Sailing by sympathy.
Some enterprises of mankind
Some near income to find.
Of tilling from shore to shore,

Of her voyages soon are o'er,
But we hold on upon your English empire,
Until we find a shore
Amid the Skies.

Crossing the pleasant flood
By milder periods,
They with the moon take wing,
And glide before its ray
To some retired bay,
Their haunt
Believe under tropic sun,
They careless run,
Bearing gum Senegal and Tragacant.
For such small ends
Time gladly spends
Itself into eternity,
For this was ocean meant,
For this the sun was sent,
And moon was lent,
And 'tis the winds' employment.
Time waits but till the field is tilled,
With such small seeds
His Cape is filled
As that with seeds.

Man's little acts are grand
Or hold from land to land,
There as they lie in time
Nearer than native clime

heart

news

less

my

4
How white the world did cast,
They are no great.

No doubt that in the port from
whence ye hail
Your master did not fail
To register your wealth,
Nor ye sail not by stealth,
Shulking close in to land,
With cargo contraband,
But they who sent a venture out by ye
Have set the sun to see
Their honesty.

A special I remember thee,
A merchant, who like me
Stands alone without society.

My life is like a western sky
Seen to an eastern eye

Of calm repose,
Each moment tented variously
As the wind blows.

Now streaming like the northern light,
Each yet more north, more high, more bright,
Subsiding on the shores of night.

Like a wide field of grain

It always doth remain

True to its root,

Prending through all its length
With graceful strength,

5
Only the shadows glide
From side to side,
But still the deep grain doth abide.

Thou it nighs along
Like the breath of a song,
Or the wind on the ledge,
Or a tempest on the ledge,
First smells then dies away
Like a harp strain,
Only a string doth stay
To vibrate the wind again,
But thou art far and blue and still,
Mocking my inferior will,
Thou standest still.
Up holding heaven, holding down earth,
Thy posture from Thy birth,
Not steadied by the one nor leaning on
The other,
May I approve myself Thy worthy brother.

Thy far blue eye,
A remnant of the sky,
Seen through the clearing on the gorge,
Or from the windows of the forge
Doth leave all it frames by.
Thou art our rostrum in the west,
Some ancient victor's bequest,
With nature's trophies fringed,

6
And natural colors tinged,
Not with the Tyrian dye,
But with the azure of the sky,
Fronting an amphitheater of glory
Greater than Greek or Roman story—
Their old nobility entering with the sun,
Here & there done, perchance, as she began.

Nothing is 'twixt
But stands 'twixt me and you,
I have western pioneers
Who know not shame nor fear,
By venturesome spirit driven
Under the care of heaven,
And canst expand thee there?
Well breathe enough of air?

The sun doth go behind thee not before,
Solely to mend his store,
Even beyond the west
With thy small stock than migrator,
In unclouded tracts,
Without a pilgrim axe,
Upon a loftier way
Than our low western route,
Clearing thy road on high
With thy all-tempered brow,
To do but makest thyself a clearing
in the sky.

In composing the other poems he followed a method I've never seen in his MSS—and I've seen most of them. I'll take you through nineteen pages of the existing twenty-page draft (I have images of all the pages but one). The manuscripts for the first eighteen pages are at the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA; the manuscript for the last page is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library (for a digital image of the last page, see <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/ba964070-e8e0-0131-78b9-58d385a7bbd0>; click on the last thumbnail at the bottom of the large window that opens).

The evening of the year done on ~~Monday~~ ^{Monday} 11

~~And all the fields a later aspect near~~ Oct. 6

~~I twilight, here creeps over the landscape~~

Some grains of night to tincture the moon tide air.

Behold

~~I may need the shadows of the trees~~

~~Scarcely a whisper ^{now} ^{under} sound their stem~~

~~Like silent sentinels which by slow degrees~~

~~Descend the world in peace protecting them~~

From many a creature branching the light

Until behind each needle of the pine

There lurks a small conspirator to the night

Behind each bush and straggling fence Oct. 6

Around the meadows peering green

And should the meadow quailance

Evening avoidance post at noon's recess

A thin long fence

L
18
1

Septentrio sides upon the gale
And brooms along the creaking roof
Then stoops ago with the sole
Spears the brake and somak with his hoop

The small birds follow a bird's lake
Who thrust the front at a rustling pace
Puffing the surface of the lake
He stuns the affrighted leaves upon his face.

~~Small birds in flocks migrating by
Beat now across some meadow's bay~~

Small birds in flocks migrating by
Beat now across some meadow's bay
And to the lake and trees on high
With faint and hurried clits beguile the way.

The lowliest beach is brown and bare
The furthest pool is strewed with leaves
That float upon their water bed
Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves

Since passed is a creek bank
That still retains the ripples from
But now the air is changed and dark
Like sunset into sunset the sun's course

Meanwhile old earth yugged steadily on
In the mantle of purest white,
And even another spring was born
When winter had vanished quite.

4 I remembered how when the wind ^{had} passed the
Each leaf curled like a living thing
As with the tearing air it would
Become some faint memorial of the spring

5 Then for its sake it turned about
And drew through elements of brown
Like painted palaces the fleet
A patient summons hoarded wealth to save.

^{green line}
I love of the rank summer's wealth
Its ^{own} ^{and} superficial show
And when I see ^{away} ^{by} ^{stealth}
Which no way meet it still doth ⁱⁿ ^{your}

Method by diligence it hath caught
The labor habits of the town.

It self infected most what ought
With a stern face upon our ^{carriage} ^{from}

A sober mind will walk alone
And ^{apart} ^{from} nature if need be
And only its own reasons own
For nature pulling to humanity.

W
W. W. W. W. W.
- W. W. W. W. W.

Thank God who seasons these days
And sometimes starts his rays
Who in his winter is most near
And planets run ^{down} the shortest days

Who gently tempers now his heat
Another the sharpest cold, but we
Should suspect a the summer's melt
Or pine upon the winter's endity.

Sometimes late autumnal thoughts
Dare come to me to green fields
And to its early peaches brought
Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky
Ripe fruits of harvest and an autumn sky.

To a small stream I have seen
One person leap ~~up~~ ^{up} the bank
Green sea which all the rest are green
Like some fair flower to tempt the traveller's sight

A dry but golden thought which gleamed
About the greenness of the vine
And permitted by use it seemed
Too ripe avoid the bowers of June & June
Oct. 1865

That ~~Love~~ which I purposed to sing,
(It sings itself I ween)
Is quite a different thing,
For neither needs to cling
Where both can stand.

Two sturdy oaks I mean, that side by side
Withstand the wint'ry storm,
And spite of wind and tide,
Grow up the meadow's pride,
For both are strong.

Above they barely touch, but undermined
Down to their deepest roots,
Admiring we shall find
Their roots are intertwined
Inseparably.

April 8th - 38.

As a mid summer I have seen
Among the glory leaves of June
One yellow leaf all new grown

As have I seen one yellow leaf
Among the glory leaves of June
Which previous being, but not with grief
Till some of some flower, it had changed to brown

The cricket stumps beneath the sod
Already in the water bed
White he has made
And steam the ^{merchandise} ~~merchandise~~ but ~~not~~ ^{not} paid
A film of ~~autumn~~ ^{the} ~~summer~~ ^{summer} ~~present~~

~~They~~ ~~stand~~ ~~with~~ ~~secret~~ ~~the~~ ~~red~~ ~~and~~ ~~poor~~ ~~and~~ ~~afar~~
When the ~~wide~~ ~~simple~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~year~~
October leads to ~~autumn~~ ~~was~~
And steam ~~has~~ ~~loopholes~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~sum~~ ~~was~~ ~~been~~
and steam ~~for~~ ~~some~~ ~~time~~ ~~glow~~ ~~for~~ ~~an~~ ~~hour~~
put ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~white~~ ~~cricket~~ ~~stumps~~ ~~with~~ ~~some~~ ~~my~~ ~~own~~

The ~~gas~~ ~~is~~ ~~exhaled~~ ~~through~~ ~~the~~ ~~chestnut~~ ~~wood~~

The ~~cricket~~ ~~and~~ ~~yellow~~ ~~leaves~~ ~~around~~

2 We ~~are~~ ~~due~~ ~~and~~ ~~texture~~ ~~of~~ ~~my~~ ~~wood~~
put ~~these~~ ~~rough~~ ~~and~~ ~~any~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~found~~

The ~~present~~ ~~time~~ ~~has~~ ~~so~~ ~~far~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~

They ~~are~~ ~~in~~ ~~leather~~ ~~than~~ ~~I~~ ~~do~~ ~~to~~ ~~find~~

3 Put ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~wood~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~
They ~~are~~ ~~in~~ ~~leather~~ ~~than~~ ~~I~~ ~~do~~ ~~to~~ ~~find~~

Per ~~rights~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~that~~ ~~found~~ ~~that~~

The ~~shape~~ ~~of~~ ~~circles~~ ~~around~~

Keeping ~~in~~ ~~mind~~ ~~the~~ ~~present~~ ~~state~~

Discarded ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~present~~ ~~business~~

At greatness we need haste alone

and do damage

amongst those

but they of their camp

5

The harvest rattle in the wind

3 And apples are hanging the hay

The cereals flourish of my mind

Wishes, tell me I am as ripe as they

The moon is a pale fruit in the sky

1 And we hang her harvest from

The sun doth beat his stern with night

From noon's height he has declined below

The greedy earth doth flout his fruit

And cast it on the night's cup

2 The stars more brightly glister with

Though their beams be, I see the birds' mishap

The sharp wit reacheth every ear

4 And dries up man's words,

I spring into my place again

With unwarped strength, like shaft and

seasoned wood.

Fair in the woods these golden days
Some leaves drop in the morn'g air
And though their fallen bodies it plays
With delicate touch the prelude of the Fair

Gently withdrawing from the stem
If ^{lightly} slowly lay softly along
When the same hand hath followed them
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's throng
None upon were a melancholy
Flood all the region
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness caught from the long summer sun

When in my bed at early dawn
I heard the cock proclaim the day
Through the snow shone scarcely on
As if more gently were they sent not day
You fall he down with their faint
From riding at that Costa's camp
Who is he shining? never more
As if unconscious of a nobler light
Their 'Carum' sung the world around
Which seemed but lately made
And this the full song infant now
When the horizon in its cradle laid.

The beds night with swollen feet
In mine, has lately passed this way
And with her train departed as neat
She has arranged the furniture of the day.

Lays the sheet of mist spread on
The overland trees of leaves beneath
Which round her head at even she wore
Mistake I see the transcripts duties left,

The fragrant mist shakes the scent
Of aromatic herbs, so you
Mould say she blew, whence she went
And through the fields had sprinkled perfume
Dew.

W

view

Washington, compared with Buonapart. Chateau
briand. Voy. en Amérique et en Italie.
Vol. 1. p. 27.

Woman Social condition of. N. A. no 91. p 489.
Witchcraft. Upham on, comprising a history of
the Salem delusion. The meaning our
ancestors attached to the word witch.
p 17.

Considerations in justification, or rather
in palliation, of the conduct of our
ancestors in relation to. Upham's
Witchcraft. 2^d Lecture.

Those who professed to hold intercourse
with the higher and spiritual powers di-
vided into 3 classes. do 137.

Wealth respect paid to in Eng. advantages thence
arising. Eng and the Eng. Vol. 1. p 37.

Wander the basis of worship. The man who cannot won-
der, who does not habitually wonder, — is but a
pair of spectacles behind which there is no
eye. Pastor Kerestut. p 66.

The I might find a whole assortment
of aromatic herbs, so you
and every part of the world with

which sparingly were shared, purchase
and caught, The measure ~~that it should~~
~~to while it flattered parts~~ ~~was thought~~

the Cliffs. July 8th - 08
Sunday

But soon there comes unsought
Some clear divine electricity
And I who had but somewhat been
So nervous gone, and as yet I am heavy
More swift its bolt than lightning is
Its voice than thunder is more loud
It doth expand my privacies
To all, and leave one simple in the crowd
It shows me new realities

This chiefly is my natal hour
And only then my promise of life
Of manhood strength it is the crown
It's peace and art has begun
I hearing get who had but ears
And sight who had but eyes before
I moments live who had but years
And filled with life, I should I ask for more
And wisdom get who had but common sense

And who had eyes before then I should see
And who had ears before then I should hear

Act of generous action can delay
Nor forward in high and steady arms
And try to see they
By the way on sight and never in frame

I have heard of range of ground
I see beyond the verge of night 4
Then came a new stream in sea around
And the sun falls his 3 reflection by
And the light of the sun falls by

I will not doubt for ever more
No matter how far from earth
For though the system be turned over
God takes not back the work
Which once he will

My morning I'll educate
of Rind the soul historic touch
Preserving & the latest date
The only true and sole immortal youth.

I will believe the love untold
with my heart of mine
Which not my birth nor need had bought
Which with my mine has never
Which would me young, and now me old
And call the days & witness now my thought
The such

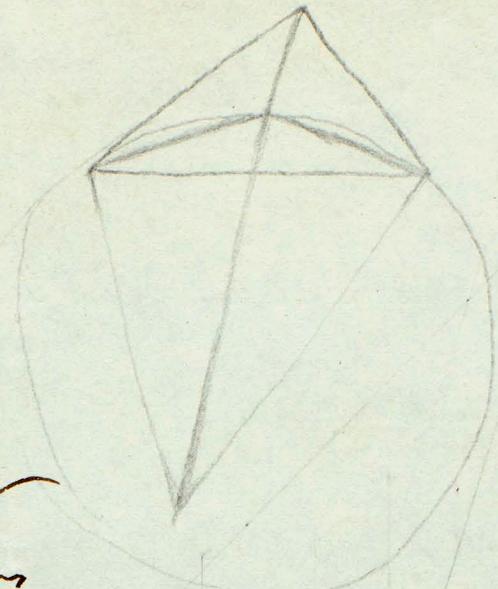
I will believe the power unseen be.

Such fragrance round my sleep it makes
more rich than the Arabian drops
That my soul sends its life and wakes
The body cop, which still is dreaming

Numbers of power
in tetrahedron shell

mind
human & unhuman

power
root
can't out
power



That come in summer broadest & warm
By a grey hole at some chosen place
Unreasoned form ^{unrolled} undone the June
And repeat the day with its presencing face

Such is the name the heavenly word
That star that guides her mortal course
Which shows when life's true kernel laid
On wheat's fine flour, and on unyielding force

^{speaks}
It ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~with~~ ^{with} such ~~as~~ ^{as} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~world~~ ^{world}
With such serene and lofty tone
That idle Time seems guided by
And learns one with eternity alone

51/052
06

There is such breadth and length of years
In this elysian spot
That even God, more young appears
And infant world through infant spaces fleet

Whose clear and ancient harmony
Pierces my ^{soul} ~~heart~~ through ^{the world} (all its din
As through its softest melody
Further behind than they, further within

Who with one breath attunes the spheres
And also my poor human heart
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my thoughts such state

Who equallets the coward's haste
And still surpasses the faintest heart
Whose loftiest fame is not disgraced
Though it assume the lowest part
It is ^{Be but the preparation} enough of trouble to give
Normal though what strange rough
I'll fathom hell or climb to heaven
And yet esteem that cheap which can but buy
For that is always

I've rounded my faculties around
To learn why life & me was lent
I'll attend his faintest sound
And then declare to man what God hath meant

Whatever we learn to God, God does
And Blesses us
What we presume to do alone
He lets be done

What we presume to do alone
God lets be done

But what we learn to God, God does

And Blesses us

That which we learn to God, God does

And Blesses us

What we presume to do alone

God lets be done

But what we learn to God, God does

And Blesses us

These pages as I'm showing them follow the order of Thoreau's large numbers, but the numbers are actually from a later stage of work. Initially, I think he simply let the language flow, filling page after page of stanzas about autumn, the experience of inspiration, and the task of the poet. Thoreau worked with these stanzas, revising and rearranging them to create fair copies of several poems: one describes the condition of inspiration, and three are on topics included in his poetic plan—morning, the transition of summer into autumn, and autumn itself.

The poem titled "Inspiration" exists in two versions. The manuscript for the sixteen-stanza version below is in the Morgan Library & Museum, NY.

Inspiration.

Always the general show of things
Floats in review before my mind,
And such true love and rev'rence brings
That sometimes I forget that I am blind.

But straight there comes unsought, unseen,
Some clear divine electuary,
And I who had but sensual been,
Grow sensible, and as God is am wary.

I hearing get, who had but ears,
And sight, who had but eyes before,
I moments live, who lived but years,
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

I hear beyond the range of sound,
I see beyond the verge of sight,
New earths—new skies—new seas around,
And in my noon the sun doth pale his light.

More swift its bolt than lightning is,
Its voice than thunder is more loud,
It doth expand my privacies
To all, and leave me single in the crowd.

Speaking with such authority,
With so serene and lofty tone,
That idle Time runs gadding by,
And leaves me with Eternity alone.

Then chiefly is my natal hour,
And only then my prime of life,

Of manhood's strength it is the flower,
'T is peace's end and war's beginning strife.

'T hath come in summer's broadest noon,
By a grey wall, or some chance place,
Unseasoned Time, insulted June
And vexed the day with its presuming face.

Such fragrance round my sleep it makes,
More rich than are Arabian drugs,
That my soul scents its life, and wakes
The body up, beneath its perfumed rugs.

Such is the Muse, the heavenly maid,
The star that guides our mortal course,
Which shows where life's true kernel's laid,
Its wheat's fine flower, and its undying force.

Whose clear and ancient harmony
Pierces my soul through all its din,
As through its utmost melody,
Further behind than they, further within.

Who with one breath attunes the spheres,
And also my poor human heart,
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my throbbing life its start.

I will not doubt forevermore,
Nor falter from an iron faith,
For if the system be turned o'er,
God takes not back the word which once he saith.

My memory I'll educate
To know the one historic truth,
Remembering to the latest date
The only true and sole immortal youth.

Be but thy inspiration given,
No matter through what dangers sought,
I'll fathom hell or climb to heaven,
And yet esteem that cheap which love has bought.

Fame cannot tempt the bard
Who's famous with his God,
Nor laurel him reward
Who hath his maker's nod.

Inspiration.

Always the general show of things
Flots in review before my mind,
And such true love and reverence bring
That sometimes I forget that I am blind.

But straight there comes unsought, unseen,
Some clear divine Electuary,
And I who had but sensual been,
Grow sensible, and as God is am wary.

I hearing yet, who had but ears,
And sight, who had but eyes before,
I moments live, who lived but years,
And truth discern, who knew but Learning's Core.

I hear beyond the range of sound,
I see beyond the verge of sight,
New earths - new skies - new seas around,
And in my noon the sun doth pale his light.

More swift its bolt than lightning is,
Its voice than thunder is more loud,
It doth expand my privacies
To all, and leave me single in the crowd.

Speaking with such authority,
With so serene and lofty tone,
That idle Time runs gadding by,
And leaves me with Eternity alone.

Then chiefly is my natal hour,
And only then in promise of life,
Of manhood's strength it is the flower,
'Tis peace's end and war's beginning strife.

'Tis both come in summer's broadest noon,
By a grey wall, or some chance place,
The seasoned Time is met June
And vexed the day with its presuming face.

Such fragrance round my sleep it makes,
More rich than are Arabian drugs,
That my soul scents its life, and wakes
The body up, beneath its perfumed rugs.

Such is the Muse the heavenly maid,
The star that guides our mortal course,
Which shows where life's true kernels laid,
Its wheat's fine flower, and its undying force.

As low clear and sweetest harmony
Pierces my soul through all its din.

As through its sweetest melody,
Further behind than they, further within.

Who with one breath attunes the spheres,
And also my poor human heart,
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my throbbing life its start.

I will not doubt for evermore,
Nor falter from an iron faith,
For if the system be turned over,
God takes not back the word which once he saith.

My memory I'll educate
To know the one historic truth,
Remembering to the latest date
The only true and sole immortal youth.

Be but Thy inspiration given,
No matter through what dangers wrought,
I'll fathom hell or climb to heaven,
And yet esteem that cheap, which Love has bought.

Flame cannot tempt the base
Who's fond as with his God,
Nor canst him win or snare
Who walks his meek way nod.

It is in my brother Henry D. Thurman
hand writing.

Septia E. Thurman

The second version, made up of twenty-one stanzas, is better organized and more concise in conveying Thoreau's experience. The manuscript has not been located; the text below is based on a photograph.

I'll read the first four stanzas, to give you a flavor of the poem. [In poetry that follows, boldface indicates portions I read aloud in Concord.]

Inspiration.

**Whate'er we leave to God, God does,
And blesses us;
The work we choose should be our own,
God lets alone.**

**If with light head erect I sing,
Though all the muses lend their force,
From my poor love of anything,
The verse is weak and shallow as its source.**

**But if with bended neck I grope,
Listening behind me for my wit,
With faith superior to hope,
More anxious to keep back than forward it,**

**Making my soul accomplice there
Unto the flame my heart hath lit,
Then will the verse forever wear,
Time cannot bend the line which God hath writ.**

Always the general show of things
Floats in review before my mind,
And such true love and reverence brings,
That sometimes I forget that I am blind.

But soon there comes unsought, unseen,
Some clear divine electuary,
And I, who had but sensual been,
Grow sensible, and as God is am wary.

I hearing get who had but ears,
And sight who had but eyes before,
I moments live who lived but years,
And truth discern who knew but learning's lore.

I hear beyond the range of sound,
I see beyond the verge of sight,
New earths—new skies—new seas—around,
And in my noon the sun doth pale his light.

A clear and ancient harmony
Peirces my soul through all the din,
As through its utmost melody,
Further behind than they, further within.

More swift its bolt than lightning is,
Its voice than thunder is more loud,
It doth expand my privacies
To all, and leave me single in the crowd.

It speaks with such authority,
With so serene and lofty tone,
That idle Time runs gadding by,
And leaves me with Eternity alone.

Then chiefly is my natal hour,
And only then my prime of life,
Of manhood's strength it is the flower,
'Tis peace's end and wars beginning strife.

'T hath come in summer's broadest noon,
By a grey wall or some chance place,
Unseasoned time, insulted June,
And vexed the day with its presuming face.

Such fragrance round my sleep it makes,
More rich than are Arabian drugs,
That my soul scents its life, and wakes
The body up—from 'neath its perfumed rugs.

Such is the Muse—the heavenly maid,
The star that guides our mortal course,
Which shows where life's true kernel's laid,
Its wheat's fine flower, and its undying force.

Who with one breath attunes the spheres,
And also my poor human heart,
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my throbbing pulse its start.

I will not doubt forever more,
Nor falter from an iron faith,
For if the system be turned oer,
God takes not back the word which once he saith.

I will believe the love untold,
Which not my worth nor want hath bought
Which wooed me young and woos me old,
And call the stars to witness now my thought.

My memory I'll educate
To know the one historic truth,
Remembering to the latest date
The only true, and sole immortal youth.

Be but thy inspiration given,
No matter through what dangers sought,
I'll fathom hell or climb to heaven,
And yet esteem that cheap which love has bought.

Fame cannot tempt the bard
Who's famous with his God,
Nor laurel him reward,
Who hath his maker's nod.

cannot lift the head
to gaze into his God,
cannot him regard,
nor with his maker nod.

Inspiration.

Whatever be done to God, God shall
And bless us;
The work we choose should be
God's will alone.

If with light head and strong
Though all the muse and the power
From my poor love of anything
The will is weak and feeble

But if with leaded neck I go
Sitting behind me for my life
With faith repair to hope,
More anxious to keep back than forward

Making my soul accomplish that
Which the small flame of heart hath
The will is weak and feeble
The will is weak and feeble

Plays the general show of things
Creates a screen before my mind,
But not true love all around
That sometimes I forget that I am

But soon that comes unbidden
Some clear divine electricity
And I who had but mortal sense
Grow sensible, and as God's own song.

“Cock-crowing” focuses on the sounds of early morning in Concord, sounds Thoreau mentions in his letter to Brown—the crowing of cocks, the single cock awake before the others, the lowing of cattle. The manuscript is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library; for a digital image, see <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/fbd60000-5331-0132-216e-58d385a7b928>.

Cock-crowing.

**Upon my bed at early dawn
I hear the cocks proclaim the day,
Though the moon shines serenely on,
As if her queenly course they could not stay—**

Nor pull her down with their faint din
From riding at that lofty height,
Who in her shining knows no sin,
As if unconscious of a nobler light.

Far in the east their larum rings,
As if a watchful host there thronged,
Where now its early clarion sings,
So bravely is their martial note prolonged.

One on more distant perch, more clear,
But fainter brags him still,
But ah! he promises, I fear,
More than his master's household will fulfill.

The stars withhold their shining not
Or singly or in scattered crowds,
But seem like Parthian arrows shot
By yielding night 'mid the advancing clouds.

**Some wakeful steer exalts his trump
Afar oer the sonorous ground,
And with a sounding eastern pomp
It grandly marcheth the horizon round.**

**Invades each recess of the wood,
Awakes each slumbering bird,
Till every fowl leads forth her brood,
Which on her nest the tuneful summons heard.**

**Methinks that Time has reached his prime,
Eternity is in the flower,**

**I hear their faint confused chime
Now ushering in the sacred hour.**

Over the hill top I have run
For fear to be too late,
I've left behind the luggard sun,
Travelling at such a rate,
To be in at creation,
To be up with fate.

And has time got so forward then?
From what perennial fount of joy,
Do ye inspire the hearts of men,
And teach them how the day-light to employ?

From your abundance pray impart
Who dost so freely spill,
 Some bravery unto my heart,
 Or let me taste of thy perennial rill.

There is such health and length of years
In the elixir of that note,
That God himself more young appears,
And a more youthful world through space doth float.

The tidy night with woolen feet,
I'm sure has lately passed this way,
And with her trim despatch so neat,
She has arranged the furniture of the day.

In yon thin sheet of mist spread oer
The lowland trees of leaves bereft,
Which round her head at eve she wore,
Methinks I see the housewife's duster left.

 The fragrant mist exhales the scent
 Of aromatic herbs, so you
 Would say she blest where'er she went,
 And through the fields had sprinkled perfumed dew.

Cock - crowing.

When my bed at early dawn
I hear the cocks proclaim the day,
Though the moon shines scarcely on,
As if her queer course she could not stay -

No pull her down with their faint - din
From riding at that lofty height,
Like in her shining beams as seen,
As if unconscious of a nobler light.

Far in the East their carum rings,
As if a watchful host ^{there} they thronged,
To hear her early clarion rings,
So loud in their martial note prolonged.

One or more distant perch, more clear,
But fainter brags her still,
But ah! be promis, I fear,
More than his masters' household wife fulfil.

~~Some watchful steen exalts his trumpet
Upon the sonorous ground,
And with a~~

The stars withhold their shining host
Or singly or in scattered crowds,
But seem like Partisan arrows shot
By yielding night mid the advancing clouds.

Some watchful steen exalts his trumpet
Upon the sonorous ground,

Ms. A. 9. 2. 4. 30/57

The lady awoke with colder feet,
In some way lately passed this way,
And with her train despatched so neat,
She has arranged the furniture of the day.

In you the dust of mist spread on
The low land trees of leaves bright,
Which round her head at even she wore,
Mistake I see the housewife's dustier coat.

The fragrant mist exhales the scent
Of aromatic herbs, as you
Would say she best when she went,
And through the fields had sprinkled perfume down.

“The Soul’s Season” describes the transition from summer into autumn. The manuscript is in Firestone Library, Princeton University.

The Soul’s Season

**Thank God who seasons thus the year,
And sometimes kindly slants his rays,
For in his winter he's most near,
And plainest seen upon the shortest days.**

**Who gently tempers now his heats,
And then his harsher cold, lest we
Should surfeit on the Summer's sweets,
Or pine upon the Winter's crudity.**

Grown tired of this rank summer's wealth,
Its raw and superficial show,
I fain would hie away by stealth
Where no roads meet, but still 't doth trivial grow.

Methinks by dalliance it hath caught
The shallow habits of the town,
Itself infected most, which ought
With sterner face upon our tameness frown.

A sober mind will walk alone
Apart from nature if need be,
And only its own seasons own,
For nature having its humanity.

**Sometimes a late Autumnal thought
Has crossed my mind in green July,
And to its early freshness brought
Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky.**

**A dry but golden thought which gleamed
Across the greenness of my mind,
And prematurely wise it seemed,
Too ripe 'mid summer's youthful bowers to find.**

**So have I seen one yellow leaf
Amid the glossy leaves of June,
Which pensive hung, though not with grief,
Like some fair flower, it had changed so soon.**

**I scent my med'cine from afar,
Where the rude simpler of the year,
October leads the rustling war,
And strews his honors on the summer's bier.**

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The Soul's season.

Thank God who seasons thus the year,
And sometimes kindly slants his ray,
For in his winter he is most near,
And plainest seen upon the thickest day.

Who gently tempers now his heats,
And then his harsher cold, lest we
Should surfeit on the summer's sweets,
Or pine upon the winter's crudity.

Grown tired of this rank summer's wealth,
Its sun and superficial show,
If any would be away by stealth
When no roads meet, but still it doth trivial grow.

Pretexts by dabbance it hath caught
The shallow habits of the town,
Itself infected most, which ought
With sterner face upon our latter frown.

A sober mind will walk alone
Apost from nature if need be,
And only its own seasons own,
For nature leaving its humanity.

Sometimes a late autumnal thought
Has crossed my mind in green July,
And to its early freshness brought
Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky.

4 A boy bent golden thoughts which gleamed
 Above the greenness of my mind,
 And prematurely laid it down,
 Too ripe amid numerous youthful bowers of pencil.

5 So here I see on yellow leaf
 Amid the glossy leaves of June,
 Which promise being, though not with grief,
 Like some fair flower, it had changed so soon.

I sent my medicine from afar,
 When the rude simple of the year,
 October leads the rustling war,
 And strewn his honors on the demon's bier.

Thoreau

And "The Fall of the Leaf," in two versions, presents the sights and sounds of autumn, and their effect on the poet. Here is the twenty-one-stanza version; the manuscript is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library; for a digital image, see <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/a85bfc10-561c-0132-7942-58d385a7b928>.

The Fall of the Leaf.

**The evening of the year draws on,
The fields a later aspect wear,
Since summers garishness is gone
Some grains of night tincture the noontide air.**

Behold the shadows of the trees
Now circle wider 'bout their stem,
Like sentries which by slow degrees
Perform their rounds, softly protecting them.

And as the year doth decline,
The sun affords a scantier light;
Behind each needle of the pine
There lurks a small auxiliar to the night.

After each shrub and straggling fence
That marks the meadows pensive green,
And shows the meadows opulence,
Evening's insidious foot at noon is seen.

**Wave upon wave a mellow air
At length floods all the region,
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness, caught from the long summer's sun.**

I hear the cricket's slumbrous lay
Around—beneath me—and on high,
It rocks the night, it lulls the day,
And everywhere is nature's lullaby.

But most he chirps beneath the sod,
Where he hath made his winters bed,
His creak grown fainter but more broad,
A film of autumn o'er the summer spread.

Small birds in fleets migrating by
Now beat across some meadow's bay,
And as they tack and veer on high,

With faint and hurried click beguile the way.

**The moon is ripe fruit in the sky,
Which over hangs her harvest now,
The sun doth break his stem well nigh,
From summer's height he has declined so low.**

The greedy earth doth pluck his fruit
And cast it in night's lap,
The stars more brightly glisten, mute
Though their tears be, to see their Lord's mishap.

The harvest rattles in the wind,
Red apples overhang the way;
The cereal flavor of my mind,
Natheless, tells me I am as ripe as they.

The sharp wind searcheth every vein,
And dries up humors crude,
I spring into my place again
 With unwarped strength, like staunch and seasoned wood.

Far in the woods these golden days,
Some leaf obeys its Maker's call,
And through their hollow aisles it plays
With delicate touch the prelude of the fall.

Gently withdrawing from its stem,
It lightly lays itself along
Where the same hand hath pillowed them,
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's throng.

The loneliest birch is brown and sear,
The farthest pool is strewn with leaves,
Which float upon their watery bier,
Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves.

I marked when first the wind grew rude
Each leaf curled like a living thing,
As if with the rich air it would
Secure some faint memorial of the spring.

Then for its sake it turned a boat,
And dared new elements to brave,
A painted palace which did float
A summer's hoarded wealth to save

**The jay screams through the chestnut wood,
The crisped and yellow leaves around,
Are hue and texture of my mood,
And these rough burs my heirlooms on the ground.**

**The threadbare trees, so poor and thin,
They are no wealthier than I,
But with as brave a core within
They rear their boughs to the October sky.**

Poor knights they are which bravely wait
The charge of winter's cavalry,
Keeping a simple Roman state,
Discumbered of their Persian luxury.

No greatness now need walk alone,
Lest nature should its ardor damp,
Which saw where their new armor shone
Or heard the rustling of the forest camp.

The Fall of the Leaf.

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The evening of the year draws on,
The fields a late aspect wear,
Since summer's garishness is gone
Some grays of bright tincture the woods air.

Behold the shadows of the trees
Now wide wide 'bout their stem,
Like sentries which by slow degrees
Peep ^{forth} their swords, softly protecting them.

And as the year doth decline,
The sun affords a scantier light,
Behind each needle of the pine
There looks a small anxious little night.

After each shrub and struggling fern
That marks the meadows pensiv'ly green,
And shows the meadows gentleness,
Evening's insidious foot at noon is seen.

Warc upon war a mellow air
At length floods all the region,
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness, caught from the long summer sun.

I hear the crickets down across lay
Round - beneath me - and on high,
It rocks the night, it lulls the day,
And croaketh in unwearied lullaby.

But must he creep beneath the sod,
When he hath made his winter bed,
His' creak grow fainter but more broadly,
A film of Autumn on the summer spread.

Shale birds in flocks migrating by
Now beat across some meadow's bay,
And as they take and veer on high,
With faint and hurried click beside the way.

The moon is 'ripe first in the sky,
Which ever hangs her harvest now,
The sun doth break his stern held night,
From summer's laughter he has declined so low.

The greedy earth doth pluck his fruit
And eat it in night's cup,
The stars more brightly glister, mute
Though their tears be, to see their Lord's mis'hap.

The harvest rattle in the wind,
Red apples overhang the way,
The cereal flavor of my mind,
Nathaniel, tells me I am as ripe as they.

The sharp wind scorcheth every bein,
And do's up hum as crude,
I spring into my place again:
With unwarp'd strength, like stanch and seasoned
wood.

Flies in the woods their golden days,
Some leaf obeys its maker's call,
And through their hollow aisles it flings
With delicate touch the prologue of the fall.

Gently withdrawing from its stem,
It lightly leaps itself along
Where the same hand hath followed them,
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's throng.

The loneliest bird is brown and scar,
The furthest pool is strewn with leaves,
Which float upon their watery hair,
Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves.

I marked when first the wind gave such
Each leaf curled like a living thing,
As if with the ^{ripe} air it would
Secure some faint memorial of the spring.

The for its sake it turned a boat,
And dared new elements to brave,
A painted pulser which did float
A summer's boarded wealth to save.

The gey screams through the chestnut wood,
The crisped and yellow leaves around,
Are hue and texture of my mood,
And these rough buss my hair locks on the ground.

The threadbare trees, so poor and thin,
They are no wealthier than I,
But with a love a core within

They see their boughs & the October sky.

Over Knight they are which hardly wait
The charge of united cavalry,
Keeping a simple Roman state,
Discerned of their Persian luxury.

No greatness we need walk alone,
But nature should it and a damp,
Which ran when they were across shore,
It heard the muttering of the first camp.

Marked by who appears thus the year

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This version, with forty-one stanzas, contains all but two of the stanzas that are in the shorter version, as well as five stanzas from “Cock-crowing,” eight of the nine stanzas that make up “The Soul’s Season,” one stanza from “Inspiration,” and eight stanzas unique to it. Often one or two stanzas are kept together, but there’s a lot of rearrangement. The manuscript is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library; for a digital image, see <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/20293560-5622-0132-573f-58d385a7b928>.

The Fall of the Leaf.

Grown tired of this rank summer's wealth,
Its raw and superficial show,
I fain would hie away by stealth
Where no roads meet, but still 't doth trivial grow.

A sober mind will walk alone,
Apart from nature if need be,
And only its own seasons own,
For nature having its humanity.

Sometimes a late autumnal thought
Has crossed my mind in green July,
And to its early freshness brought
Late ripend fruits and an autumnal sky.

A dry but golden thought which gleamed
Athwart the greenness of my mind,
And prematurely wise it seemed,
Too ripe mid summer's youthful bowers to find.

So have I seen one yellow leaf
Amid the glossy leaves of June,
Which pensive hung, though not with grief,
Like some fair flower, it had changed so soon.

I scent my med'cine from afar,
Where the rude simpler of the year
October leads the rustling war,
And strews his honors on the summer's bier.

The evening of the year draws on,
The fields a later aspect wear,
Since summer's garishness is gone
Some grains of night tincture the noontide air.

Behold the shadows of the trees
Now circle wider 'bout their stem,
Like sentries which by slow degrees
Perform their rounds, gently protecting them.

And as the season doth decline
The sun affords a scantier light,
Behind each needle of the pine
There lurks a small auxiliar of the night.

After each shrub and straggling fence
That marks the meadow's pensive green,
And shows the meadow's opulence,
Evening's insidious foot at noon is seen.

Wave upon wave a mellower air
Flows over all the region,
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness caught from the long summer's sun.

I hear the cricket's slumbrous lay
Around, beneath me, and on high,
It rocks the night, it lulls the day,
And everywhere 'tis nature's lullaby.

But most he chirps beneath the sod,
Where he hath made his winter's bed,
His creak grown fainter, but more broad,
A film of autumn o'er the summer spread.

Upon my bed at early dawn
I hear the cocks proclaim the day,
Though the moon shines serenely on
As if her queenly course they could not stay;

Nor pull her down with their faint din
From riding at that lofty height,
Who in her shining knows no sin,
But is unconscious of a nobler light.

The stars withhold their shining not
Or singly or in scattered crowds,
But seem like Parthian arrows shot
By yielding night 'mid the advancing clouds.

And has time got so forward then?
From what perennial fount of joy
Do ye inspire the hearts of men,
And teach them how the daylight to employ?

From your abundance pray impart,
Who dost so freely spill,
Some bravery unto my heart,
Or let me taste of thy perennial rill.

Small birds in fleets migrating by
Now beat across some meadow's bay,
And as they tack and veer on high,
With faint and hurried click beguile the way.

The moon is ripe fruit in the sky
Which overhangs her harvest now,
The sun doth break his stem well nigh
From summer's height he has declined so low.

The greedy earth doth pluck his fruit,
And cast it in night's lap,
The stars more brightly glisten, mute
Though their tears be, to see their lords mishap.

The harvest rattles in the wind,
Ripe apples overhang the hay,
The cereal flavor of my mind
Natheless, tells me I am as ripe as they.

I hearing get who had but ears,
And sight who had but eyes before,
I moments live who lived but years,
And truth discern who knew but learning's lore.

Far in the woods these golden days
Some leaf obeys its maker's call,
And through their hollow aisles it plays
With delicate touch the prelude of the fall.

Gently withdrawing from its stem
It lightly lays itself along,
Where the same hand hath pillowed them
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's throng.

The loneliest birch is brown and sere,
The farthest pool is strewn with leaves,
Which float upon their watery bier,
Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves.

I marked when first the wind grew rude
Each leaf curled like a living thing,
As if with the ripe air it would
Secure some faint memorial of the spring.

Then for its sake it turned a boat
And dared new elements to brave,
A painted palace which did float
A summer's hoarded wealth to save.

Oh could I catch these sounds remote,
Could I preserve to human ear,
The strains which on the breezes float,
And sing the requiem of the dying year.

I stood beside an oaken copse
When the first gale of autumn sighed,
It gently waved the birch tree tops
Then rustled the oak leaves and died

But not the strains which it awoke,
For in my inmost sense I hear
The melody of which it spoke
Still faintly rising on my inward ear.

A ripple on the river fell,
A shadow o'er the landscape passed,
And still the whispering ferns could tell
Whither the stranger travelled so fast.

How stand the cottages of men
In these so fair October days,
Along the wood along the fen
I see them looming through the mellow haze.

Immersed in Nature there they lie
Against some cliff or chestnuts shade
Scarce obvious to the travellers eye
Who thoughtful traverses the forest glade.

The harvest lies about the door
The chestnut drops its burs around
As if they were the stock that bore
The yellow crops that strew the ground.

The lily loves the river's tide
The meadow's are the daisy's haunt
The aspens on the mountain side
Here child of nature grows the human plant.

The jay screams through the chestnut wood
The crisped and yellow leaves around
Are hue and texture of my mood,
And these rough burs my heirlooms on the ground.

The thread bare trees so poor and thin
They are no wealthier than I,
But with as brave a core within
They rear their boughs to the October sky.

Poor knights they are which bravely wait
The charge of winter's cavalry,
Keeping a simple Roman state
Discumbered of their Persian luxury.

Thank God who seasons thus the year
And sometimes kindly slants his rays,
For in his winter he's most near
And plainest seen upon the shortest days.

Who gently tempers now his heats
And then his harsher cold, lest we
Should surfeit on the summer's sweets,
Or pine upon the winter's crudity.

The Fall of the Leaf.

Green tired of the sun's summer's wealth,
No sun and superficial show,
I fan' would lie away by stealth
Where no roads meet, but still 't doth trival grow.

A sober mind will walk alone,
Apart from nature if need be,
And only its own seasons own,
For nature having its humanity.

Sometimes a late autumnal thought
Has crowned my mind in green July,
And to its early freshness brought
Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky.

A dry but golden thought which gleamed
Athwart the greenness of my mind,
And prematurely wise it seemed,
Too ripe mid summer's youthful hours of mind.

So have I seen one yellow leaf
amid the glory leaves of June,
Which plume is hung, though not with grief,
Like some fair flower, it had changed so soon.

I scent my med'icines from afar,
Where the rude simplicity of the year
October leads the rustling war,
And strewn by honors on the summer's beer.

The evening of the year draws on,
The field a later aspect wear,
The summer's garishness is gone
Some grains of night tincture the nocturnal air.

Behold the shadows of the trees
Now circle wider 'bout their stems,
Like scoters whirled by slow degrees
Perform their rounds, gently protecting them.

And as the season doth decline
The sun affords a scantier light,
Behind each needle of the pine
There looks a small ambition of the night.

After each shrub and straggling fence
That marks the meadow's perovis green,
And shows the meadow's fulence,
Evening's insidious foot at noon is seen.

Now upon have a mellowed air
Flows o'er all the region,
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness (caught) from the long summer's sun.

I hear the cricket's slumberous lay
Around, beneath me, and on high,
It rocks the night, it lulls the day,
And everywhere his nature's lullaby.

^{The cricket} But almost he chirps beneath the sod,
When he hath made his winter's bed,
His 'ereat' grows fainter, but more broad,
A film of autumn o'er the former spread.

Small birds in flocks migrating by
Some beat across some meadow's way,
And to thy lake and rear on high,
With short and hurried cluck beguile the way.

12
Upon my bed at early dawn
I hear the cocks proclaim the day,
Though the moon shines serenely on
As if her queenly course they could not stay;
Nor pull her down with their faint din
Of frown riding at that lofty height,
Who in her shining knows no sin,
But is unconscious of a nobler light.

13
The stars withhold their shining not
In ring or in scattered crowds,
But seen like Partisan arrows shot
By yielding night amid the advancing clouds.

And how true get so forward then?
From what perennial fount of joy
Do ye inspire the hearts of men,
And teach them how the daylight to employ?

14
From your abundance pray impart,
Who do not so freely spill,
Some heaven unto my heart,
Or let me taste of thy perennial rill.

15
Small birds in flocks migrating by
Some beat across some meadow's way,
And to thy lake and rear on high,
With faint (and hurried) cluck beguile the way.

19 The moon is 'ripe fruit' in 'the sky
Which overhangs his harvest moon,
The sun doth break his stem well nigh,
From summer's bright he has declined below.

20 The greedy earth doth pluck his fruit,
And cast it in 'night's lap,
The stars more brightly glister round
Though their tears be to see their lord, midday.

21 The harvest rattle in the wind,
Puffe apples overhang the hay,
The cereal flavor of my mind
Partaken, tells me I am as ripe as they.

22 I hearing yet who had but ears,
And sight who had but eyes before,
I moments live who lived but years,
And county discern who knew but learning's lore.

23 I see in the woods their golden day
Some leaf obey its maker's call,
And through their hollow circles it plays
With delicate touch the prelude of the fall.

24 Gently withdrawing from its stem
It lightly lays itself along,
When the same hand hath followed them
Perigued to sleep upon the old year's wrong.

25 The lowliest birch is brown and bare,
The fattest pool is strewn with leaves,
Which float upon their watery hair,
When is no eye that grieves, no heart that grieves.

22
23
I marked when first the wind green made
Each leaf curled like a living thing,
As if with the ripe air it would
Secure some faint memorial of the Spring.

Then for its sake it turned a boat
And dived new elements to share,
A painted palace which did float
A summer's hoarded wealth to save.

If could I catch these sounds remote,
Could I preserve to human ear,
The strains which on the breeze float,
And sing the requiem of the dying year.

I stand beside an oak tree copse
When the first gale of autumn sighs,
It gently waves the birch tree tops
Then rustles the oak leaves and dies

But not the strains which it awakes,
For in my inmost sense I hear
The melody of which it spoke
Still faintly rising on my inward ear.

A ripple on the river fell,
A shadow on the landscape passed,
And still the whispering ferns could tell
Whether the stranger travelled so fast.

How stand the collages of now
In these so fair October days,
Along the wood along the fern
Free from loosing through the mellow haze.

Immersed in nature then they lie
Against some cliff or chestnut shade
Near stream to the traveller eye
Who thoughtful leans on the forest glade.

The harvest lies about the door
The chestnuts drop its husks around
As if they were the stalks that bore
The yellow crops that strew the ground.

The lily covers the river's side
The meadows are the dairies' haunt
The aspens on the mountain side
Here wild nature grows the human plant.

The jay screams through the chestnut wood
The crisp and yellow leaves around
Are here and texture of my mood,
And these rough husks my bee-looms on the ground.

The threadbare trees so poor and thin
They are no wealthier than I
And I with as brave a core within
They scan their boughs to the October sky.

Poor knights they are that hardly wait
In charge of winter's cavalry,
Keeping a simple Roman state
Or 'cumbered of their Persian luxury.

I thank God who rears us, that this year
He sometimes kindly sends his rays,
That in his winter he's most near
And pleasure seen upon the shaded day.

God kindly
Who gently tempers now his heat,
And then his harsher cold, lest we
Should suffer in the summer's sweet,
Prepare upon the winter's cold.

Now that you've seen the titled poems that Thoreau drew out of the twenty-page penciled draft, and heard parts of them, I want to look again at that draft and offer a hypothesis about it. I think Thoreau arranged the pages of the draft after he made his fair copies, and that he did so to bring his poem together in a new order. I think he was experimenting with integrating the individual poems into a larger, continuous work.

On the verso of the draft page numbered "1" Thoreau listed aspects of autumn in Concord that correlate with the contents of the first eight pages of the draft (the manuscript is in the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA):

~~Night shades~~

~~Migration of birds~~

Fall of the leaf

Harvest & its effects

Cricket

Appearance of the wood

~~Mellow air.~~

- " 31st Webster's Letters and Lives, 2 vols
- Apr 1st Johnson's Works vol 3^d Sat 17 16
- " 15th Amblichus' Life of Pythagoras - & Porphyry
on Abstinence from Animal food &c
- 14th Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit. Gladstone
- 15th On Heroes, Hero-worship - and the Heroic in History
~~six lectures by Carlyle~~ in three parts.
- De Quincey's works from 1st and 2nd
Bowley's prose works
Bothe's / Orpheus (partially)

June 3rd Frothing's Saga by Ervius Tegner.
Lives of modern Frenchmen to

~~eight studies~~
~~migrations of tribes~~
Fall of the leaf
Harvest & the effect
~~about~~
Appearance of the wood
~~appearance~~

Let's take a look at these transcripts of the first eight pages (the manuscripts are in the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA). Stanzas on the first page describe evening ("Night shades").

①

9/7/11

HM 13201 IV

HDT, vol. p.

PE, J, vol. p.

The evening of the year draws on ~~apple~~ Monday
~~All~~ the fields a later aspect wear
 since summers garishness is gone
 A twilight hue creeps o'er the landscape's face
 Some grains of night tincture the ~~noontide~~ [#] air.

behold
 In ~~every~~ ~~wood~~ the shadows of the trees
 now circle wider
~~Describe a wider~~ circuit round their stem
 Like ~~silent~~ sentries which by slow degrees
 Perform their rounds--in peace protecting them.

From many a crevice banishing the light
 Until behind each needle of the pine
 Their lurks a small auxiliar to the night

Behind each bush and straggling fence
 Amid the meadows pensive green
 And shows the meadows opulence
 Evenings insidious foot at noon is seen

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Sep 6th



since [unclear] S

Describe [unclear] e we ?

Link 7

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L181
+281

auxiliar [unclear] to auxiliar

many
stuff

same
stuff

10.2/15

top of leg du chert

The page numbered "2" includes a couple of stanzas about migrating birds ("Migration of birds").

September rides upon the gale
 And booms along the creaking roof
 Then stoops afar into the vale
 Spurning the brake and sumack *with* his hoof

The small birds follow in his wake
 Who threads the forest at a rustling pace
 Ruffling the surface of the lake
 He strews the affrighted leaves upon its face.

*affrighted] a l-etr
 affrighted*

~~Small birds in fleets migrate on high
 Or beat across some meadow's bay~~

Small birds in fleets migrating by
 Beat now across some meadow's bay
 And as they tack and veer on high
 With faint and hurried click beguile the way.

<ink>

The loneliest birch is brown and sere
 The farthest pool is strewed with leaves
 Which
~~That~~ float upon their watry bier
 Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves

birch] i-ach att

their

3

Venice *preserved* is in each bark
 That still sustains the ripples force
 But soon to lie deluged and dark
 Like sunken isles beneath the sailor's course

HM13201

spot of ink smudged

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13 A
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Septentrio sides upon the gale
And brooms along the creaking roof
Then stoops ago with the sole
Spears the brake and someth' with his wing

The small birds follow a bird's wake
Who thrusts the front at a rustling pace
Puffing the surface of the lake
He stuns the affrighted leaves upon his face.

~~Small birds in flocks migrating by
Beat now across some meadow's bay~~

Small birds in flocks migrating by
Beat now across some meadow's bay
And to the lake and trees on high
With faint and hurried clits beguile the eye.

The lowliest beach is brown and bare
The furthest pool is strewed with leaves
That float upon their water's vein
Where is no eye that sees, no heart that grieves

Since passed is a creek bank
That still retains the ripples from
But now the air is changed and dark
Like sunset's color through the dunes course

The verso of "2" and both sides of "3" deal with falling leaves ("Fall of the leaf").

cleanly
may

M alt fr W

Meanwhile old earth jogged steadily on
 In her mantle of purest white,
 And anon another spring was born
 When winter had vanished quite.

I marked ~~now~~ when ^{first} the wind ^{grew rude} ~~first blew~~

4 Each leaf curled like a living thing
 [As with the teeming air it would
 Secure some faint memorial of the spring

Then for its sake it turned a boat

5 And dared strange elements to brave
 Like painted palaces that float
 A ~~patient~~ summer's hoarded wealth to save.

Grown tired
 I ~~live~~ of this rank summer's wealth

Its raw and superficial show
 I fain would
 And when I hie away by stealth
 Where no ways meet ^{but still 't} ~~it still~~ doth trivial grow

Methinks by dalliance it hath caught

The shallow habits of the town.

It self infected most which ought

With ~~a~~ sterner face upon our tameness frown

A sober mind will walk alone
 apart

~~Aside~~ from nature if need be

And only its own seasons own

For nature pulling its humanity.

Current revision

teeming] all fr. teeming

I wo I

Summer's - r's wo r's

sterner] orig stan eraded

pulling] poss hutting

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I was I
r's over

form

9

HDT, vol. p.

HM 13201 3V

PE, J, vol. p.

Thank God who seasons thus the year
 kindly
 And sometimes slants his rays
 Who in his winter is most near
 easiest during
 And plainest seen upon the shortest days

seems] swoed
 d can

he's] as hes

Who gently tempers now his heats
 An then his harsher cold, lest we
 Should surfeit on the Summer's sweets
 Or pine upon the winter's crudity.

his] wo' illegible

Sometimes a late Autumnal thought
 crossed my mind rustled mid the leaves of June
 Has come to me in green July

And to its early freshness brought
 Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky
 Ripe fruits of harvest and an autumn sky.

So in mid summer I have seen
 One pensive leaf upon the birch-----vide
 Grown sere when all the rest are green
 Like some fair flour to tempt the traveller's reach.

leaf to note

when] all for white?

flour] ur illeg -
 poisoner

A dry but golden thought which gleamed
 Athwart the greenness of the mind
 And prematurely wise it seemed Oct. hues
 Too ripe amid the bowers of June to find.

Athwart] just fr Athwart

and] am afraid
 redder perhaps
 reformed

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19 A
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That Love of which I purposed to sing,
(It sings itself I ween)
Is quite a different thing,
For neither needs to cling
When both can stand.

Two sturdy oak I mean, that side by side
Withstand the wintry storm,
And spite of wind and tide,
Grow up the meadow's pride,
For both are strong.

Above they barely touch, but undermined
Down to their deepest source,
Admiring we shall find
Their roots are intertwined
Insep'rably.

April 8th ----38.

14th vs page below date

So in mid summer I hav seen
Among the glossy leaves of June
One yellow leaf when all were green

the] these?

So have I seen one yellow leaf
Amid the glossy leaves of June
Which pensive hung, but not with grief
Like some / rare flower, it had changed so soon

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Meanwhile old earth yugged steadily on
In the mantle of purest white,
And even another spring was born
When winter had vanished quite.

4 I remembered how when the wind ^{had} passed the
Each leaf curled like a living thing
As with the tearing air it would
Become some faint memorial of the spring

5 Then for its sake it turned about
And drew through elements of brown
Like painted palaces that float
A patient summons hoarded wealth to save
A patient summons hoarded wealth to save
Green trees

I love of the rank summer's wealth
Its sun and superficial show
And when I lie away by stealth
Which no way meet it still doth love
Which no way meet it still doth love

Whether by diligence it hath caught
The labor habits of the town.
It will infect most what angle
With a stern face upon our common form
A sober mind will walk alone
And ^{away} from nature if need be
And only its own reasons own
For nature pulling to humanity

W
W. W. W. W. W.
- W. W. W. W. W.

Thank God who seasons these days
And sometimes starts his rays
Who in his winter is most near
And planets run ^{down} the shortest days

Who gently tempers now his heat
Another the sharpest cold, but we
Should suspect a the summer's melt
Or find upon the winter's end.

Sometimes late autumnal thoughts
Dare come to me to green fields
And to its early peaches brought
Late ripened fruits and an autumnal sky
Ripe fruits of harvest and an autumn sky.

To a small stream I have seen
One person leap ~~up~~ ^{down} the bank
Green sea when all the rest are green
Like some fair flower to tempt the traveller's eye

A dry but golden thought which gleamed
About the greenness of the vine
And permitted by use it seemed
Too ripe around the bowers of June & June
Oct. 1865

That ~~Love~~ which I purposed to sing,
(It rings itself I ween)
Is quite a different thing,
For neither needs to cling
Where both can stand.

Two sturdy oaks I mean, that side by side
Withstand the wint'ry storm,
And spite of wind and tide,
Grow up the meadow's pride,
For both are strong.

Above they barely touch, but undermined
Down to their deepest roots,
Admiring we shall find
Their roots are intertwined
Inseparably.

April 8th - 38.

As a mid summer I have seen
Among the glory leaves of June
One yellow leaf when all were green

As have I seen one yellow leaf
Among the glory leaves of June
Which persons here, but not with grief
Till some of some flower, it had changed to green

The next three topics on the list are out of order in the manuscript. The cricket and the appearance of the wood are both on “4” (“Cricket,” “Appearance of the wood”).

4

24.8
11.7

HM13201 4v

HDT, vol. p.

PE, J, vol. p.

notably held

[further under]

stowed [e] by A

summer

where] ^{1st} e alt fr a?

<ink>

S] poss s
ber] alt fr beer?

No chance + obviously all for revision

long way spot obscuring rest

Are] e woe e?

my] alt fr are

wealthier] poss h -

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october] er illeg

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The cricket chirps beneath the sod

Already in his winter bed

Where he has made

His creak grown fainter but more broad - ~~stronger~~

And slowed his creaking without fraud

A film of Autumn oer the summer spread

~~My hand doth~~ ^I scent ^{my} its med'cine from afar

Where the rude simpler of the year

October leads the rustling war

And strews his trophies on the Summer's bier

And strews the summers glory far and near

And with shrill trumpet pierceth now my ear

The jay screams through the chestnut wood

The crisped and yellow leaves around

Are hue and texture of my mood

And these rough burs my heir loom[s on] the ground.

The thread-bare trees, so poor and thin

They are no wealthier than I

But with as brave a core within

They rear their boughs to the october sky

Poor knights they are that bravely wait
chivalry

The charge of winter's cavalry

Keeping a simple Roman state

Discumbered of their Persian luxury.

3

4

And the harvest is on “5” (“Harvest & its effects”).

(6)

HDT, vol. p.

H M 13.201 5V
PE, J , vol. p.

Nor greatness now need walk alone

ardor damp

armor shone

bustling of their camp

The harvest rattles in the wind

Red apples overhang the hay

The cereal flavor of my mind

How'er, tells me I am as ripe as they

(link, not arch p)

The moon is ripe fruit in the sky

And overhangs her harvest now

The sun doth break his stem well nigh

From summer's height he has declined so low

The greedy earth doth pluck his fruit

And cast it in Night's lap

The stars more brightly glisten--mute

Though their tears be, to see their Lord's mishap

The sharp wind searcheth every vein

And dries up humor's crude,

I spring into my place again

With unwarped strength, like staunch and

seasoned wood.

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fir*

At greatness we need haste alone

and do damage

amongst those

but they of their camp

5

The harvest rattle in the wind

3 And apples are hanging the hay

The cereals flourish of my mind

Wishes, tell me I am as ripe as they

The moon is a pale fruit in the sky

1 And we hang her harvest from

The sun doth beat his stern with night

From noon's height he has declined below

The greedy earth doth flout the fruit

And cast it on the night's cup

2 The stars more brightly glister with

Though their beams be, & see the birds' mishap

The sharp wit reacheth every ear

4 And dries up man's words,

I spring into my place again

With unwarped strength, like shroud and

seasoned wood.

Finally, the “mellow air” is on “6” (“Mellow air”).

9

much fold

H M 3201 Gr

HDT, vol. p.

PE, J , vol. p.

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Far in the woods these golden days
Some leaf obeys its maker's call
And through their hollow aisles it plays
With del'cate touch the prelude of the Fall
Gently withdrawing from its stem
lightly
It bravely lays itself along
Where the same hand hath pillowed them
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's thron
Wave upon wave a mellow air
Floods all the region
As if there were some tincture there
Of ripeness caught from the long summer sun.

low

<iah>

where wh poss

tho? alt fr It

mellow - cr added

summa poss summers

1

2

low fold

much fold

Fair in the woods these golden days
Some leaves drop in the morn'g air
And though their fallen circles it plays
With delicate touch the prelude of the Fair

Gently withdrawing from the stem
If ^{lightly} slowly lay softly along
When the same hand hath followed them
Resigned to sleep upon the old year's throng
None upon were a melon in
Flood all the region
As if there were some tincture then
Of ripeness caught from the long summer sun

The draft pages numbered “7”, “8”, and “9” contain ten of the fifteen stanzas of the poem “Cock-crowing”; and the draft pages numbered “10” through “14” contain sixteen of the seventeen stanzas that are in the shorter version of “Inspiration” and seventeen of the twenty-one stanzas that are in the longer version of “Inspiration.”

This poem would have been even longer than the longest of the fair copies. Was it going to be “the poem to be called Concord”? I just don’t know. I have not discovered a fair copy that puts into practice the rearrangements Thoreau made in the long penciled draft, and I suspect it doesn’t exist because I think the more he worked with this poetry—its conventional structure, formal language, and sedate rhymes—the more dissatisfied he became. This is decidedly not the poetry of the Chippeway. He could see that the faint praise he offered for “the best poets” in his August 18 Journal entry—that they “exhibit only a tame and civil side of nature”—applied to his own work.

I should mention two more factors that probably contributed to the fading of Thoreau’s poetic ambition. One is that in early November, he met with the first rigorous criticism of his work, from Margaret Fuller, then the editor of the Transcendentalist periodical, the *Dial*. She sent “The Mountains in the Horizon” back to him to be reworked at least once, and she never published the poem. Even though Thoreau used it a year later in his essay “A Walk to Wachusett” he must have realized that the *Dial* was the most likely outlet for his poetry and that if he was having difficulty publishing there it would be almost impossible to reach a larger audience.

Another factor is that in late November and early December, Thoreau was in the Harvard Library copying poetry from Alexander Chalmers’s 21-volume collection, *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper*. He filled nearly three hundred pages in four notebooks with notes on and extracts of English poetry for an anthology he apparently hoped to publish (“Thoreau’s Projected Work on the English Poets,” p. 243).



Poor Man's Rare Books

But instead of being stirred and motivated by what he was reading, as he had expected, he found himself disappointed—this may be an echo of his reaction to his own poems. Two comments in a Journal entry for November 30 distill this disappointment:

When looking over the dry and dusty volumes of the English poets, I cannot believe that those fresh and fair creations I had imagined are contained in them. English poetry from Gower down collected into one alcove—and so from the library window compared with the commonest nature seems very mean. . . .

I can hardly be serious with myself when I remember that I have come to Cam. after poetry—and while I am running over the catalogue, and collating and selecting—I think if it would not be a shorter way to a complete volume—to step at once into the field or wood, with a very low reverence to students and librarians. (*Journal 1*, pp. 337-338)

Thoreau's projected anthology and his projected poem of Concord met similar fates. He never published an anthology, and of the many stanzas of verse he composed in fall 1841, he chose to publish only eighteen lines, eight years later, in his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. These lines are all from "Inspiration": he used twelve in "Monday" and six in "Friday." Publication, though, as he wrote in *A Week*, is not the most important test of either quality or significance:

The true poem is not that which the public read. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, stereotyped in the poet's life. It is *what he has become through his work*. (*A Week*, p. 343)

By that criterion, Thoreau's endeavor was a success. Through his work on poetry, his own as well as that of others, he became a much better writer of prose. He continued to privilege poetry, and to revere the true poet as a heroic, enlightened figure, open to the voice of the divine, but his attempt to complete the poem of Concord was the beginning of the end of his ambition to write conventional poetry.

I'm going to suggest, however, that Thoreau found another way to capture Concord, in words in his close observation and recording of the natural phenomena of the place as they changed through the seasons. This is his phenological work. In this endeavor, which began in earnest soon after *A Week* was published, he became a student of the poetry composed by nature, which he identifies in the final chapter of *A Week*. "But here on the stream of the Concord," he writes, "where we have all the while been bodily, Nature, who is superior to all styles and ages, is now, with pensive face, composing her poem Autumn, with which no work of man will bear to be compared" (*A Week*, p. 377).

Thoreau's phenological work began between 1850 and 1851, when his casual interest in plants deepened into a more systematic study. He knew the names of most Concord species, but as he describes his new ambition in a Journal entry written several years after the fact, he wanted to become more knowledgeable in the habits of particular plant species, as well as of individual plants:

I soon found myself observing when plants first blossomed and leafed, and I followed it up early and late, far and near, several years in succession, running to different sides of the town and into the neighboring towns, often between twenty and thirty miles in a day. I often visited a particular plant four or five miles distant, half a dozen times within a fortnight, that I might know exactly when it opened, beside attending to a great many others in different directions and some of them equally distant, at the same time.
(December 4, 1856; *Journal* 1906, 9:158)

Thoreau's observations encompassed other phenomena that could be studied in Concord and the surrounding area as well, including birds and "whatever else might offer" (*Journal* 1906, 9:158). From 1851 through 1861, his Journal records the arrival and departure of various species of birds; the depth of snow in various locations on different dates; changes in the colors of leaves in autumn; freezing and thawing of Walden Pond, the Concord River, and other bodies of water; the composition of birds' nests; and other events that allowed him to understand nature in the context of seasonal change.

In April 1852—this is the third spring of his systematic study, which would become yet more systematic—Thoreau records a pivotal moment in his Journal: "For the first time I perceive this spring that the year is a circle— I see distinctly the spring arc thus far. It is drawn

with a firm line” (April 18, 1852; *Journal 4*, p. 468). In the paragraph that follows he poses a series of questions that will shape his phenological work during the next nine years:

Why should just these sights & sounds accompany our life? Why should I hear the chattering of blackbirds—why smell the skunk each year? I would fain explore the mysterious relation between myself & these things. I would at least know what these things unavoidably are—make a chart of our life—know how its shores trend—that butterflies reappear & when—know why just this circle of creatures completes the world. Can I not by expectation affect the revolutions of nature—make a day to bring forth something new? (*Journal 4* 1992, p. 468)

Ten weeks after this April entry, on July 2, he declares 1852 his “year of observation” (*Journal 5*, p. 174). The activity he undertook during this year was demanding. His Journal entries for late spring and summer 1852 include almost twenty lists in which he records the growth, blooming, prevalence, and persistence of flowers; the leafing of trees; the migration and appearance of birds; the lichens he saw in winter 1851-1852; and “miscellaneous observations,” which include weather, the ripening of fruit and berries, the color of specific fields, and the behavior of birds, insects, and reptiles (*Journal 5*, pp. 3-281 passim).

To give you an idea of how he threw himself into this work, I’ll show you most of the lists from April through August; the manuscript volume of the Journal that contains them is in the Morgan Library & Museum, NY. Bradford Torrey omitted some of these in the 1906 edition of the Journal; the Princeton Edition includes them all. He starts with flowers observed from April 21-28, recorded in his April 28 entry, and periodically throughout the summer he updates and expands his initial list:

April 28 52: (April 11-28) Are not the flowers which appear earliest in the spring the most primitive & simplest? They have been in this town thus far, as I have observed them this spring, putting them down in the order in which I think they should be named. (*Journal 5*, pp. 3-4)

April 28th 1852

I scarcely know why I am excited
when in Mr. Nye's books I read
of the country of the "New England
Tans as the Land of Greens", but
I am as much as if I were a cow.
242 Jan & Cliffs & Beyond's Brook.

Are not the flowers which appear
earliest in the Spring the most primi-
tive & simplest? They have been in this
town thus far, as I have observed them
this Spring, putting them down in the order
in which I think they should be named.
Using Gray's names -

(collected Feb. 13 '51)

<i>Symlocos</i> <i>foetida</i>		
<i>Alnus Incana</i>	Apr. 11	}
" <i>serotina</i>	" 8	
<i>Acer Roburum</i> <i>Discolorum</i>	9	one by Red Bridge
<i>Willow</i> earliest	12	
<i>Ulmus Americana</i>	15	one - Cheney's (Others 10 days or 14 later)
<i>Populus Tremuloides</i>	15	
<i>Corylus Rostrata</i>	16	perhaps before the last
<i>Carex Pennsylvanica</i>	22	
<i>Calltha Palustris</i>	25	many
<i>Stellaria Media</i>	26	Cheney's garden
<i>Capsella Bursa Pastoris</i>	26	"
<i>Taraxacum Dens-leonis</i>	25	one in water (seen by another the 20 th)
<i>Equisetum Arvense</i>	25	in water
<i>Gnaphalium Purpureum</i>	27	(about Apr 16 th '51)
<i>Thysanota Virginiana</i>	27	(Apr. 22 nd '51)
<i>Geophila</i>	"	
<i>Antennaria Plantaginifolia</i>	27	only 2 (abundant Apr 22 nd '51)
<i>Ranunculus Foscicellari</i>	28	All but the 3 rd 8 th 11 th 12 th observed in the very last season, & then within a day(?) of their flowering.

N.B. Is the hepatica tuberosa further?

I presume that the first six are
decidedly water or water loving plants
& the 7th, 10, 13th & 14th were found in
the water - & are equally if not
more comprised of the element.
- - - The 4th & 8th belong to the
cooler zones of the earth - the 7th & 11th
as I remember as far as 640 comes up
(is it this?) on burnt lands just built
upon in dry cool dreary places.

The 9th on a dry warm rocky hillside
the earliest (17) years to blossom the 18th -

The 11th & 12th in cold damp gardens
like the earth just made dry land.

- - - the 15th & 19th on dry (recently
clay with grass) fields & hills - hardly

- - - The 16th among bare rocks
in seams on mossy ground also in a day
or two the columbine will bloom. The 18th
is also indebted to the warmth of the rocks -

This may perhaps be nearly
the order of the world's creation -
thus we have in the spring of the year the
spring of the world represented. First were
the first localities of peopled plants
- water bottoms - bare rocks - & soon
dry clay lands - & land recently bare of
water.

The spotted tortoise is spotted on the
head tail - & legs. Fresh leaves of
a nettles pale & not distinctly veined.
Red Solomon seal berries on their short stems
protrude on the dead leaves, some of them
plump thin. The man has turned his cows
out to pasture. Have not seen the
plate col. moulded for a few days. I am
getting my great coat, but it is a

May 14th 52: (April 28-May 13) Hastily reviewing this journal I find the flowers to have appeared in this order since the 28th of April—perhaps some note in my Journal has escaped me. (*Journal 5*, pp. 53-56)

[Plus birds and insects]

Have not spray now
 Now ever further *Utricularia* *multiflora* the rain
 - The violet pedata *ovata* now begin to
 be abundant on warm sandy slopes. The
 leaves of the lupine 6 inches high are
 handsome covered with rain drops.

May 14th 52

Partly reviewing this journal I find the flowers
 to have appeared in this order viz the 28th of April -
 perhaps some wrote in my journal have caught me.

But I find 51 in my 30th day & earlier
 - (Page 57)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---|-----------|
| <i>Acer rubrum</i> | Apr 28 | made a female 30 th 1 st date is perhaps early enough | for both. |
| <i>P. grandidentata</i> | 29 | | |
| <i>Epigea repens</i> | 30 | (Apr. 25 51) | |
| Sweet gale | 30 | probably a day or two before | |
| <i>Vicia ovata</i> | May 1 st | (Apr. 25 51) | |
| <i>Potentilla Canadensis</i> | 3 rd | | |
| <i>Chrysothamnium Americanum</i> | 3 rd | This may have bloomed 2 or 3 days before | |
| <i>Saxifraga tritaenoides</i> | 5 th | | |
| Sweet Fern | " | | |
| <i>Thalictrum Anemonoide</i> | " | | |
| <i>Balm of Gilead</i> | " | 2 inches long. | |
| <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> | 6 th | | |
| <i>V. blanda</i> | " | Perhaps the day before. | |
| <i>Aquilegia Canadensis</i> | " | | |
| <i>Redtopis Cordata</i> | " | (Apr. 25 51) | |
| <i>Andromeda Cylindrata</i> | " | | |
| <i>Fragaria Virginiana</i> | 7 th | perhaps (May 10 th 51) | |
| <i>Ostrya</i> | 8 th | begins | |
| <i>Saxifraga alba</i> | " | | |
| <i>Betula alba</i> | 9 th | | |
| <i>Amelanchier Canadensis</i> | 9 th | | |
| <i>Vicia pedata</i> | " | probably a day or two before | |
| <i>V. cucullata</i> | " | did not examine where they grow | |
| <i>Sugar maple</i> | 10 | probably some days earlier. | |
| Canada (?) Plum in garden | 10 | | |

June 24: (May 14-June 24) On a hasty review of my journal since the 13th of May I find that I have observed the flowers in the following order– I did not attend particularly to the trees, especially the evergreens–nor to the grasses &c &c. and have knowingly omitted several besides. (*Journal 5*, pp. 130-141; omitted from *Journal 1906*)
[Plus birds and miscellaneous observations]

June 24th

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In a last review of my journal since the 13th of May, I find that I have observed the leaves in the following order. I did not attend particularly to the trees, especially the evergreen - nor of the grasses, &c &c. and I have accordingly omitted several kinds. — In groups Latin

- X ~~Urtica dioica~~ ^{Urtica} dioica. xx very early.
- X *Urtica* *pedicularis*. May 14th
- X *Saxifraga* *Pennsylvanica* "
- X *Fragaria* (in meadow)
- X *Achillea* *umbellata* (may have been some time earlier)
- X *Prunella* *sp.* in meadows
- XX *Rumex* *crispus* (corner spring) 16th
- X *Cardamine* *Pennsylvanica* 7 Prig. Apparently *hirsuta* Gray
- X *Centaurea* *trifolia* (the 2 last prob. in pretty good season)
- X *Serratula* *vulgaris* (some time earlier. I did not see it & *sinensis*)
- X *Artemisia* *Trophosium* (some time since)
- XX *Luzula* *illinoensis* 17th
- X *Veronica* *repullifolia*
- X *Thalictrum* *canadense* 18th
- X *Cyrtus* *communis* 19th earlier than the Apple
- X " *Maale* 20th (some time since)
- X *Vaccinium* *convictum* (or *puscatum*)?
- XX *Luzula* *illinoensis* 21st
- XX *Najas* *canadensis*
- X *Cerasus* *purpurea*
- X *Rubus* *accutellus*
- X *Viola* *lanceolata* 22^d in Plymouth may have been some time in Concord - see I distinguish it from *pauciflora* (in P. in prime. but not of them in C. June 13th) 23rd 25th &c.
- X *Chelidonium* *maiale* 24th
- X *Asarum* *europaeum*
- X *Pyrus* *arbutifolia* 25th
- X *Elymus* *princeps*
- X *Arctostaphylos* *uva-ursi*

- X *A. veronica* (in fruit)
- X *Trenthalia Americana* 25th May continued.
- X *Trichium cernuum* (1) (seen the day before)
- X *Vicia pubescens* (seen here 11)
- X *Polygala paucifolia*
- X *Thalictrum divicium* 26th (Toward meadow in Lincoln apparently almost done.)
- X *Equisetum limosum*
- XX *Geranium maculatum*
- X *Adiantum flowering fern* - flower ripened in meadow on 26th
- XX *Tripellium patense*
- X *Pedicularis canadensis*
- X *Cypripedium acaule* 27th (corner Spring.)
- X *Ranunculus recurvatus* (may have been a day or 2 earlier)
- X *Prunus maritima*
- X *Coriaria canadensis*
- X *Ranunculus acris*
- X *Milium nigricans* (seen in meadow)
- X *Myosotis laxa*
- X *Crataegus* - - 28th
- X *Hypoxis creta*
- X *Berberis vulgaris* 29
- X *Pilea Pennsylvanica* (3)
- X *Syrinchium Pennsylvanicum* var. *anceps*
- X ? *Polygonatum pubescens* (well budded the 25th perhaps flowered 26th)
- X *Veronica aurea* 30
- X *Cerasus serotina*
- XX *Viola palmata* (known not how long before)
- XX *Sarracenia purpurascens* (hardly yet?)
- X *Najas advena* (probably sometime before)
- X *Rubus* (Canadian? low erectish Hubbard's Grove meadow)
- X *Ranunculus abortivus*
- X *Actaea alba*
- X *Sarracenia purpurascens* (perhaps a day or 2 before)
- X *Plantago lanceolata* (pretty good season)
- X *Criophorum polystachyon* var. *angustifolium*
- X *Equisetum hyemale* (known not how long)
- X *Lupinus perennis* (some time before - almost out in 1st meadow)

- X *Zizia aurea* 2nd Apr. in pretty good season
- ? *Rubus canadensis* V. above
- X *Comandra umbellata* 3rd
- X *Nepta Glechoma* 3rd
- X *Helianthemum Canadense* 4th
- X *Liana Canadensis*
- X *Medeola Virginica* 5th
- X *Rotundifolia argentea*
- X *Leucanthemum vulgare*
- X *Rubus strigosus* (some days)
- X *Viburnum lentago*
- X *Veratrum viride* (15 heads not yet elongated)
- X *Trifolium repens* (perhaps a day or 2 later)
- X *Clematis vitalba* (in pretty good season)
- X *Erigeron bellidifolium*
- X *Arenaria latiflora* (Apr. in pretty good season)
- X *Smilacina racemosa* (?) (green flowers the 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 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Veronica scutellata (probably in prett. zone)
Pris verticillata
Oenothera purpurea
Sisymbrium officinale
Ranunculus reptans (filiformis of Michx. aff. nigroline)
Apocynon uniflorum 12" (described by Pennell & Love) (known as how to go)
Fumaria officinalis (?) 13"
Viburnum nudum 13"
Clintonia borealis (sp. in good season)
Oxalis stricta "
Prunella herbacea
Cornus alternifolia (a day or two)
Urtica dioica 15 (sp. in prett. good season)
Leontodon autumnale
Erigeron strigosus
Viburnum acerifolium
Celastrus scandens
Platanus fimbriata (?) ~~var. sinensis~~ fresh
~~*Kalmia angustata*~~ ~~*Prospice*~~ both one
Cynoglossum officinale
Rumex crispus 16
Malva rotundifolia
Potamogeton zosterifolius (sp. in prett. good season)
Naumburgia thymiflora
Viburnum dentatum
Nuphar lutea var. *kalmiana* (known as how to go)
Lysimachia quadrifolia 18
Hypericum perforatum
Veronica (great side at 19 Mrs. Horners?)
Sium *lacunosum* (like that on cliff?)
Verbascum thapsus
Apocynum androsaemifolium
Arabis hispida
Cornus paniculata
Vitis
Geranium macranthum
" *reabrum* or like *Gronovii*?
Rosa red stemmed & wild. rose?

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Pyrola asarifolia (?)
Azalea viscosa
~~*Camptopogon virginicum*~~
Prinos laevigatus (?) fresh
Quercus nigra
Linaria vulgaris (15 31)
Prunella vulgaris
Pyrola elliptica
Isotria medeoloides
Isotria medeoloides
Pris virginica 20 (Prig. *prunifolia*) (known as how to go)
~~*Epidotium*~~
Ranunculus canadensis 21
Andromeda paniculata
Tephrosia virginiana (a pretty good season)
Ratibida flava
Galium trifidum var. *latifolium*
Chimaphila repens 23 (prob. a day or two)
Pyrola secunda
Silene acaulis (perhaps a week)
Cornus coccinea (a day or two)
Saxifraga latifolia (15 31)
Phlox pilularis
Rosa rubiginosa (var. *canadensis* the com. rose)
 errors exc. etc.

Birds observed since May 13th

King bird May 14th
 Humming bird heard (?) 16th
 Veery 17th
 Pigeons or Turtle dove (?) "
 18
 Pr. A.
 Night hawk (great & boom) 25th
 Starling (Charming) 26th
 27th
 Cuckoo
 Goldfinch in dull (note) June 18th
 Cherry birds not observed till " 21st
 July 9th

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Grand tree - I have enumerated 22
 flowers observed in April
 in May 90
 not including spores. In June 92
 before the 24th
 Probably many opened several days earlier in some places

N 13

Miscellaneous observations in
 May 13th

- May 14th Grass begins to be whitened with blue
 Anemones in their prime
 May storm of 3 or 4 days, about this
 (The had had some ~~unpleasant~~ pleasant
 rainy days in the first part of May)
- 15th First birds, nests (song sparrow?)
 A Rana palustris (Great called it ~~palustris~~?)
 A young of fresh water *Trispania* in a small place
 dentate eggs through some grass
 Age 6 or 10 inches high
 leaves of shrub & of young oak, flower like
 young of painted tortoise 1 inch diameter
- 17th First lightning.
 Coelets, holding to the rocks under in to
 their feet
 young of the wood tortoise 2 1/2 inches diam.
 seen some on tender leaves after storm
 the sticky leaves of buckle berries.
 worm like frog or toad sparrow in woods
- 18th Deciduous trees generally & coniferous
 are expanding their leaves.
 Apples tall in view.
- 20th Trees leafing & farmers planting
 A ^{Pal. leaf} caterpillar ^{on} ^{of} ^{the} ^{tree} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{field}
 Frost apprehended
 Red oak leaves 1 3/4 inches long

- 21st Song Sparrow's egg
 Robins " "
 22nd Down from tender potatoe & turnip
 covers the cloths.
 Tropicidonota, ripened on water make
 Cabbins of the water alba cover the water.
 25th Pads lie on the surface now
 Picea larva galls on oaks
 Pale belly forming
 Blossom well at apple trees
 mosquitoes
 A few yellow butterflies
 Trump of the bull-frog
 Night-hawks squeak & swoon
 26 Petrus, hovi(?) makes the cattle in
 meadows smell sweet at night
 cricket begin to be numerous
 fields begin to be reddened with soil
 Hear the Peewai note
 27th cutworms, fit & eat & the wire
 leaf.
 But then peeping frogs heard
 that wonderful indescribable ~~ing~~
 voice, a wonderful fragrance in the
 corner came way begins - (not ~~before~~?)
 I perceive it as much as ever by ~~the~~
 word frog *Rana sylvatica*
- 29th some slight fog in the morning
 Quail frequently heard now a days
 30th some grass begins to come
 out of the ~~ground~~ ~~ground~~ ~~ground~~
 Fruit of the *Amelanchier* as big as small peas
 Observe the leaf of the *Thymus rotundifolia*
 Anemones nearly done
 young robins in nests
 Considerable fern at foot
 Ear of *Quadrifid* ~~grass~~ ~~grass~~ ~~grass~~

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- June 1st Saw bugs down at twilight
- 2nd Butter cups not too green yet.
- 3rd Fire flies, swarm every eve. after thunder ^{storms}
- 4th The star flowered hairy leaved Chickweed common
- 5th Young oats leave ground
 white rice cones 1 1/2 inches long
 Larch "not so red as they will be.
 Potentilla Canadensis var. *suplex* stands up
 Frost on the pines
 Some meadows white with cotton grass
 Some rye almost full height
 Lupines in their glory.
- 6th seeds, needles
 effect of recent frost on young oats
 on bottoms turning them black
- 9th The yellow water ramonensis common
 in the river.
- 9th Upland strawberries begin to ripen
before cultivated are ripened. & c
- 10th white pines budded
- 11th Fields fairly reddened with rye
 cut rye grass on the trees
- 13th Mosquitoes troublesome
- 15th Fields ^{all over} blue with blue eyed grass
 Walden 2 inches above my last ^{mark = 5 ft}
 pt count on the Walden road
 Pollen on pond. The flowers of
 the pinto pine effloresce
 From inches, about done
- 16th Arum-like berries begin to ripen ^{or?}
- 18th Rose bugs with garden rose
 Clover days
- 19th white buff-ball (C)
- 22nd Larch cones red, ground ^{importance}
 1st thunder & lightning in the night
- 23rd Thunders pouring in the night
 Racemes fruit of *Cerastium Virginicum* big
 fine top - *clivie* (what say?) V.P. 7 of 12/2
 A cool washing day.

July 7: To the 93 flowers observed in June before the 24th should be added 25 observed before the end of the month—and the following at least either overlooked before or observed not till July though they blossomed in June (*Journal 5*, pp. 196-197; omitted from *Journal 1906*)

now is still full of flowers & buds.)
 to be seen in a perfect flower - then will
 be proportion between the flower & leaves -
 - but these are fine & delicate nymph-like
 The flower of the *J. lanceolata*. very bright
 lower strip in eye particularly faint & a
 soft yellow. (Flourish) may be ||
Lepidium Virginicum pepper grass - an in - ||
 in suspension used. with red vessels some what
 like the plants' base. I find in Hubbard's
 meadow - what may be the 14" (8" - 11" or 12" wide) ||
 of Gray - *V. dictyonum*

10th 93 flowers observed in June before
 the 24th should be added 25 observed before
 the cut of the wood. after following at
 least in the red rock before or observed
 not but 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 31st

- Rubus* *virginicus*
- " *triflorus*?
- " *occidentalis* (seen in May)

Vaccinium *marianum*
 most (common bottom earlier?)
fuscatum (probably the 21st May 9th)

- Asimnophila* *ambellata*
- Lyspericum* *oblongatum*
- Liquidum* *vulgare*
- Asplenium* *platyneuron* last year June 14 (may be seen later)
- Comarostachys* *palustris*
- Xyris* *virginica* etc

making in all 129 in June
 of 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21st 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th 31st
 92 " May
 22 " April

When the yellow of flowers in the meadows
 & the red in dry land & wood paths - then
 we think it is the morning. has reached its
 height - This morning we are perhaps not more
 far. Now 9th am, prepared for anything.

July 25: Of flowers observed before June 11th the following I know or think to be still in blossom viz— (*Journal 5*, pp. 248-250)

[Plus those gone out of blossom since June 10 and those observed June 10-24 that are still common]

are heard singing from the middle
 of the page. And one flew & flew
 that day with all evaporate & the
 sun be reflected from from windows
 on the open bottom. Of the a rare
 music the earliest - bees hum round
 the flowers - visiting the flower
 bells just after sunrise.

Of flowers observed before June
 11th the following names are thought to be
 still in blossom viz -

- Stellaria media*
- Sheep heads' pulse } probably
- Potentilla canadensis* } ??
- Columbine* ?
- Delosyotis* ?
- Cyanus & Pinks*
- Jonquil* ??
- Trifolium pratense* red clover
- Celandine*
- Red clover } in favorable soil & shady places
- Tall Clover }
- Fragaria* most common
- Hypoxis aurea* ?
- Blue-eyed grass* scarce
- Juncus* ??
- Nasturtium* both numerous
- Ranunculus Purshii* ??
- Ribes* ?
- Cotton grass* common
- Rubus Canadensis* ?
- Cistus* very scarce
- Onoda* ?

Potentilla arguta not very common!
 White ones may be here & there
 White clover ??
 Meadow-sue very common
 Purple clover ?
 Purple sweet cicely
 Yellow very common
 Knapweed ?
 White-clover ?

10th (before sunrise) before June 24th) the
 following

- Trifolium pratense*
- Potentilla* ?
- Fragaria* ?
- Ranunculus*
- Asplenium*
- Caryophyllus*
- Coriander*
- Polygonum bistorta* ?
- Erigeron philadelphicus*
- Viola* ?
- Large purple or white
- Scilla maritima* ?
- Tupelo* leaves white
- 4 leaf " ?
- A. veronica*
- Androsace*
- Grape vines*
- Non rose & early thorn (in some) ?
- Pyrola* ?
- Manisuris* ? may have some here

Prinos Caenigatus

Bozonia?

Mis Virginia

Elder?

Nitellum?

Sierrilla

W. Laurel

Sweet Mar.

Of these observed between June 10th & 12th 29th

The following are still common.

~~W. Laurel~~

Floating heart

Mullein

Sage's home

Car wheel

Buttercup

Prunella

Epilobium

or most
some epilobium.

July 6th

By my intention with nature I
find myself withdrawn from
man. By intent in the sun & the
moon - in the morning & the evening
compels me to solitude.

The grandest picture in the world is
the sunset. Oh, in your higher
moods what power is there to meet?
You are of necessity isolated. The
mind that perceives clearly any
natural beauty is in that instant
withdrawn from human society.

July 26: (June 23-July 25) Flowers observed between June 23d & July 27th [Thoreau miswrites—it's July 25]

x Those observed in very good season

xx " " " rather early

S Those which have been in blossom for a day or two

X " " some days

O " " some time

V not quite open (*Journal 5*, pp. 252-259; omitted from *Journal 1906*)

[Plus miscellaneous observations]

Flowers observed between June 23^d

& July 2^d

- x These showed in very good season
- xx " " " rather early
- s some have been in blossom for a day or two
- x " " " some days
- o " " " some time
- v not quite open

Rubus hispida, seen July 6th o

Potamogeton hybridus, seen June 26th - o

" " " narrow leaved (leaves seen 9th 10th) o

Linnaea borealis June 24th going out of blossom

June 24th *Vaccinium macrocarpum* x

Calopogon pulchellus v

Asclepias quadrifida s

x *Fisacia salicifolia* ~~o~~

x *Archangelica canadensis*

25th xx *Mentha ulmifolia*

x *Prinos verticillatus*

x *Rhus typhina*

Convolvulus sepium

Linnaea vulgaris - seen by another 19th ult

Lychnis viscaria s

26th x *Nyssa sylvatica*

Lychnis viscaria var. *viridula* small form o

27th *Epilobium angustifolium* probably 16th

Asclepias tuberosa o

28th x *Stemmatea bicolor*

29th *Scorzonera officinalis* seen

Sporanum ramosum pretty good season

- 29th xx *Portulaca cordata*
Arenaria virginiana X
 30th *Asperula cataractae* sp. in good season
 July 1st xx *Trifolium arvense*
Synanthus viridis V
Ligustrum vulgare X
Hypocistis ellipticum S
 x *Polygonum rugelatum*
 x *Lobelia spicata*
Kuhnia virginica sp. in good season
Comarostaphyly 0
 2nd x *Mollugo verticillata*
 x *Polygonum convolvulus*
Cornus rotundifolia S
 3rd x *Silene canadensis*
Chimaphila umbellata 0
 x *Polygonum persicaria*
 x *Ceanothus americanus*
 x *Asclepias purpurascens*
 x *Daucus carota*
 4th *Synanthus laevis* var. *hybrida* S
Erigeron aurea "
 5th *Typha latifolia* X
Campanula sp. in good season
 x *Centaurea maculata*
 x *Asclepias cornuta* (2nd 3rd)
 x " *incarnata*
 6th x *Cirsium arvense*
Vicia cracca 0
 x *Pastinaca sativa*
 x *Asperula eupatorioides*
Taraxacum vulgare V

- 6th *Castanea vesca* S
 x *Silene fistulosa*
Lycopus dendroideus S
Galium triflorum X
 " *triflorum* X
Scutellaria lateriflora S
Circaea alpina S
 7th x *Sparganium angustifolium*
Pyrola rotundifolia (?) *elliptica* (?) *chlorantha* (?)
 some earlier some later 0
 x *Plantago major*
 x *Lepidium virginicum*
 x 17-18 or 19 " *arvense* (?) of Gray
 8th small globe white flowers *paniculata*
Sium latifolium S
 9th x *Thalictrum americanum* (July 9th 51)
Asclepias tuberosa sp. in good season
 x *Lactuca elongata*
Ludwigia palustris 0
Utricularia cornuta S
Thymus gratioloides S
Sida acuta var. *virginiana*? X
 x *Galium aparine*
 10th x *Portulaca oleracea*
Nelumbo leucantha sp. in good season
 x *Scutellaria galericulata*
Sonchus longifolia X
 x *Diocleis complanata*?
 11th x *Polygonum hydrophyloides* (?)
 large orange lily shaped from cult. X S
 x *Impatiens pallida*
 13 x *Mollugo stricta*?

- July 13th *Polygala sanguinea* S
 " " *crucata* S
 x *Veronica ulmifolia* S
Ochrorium intybus S (9/51)
Urtica gracilis S
Polygonum aviculare O
 16th x *Chenopodium album* S
Cornus form of sagittaria S
 x *Xyris*
 x *Callitriche occidentalis*
 x *Rhynchospora virginica*
 x *Thalictrum asperum*
 x *Plantago lanceolata*
Desmodium acuminatum S
 xx *Silene maritima*
 17th x *Antennaria margaritacea*
Rosa carolina? X
Lobelia inflata S
 x *Lappa major*
 x *Anarcardium hybridum*
 x *Verbena hastata*
 x *Eupatorium altissimum*
Hypoxis canadense S
 18th x *Mentha canadensis*
Peltandra virginica about edge of Pt. wetland
 A *Veronica* well out
 x *A narrow leaved polygonum* found near Pt. wetland
Spergula arvensis O
Raphanus raphanistrum X
 x *Sycopus ruscifolius*
Brassica peitata O nice July 17
 19 *Phytolacca dicandra* S

- 20th *Elodea virginica* X
 x *Pentstemon sedoides*
Prockmeria cylindrica? S
Alisma plantago O
 21st x *Mimulus ringens*
Sium lineare (?), with round black stem
 22nd *Aster macrophyllus* S
Lysimachia ciliata O (16/51)
Strova rotundifolia X
Monarda uniflora S (same date 4/51)
 xx *Polypogon canadensis*?
 x *Another Polygonum* *Polypogon* *perfoliatum* or *hydropiper*
 x *Cnicus lanceolatus*
Gabium circaeans O
 unknown flower:
 quite small aster like flower just out
 23rd x *Pycnanthemum muticum* (Calamin. July 5/51)
 x *Cnicus pumilus*
 x *Chenopodium hybridum*
 unknown plant with flower
 24th x *Lobelia cardinalis*
 x *Euphorbia canadensis*?
 25 x *Polygonum hydrophyllum*

Miscellaneous Observations within same dates -

July 24th White ash tree
 Excessives on grape leaves & vines
 uncommonly cool weather
 many small flies for fruit tree

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most June grass dead in dry fields
 Pine tops incline
 Parula and *Andromeda* has bottom of it.
 25th Season of wild rose
 White pine cones 1/2 inch long
 26th A fine wing grass in sprout lands
 Bluey underside of quills & other leaves ^{in blue}
V. Pennsylvanicum ripe for a day or two on trees
 Meadow fragrance still perceived
 27th Freshness of the year nearly passed
 Fields generally incline to a reddish brown ^{green}
 parting with the wood.
 Hawthorn in their prime
 29th Blue berries brought to sell
 Yell. water ramunculus scarce
 30th Lower shoots of *Andromeda* ^{inches long}
 about oak acorns as long as pen
 Proboscis used heart for a week.
 July 1st Roses in their prime
 Rubus *triflorus* (?) ripe
 2nd Clover heads drying up
 3rd Have seen no warts for some time
 Rubus *stigosus* ripe prob. a day or two
 Hardly a geranium now
 4th Young houts 1 inch long
 moss rose up out of bloom
 5th Humble berry ripe
 Vaccinium *fuscatum* (?) ripe 5 RR
 Season progresses & berrying time & least ^{weeds}
 Butterflies have generally disappeared.
 6th Caterpillar nests on hick oak
 7th Fresh really fresh morning

7th Do not see the *Andromeda* now
 Drooping heads of rattle make grass
 8th Great moth - *Atticus Luna* on tree
Parthenia begins to show
 9th First seen a *tanagers* this year
 Matting a great luxury
 Warm weather ^{by most birds in the}
Vaccinium vacillans heard then & there
Rubus Canadense
 10th White pines have a strawberry fragrance
 11th Fishes nests left dry - ^{since low}
 Elder - *pogonias*, & *Calo pogon* ^{abundant}
 Made important insignificant.
 13th *Cerasus Pennsylvanicum* ripe
Gaylussacia blue for a day or two
 " *veniosa* ripe
Vaccinium corymbosum ripe
 15 Fleets of yel. butterflies in road
 16 Little hawk fall note of bobolink
 a Goldfinch twitters over
Parus patilla berries black
 17th Gentle summer rain ^{like falling}
^{early in} ^{city} ⁱⁿ ^{consequence}
 Roses not numerous, many pink still numerous
 green coat of leaves out
 Yellow flower bunches of Indigo weed
 Entire leaves *virgata* abundant
 Meadows white with meadow rue
 18 *Parthenia* in prime
 White lilies in greatest profusion
 Cooler - *laccaria* - (muggy - hard) weather
 A ^{water} *Columbine* still
^{grass} *Andromeda* still found under high mead.
 Green grass ready for mowing

- 19th *Ceranus parvula* may be a day or two
 Chestnut blossoms have made ^{up} ~~up~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{some} ~~some~~ ^{time}
- 20th Aromatic leaves of blue cepts appear
- 21st A broken stem from a hobo link
 A golden robin 2 or 3 times
 Early straight thorned rose, early bloom
 Older locust
- 22nd Flock of female hobo links
 Green berries of arum - axil flowers of
 rest & reddish fruit of Trillium
 Farmers field begin meadow laying
 More purple like heat after all
 Huckleberrying & blackberrying ^{commence}
- 23rd *Ceranus virginiana* ripe
Peperis arbutifolia "
- 24th Some mostly orange berries red
 Fresh green ^{on} ^{the} ^{green} ^{fields}
 Gold finch, 1 seen about on willows
- 25th Morning fog falling low lands the sea
 & evening battalions ... (Herald Reed)

Tuesday, July 27th '52

4 pm to (about behind) Bee Flaw

It is pleasing to behold at this season
 contrasted shade and sunshine on the
 side of neighboring hills. They need
 so attractive to the eye when all in
 the shadow of a cloud or wholly open
 to the sunshine. Each must enhance
 the other.

That the luxury of walking in the
 sun may be perfect it must be very less
 - such as we find days even in July - is

August 5: Of the list of flowers "observed before June 11th" which I thought to be still in blossom July 25th—the following are now probably out of bloom viz. (*Journal 5*, pp. 276-281; omitted from *Journal 1906*)

[Plus flowers observed between June 23d & July 27 (list given July 26th) that are probably out of bloom, those very common, those abundant and conspicuous, those still common since July 25, and those still in bloom since June 10]

were uncollected so low a point of sub-
stituted a higher. Then proper to
have heard the names of some - but
for the most part they give no evidence
in their opinions & some that they have
heard it. It would not leave them
narrow-minded & bigoted.

Of the list of flowers observed
before June 11th which I thought that they were
in bloom July 25th - the following are
now probably out of bloom viz.

~~Colombine~~

~~Correl~~

~~Samolonia~~

~~Ranunculus Purshii~~

~~Rubus Canadensis?~~

~~Cistaceae black long?~~

~~Prunella ~~sp.~~~~

Of flowers observed between June
23rd & July 27 (list given July 26th)
the following are probably out of bloom
(I think of them only about which I am
more confident)

Linnæa borealis (observed too late) of course.

Colopogon pulchellus

Archangelica?

Prinos verticillatus

Rhus venenata

Opuntia perfoliata?

Hedyotis longifolia??

Arenone Virginiana

Lysimachia stricta (may be inserted left)

Ligustrum vulgare?

Hypericum ellipticum

Knigia?

Thoreau is at the beginning of a very long project, and he does not yet see where it will lead. His sense of being overwhelmed by the amount of detail he is trying to assimilate is conveyed by another passage in the July 2 Journal entry: “At this season methinks we do not regard the larger features of the landscape—as in the spring—but are absorbed in details— ... You are a little bewildered by the variety of objects. There must be a certain meagreness of details and nakedness for wide views” (*Journal 5*, p. 174). We get another glimpse of his mental state during this period of intense absorption in phenomena in a July 13, 1852, letter to Sophia:

I am not on the trail of any elephants or mastodons, but have succeeded in trapping only a few ridiculous mice, which cannot feed my imagination. I have become sadly scientific. I would rather come upon the vast valley-like “spore” only of some celestial beast which this world’s woods can no longer sustain, than spring my net over a bushel of moles.
(*Correspondence 2*, p. 112)

He persevered, however, entering his observations in his Journal and marking many of them with double virgules for ease of locating them. (He must have realized that maintaining lists in his Journal like the ones he kept in 1852 just wasn’t tenable.)

He explored not only the events of nature but the relationship between himself and those events, as you’ll see in this example. In his Journal entry for October 26, 1858, he marks not only the flowing of sap in the largest scarlet oak in the neighborhood and the trees that are taking a long time to lose their leaves, but also the thickness of the coat he is wearing and the coolness of his fingers—and he comments on the effect of the cooler weather on the sale of gloves. The following is a transcription of the first part of Thoreau’s October 26 entry; the manuscript is in the Morgan Library & Museum, NY.

At some time in the early 1860s, Thoreau collected his marked observations in lists ordered by year and category (general phenomena by month, growth and leafing, flowers, birds, animals). Here you see his Journal observations as he transferred them to his list of October 1858 phenomena (the manuscript is in the Morgan Library & Museum, NY):

Sap flows in Scarlet oaks 26

(generally bare 29th)

white birches—elms—chestnuts—s. alba & small

willows—& white maples are a long time falling

Wear a thicker coat (not an outside one) & begin to

feel finger cold early & late

Shop keepers bring out woolen gloves

From the lists, he moved the information into charts, many arranged on large sheets of paper with years across the top and phenomena down the left side, to provide a picture of the occurrence of particular phenomena over time. At this stage Thoreau made a choice about which chart was appropriate for the events he had recorded.

The note about sap flowing in scarlet oaks doesn't appear on any of the extant charts—there's no use mark through it, either.

The information about the leaves of white birches, elms, chestnuts, salix alba, small willows, and white maples—marked through with an ink line—was entered on a chart titled “Fall of the Leaf” (the manuscript is in the Morgan Library & Museum, NY):

p. 1	Chestnut	Oct 25 gen. bare long time falling
	White Birch	29 gen bare long time falling
p. 2	S. Alba	Oct 26 & <u>small willows long time falling</u>
	Am. Elm	26 long time falling
p. 5	White Maple	26 [almost] bare except small

	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	50	51
Juap Cornel											
White Hazel	Oct 19 - base										
Wild Gooseberry	"					Oct 19 - base			Oct 19 - base		
Current											
Meat. meat					Oct 21 - base						
Hard hark											
Flowering Raspberry											
Red. Raspberry											
High Blackberry (2 var)											
Low Blackberry											
Thimbleberry											
R. Hempstead											
R. Triploras											
Early North Rose											
North Rose											
Rosa Carolina											
West Brier											
Cochequin Thorn											
White Thorn		Oct 24 - base									
Hard Thorn											
Pear											
Apple	Oct 5 - base										
Am. Wild ash											
Chokeberry (2 kinds)											
June-berry (2 kinds)											
Quince											
Beach Plum											
Canada Plum											
Northern Red Cherry		Oct 23 - base									
Sand Cherry											
Black Cherry											
Choke Cherry											
Cultivated Cherry											
Socumb		Oct 24 - leaf base									
Grape (2 kinds)		Oct 1 - leaf base									
Woodbine											
Buck Thorn											

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- Linnaea
- Fernroot
- Scirilla
- Elder
- Naked viburnum
- hedge viburnum
- Arrow-wood
- Maple-leafed arrow-wood
- White Andromeda
- Dwarf Camellia
- Panicled Lyonia
- Clustered Zambria
- Clethra
- Wax-flower
- Chickensberry
- Arbutus var. var.
- White Swamp Pink
- Pink Swamp Pink
- Rhodora
- Wax Laurel
- Sambur
- Kalmia flauca
- Sedum
- Black Hotholly
- Red. Hotholly
- Strawberry
- Vac. Junodum
- High-holly
- Vac. Pennsylvanicum
- Vac. varillans
- Common Cranberry
- European Cranberry
- Alternate cornel
- Round-leafed cornel
- Panicled cornel
- Waxy cornel
- Flowering Dogwood

Nov 5 some pinkish

Nov 9 just falling

Oct 23 1/2 fallen

Oct 26 not yet fallen

Nov 8 some long fallen

Nov 7 some long fallen

Oct 28 1/2 fallen
 Oct 23 the base / Nov 3
 1. Oct 23 some still green leaves
 18 in fall
 Oct 31 about base

Nov 7 some leaves red
 15 fallen
 Oct 27 1/2 fallen -
 28 base

Oct 16 fallen

Oct 23 1/2 fallen or more Oct 23 some long?

Oct 15 fallen

Oct 15 1/2 falling

Oct 16 fallen

Oct 18 fallen

Oct 19 falling fast
 Oct 16 fallen
 Oct 22 fallen 1/2 fallen all day

Nov 12 after base

Oct 19 about base

Nov 7 base

Oct 18 base of fall
 Nov 12 after base
 Nov 16 1/2
 Nov 19 1/2 fallen
 Oct 21 1/2 fallen
 Nov 13 1/2 fallen

51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
<p>Beak of young long slender Faded white tips in dark Broken without Below of white scar Downy long leaflet - very small Small thorns Hypocistis greenish leaf with fine dark lines Lower part of young form Felt of leaf pale green Enfolded Dicksonia form Pine mark washed off look green brown Reddish brown black & white Leaf growth white - the whole as the No. 1 in stream Rushes Long old white to pale green Leaf whitish in the back Bird range tree White of the leaf to be in Meadows near Oak point in the high hills No. 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20 - 21 - 22 - 23 - 24 - 25 - 26 - 27 - 28 - 29 - 30 - 31 - 32 - 33 - 34 - 35 - 36 - 37 - 38 - 39 - 40 - 41 - 42 - 43 - 44 - 45 - 46 - 47 - 48 - 49 - 50 - 51 - 52 - 53 - 54 - 55 - 56 - 57 - 58 - 59 - 60 - 61 - 62 - 63 - 64 - 65 - 66 - 67 - 68 - 69 - 70 - 71 - 72 - 73 - 74 - 75 - 76 - 77 - 78 - 79 - 80 - 81 - 82 - 83 - 84 - 85 - 86 - 87 - 88 - 89 - 90 - 91 - 92 - 93 - 94 - 95 - 96 - 97 - 98 - 99 - 100 - 101 - 102 - 103 - 104 - 105 - 106 - 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PROPERTY OF
 THE THOREAU EDITION
 RETURN TO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
 GENESEEO, NEW YORK 14454

9/25/15
 6/2/15
 8/5/15

The information about his reaction to the increasing cold, marked through in pencil, is on the chart titled “General Phenomena for October.” The manuscript is in the Beinecke Library, Yale University; for a digital image, see <http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3558329>.

In the category “Wear a thicker coat than thin” under the year “58” we see “26 a thicker (not outside one)”–he must have had at least three coats of different weights (Journal—greatcoat, thin coat, outside coat); in the next category, “Finger cold early or late” we have “26 beg. to feel finger cold early & late.”

The chart allows him to see the variation year by year from 1852 through 1861. He doesn’t have a Journal entry every year for these two observations, but there are enough for him to create an average

In 1852, he changed coats “Before Oct 2d”; in 1856, he wore “a thicker coat” on October 1; in 1857, it was “Before Oct 5th”; in 1858, October 26. In the leftmost column he recorded what seems to be a mean or an average date for the changing of the coats—“3 or earlier.”

The cold began to affect his fingers on the 14th in 1856 (“after rains in night suddenly changes to finger cold”); on the “21st at least” in 1857; on the 26th in 1858 (“beg to feel finger cold early & late”); on two days in 1859, the 16th (“hands cool when rowing at eve”) and the 20th (“at eve”); and on October 1 in 1860 (“cold enough for mittens in am”). The average date for this is the 14th, I think—the pencil is very faint.¹

He has much more data for some events than for others: there are annual observations about the river at its lowest, about hard frosts, about Indian Summer, and about gossamer—that is, spider silk—and for almost every year about when it rained (first or last half), about the temperature and the wind, and, in the very last row, in pencil, “Shadbush &c &c leaf after Ind. Summer.”

¹ In *Walden's Shore*, Robert Thorson includes his hypothesis about why Thoreau was interested in the mean date of occurrence for the phenomena he recorded in his charts. The explanation is necessarily somewhat complex; see pp. 318-322.

General Phenomena for October

52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

Partly cloudy
 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31.
 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31.
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River Discharge

Rain in 1st half
 Rain in 2nd half

NE storm from night

Rain from morning to evening

Fog at

Thunder Power

Lightning at sea

Spring low

Turner hole bright

Muske in horizon

Washed goods in dolly

1st wide weather

East of station

1st decided weather

Mean a thicker with than

Temp cold early a late

Old holes in d. remove

Wind after do

Very cold

Heart Fresh

Ice in part a tubs

Ice a long one in

Fog at sea

Begin there for tomorrow

Moon in water

90

NOV 8 NOV 10 NOV 11 NOV 12 NOV 13 NOV 14 NOV 15 NOV 16 NOV 17 NOV 18 NOV 19 NOV 20 NOV 21 NOV 22 NOV 23 NOV 24 NOV 25 NOV 26 NOV 27 NOV 28 NOV 29 NOV 30 NOV 31

General Phenomena for October

| | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 |
|------------------------------|------------|-------|--------|-------------------|----|--------|--------------------|----|----|----|
| 26 Cool white mist | | Nov 2 | | | | Oct 17 | 29 cool white mist | | | |
| 15 mist before & behind | | | | | | Oct 17 | 7' | | | |
| 16 mt. peak the top of the | 26 on a. 9 | | | | | Oct 17 | | 3' | | |
| 18 mt. peak the top of the | 26 | | | | | Oct 21 | 3' | | | |
| 20 Cool grey mist the top of | 26 | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 Yellow dipper | 21 | | 3/4 27 | Oct 12 - 20 Nov 1 | | 21 | Nov 1 | | | |
| 22 Winter like morning | 31 | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 61 | | | | | | | | | | |

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including dates like 'Oct 17', 'Nov 1', and 'Nov 2'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'High wind', 'Strong NW wind', and 'Strong S. wind'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Cold & Blustering' and 'Reflected from the snow'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Double shadow', 'Red light from side', and 'Lightning with mist'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Fogging over' and 'Fogging over'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Fogging over' and 'Fogging over'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Fogging over' and 'Fogging over'.

Handwritten notes in red boxes, including 'Fogging over' and 'Fogging over'.

Thoreau put a tremendous amount of time and effort into this project, which he called his “Kalendar,” with a capital “K,” and the work involved several stages, as you’ve seen. Observing and recording the phenomena was only the beginning. He had to decide which events were significant for his study (at the outset he probably included more than he ended up using). Then he had to figure out how best to organize the information. Finally, he had to apply the organization he had chosen, first copying the information into the lists, and then creating the charts.

As I said, I believe that he started extracting the Journal information into lists sometime in 1860. I think that much of the chart-making took place in the later summer and fall of 1861 after he returned from Minnesota in July. Altogether, seventeen charts survive; they compile data in the categories of general phenomena for April, May, June, October, and November, all phenomena for December, phenomena for winter, leafing, flowering (three charts), the fall of the leaf, birds (three charts), insects, and the freezing and thawing of Walden, White’s, and Flint’s Ponds. Most include phenomena for dates from 1850 through 1861. It’s not clear whether the gaps represent uncollected data or data he didn’t live long enough to transfer—a close study of one category of lists and the charts that resulted could help answer that question.

The charts seem to be the only substantial end product for this project—but do they represent all that he wanted to do with this data? I’m sure they do not. They look like the end product because they’re as far as he got with the project—he ran out of time, literally, before he could put the information to any other use.

What would he have done with it had he lived another several decades? He didn’t tell us, and I don’t think there’s enough indirect evidence to know.

He mentions the Kalendar in his Journal one time only, in an entry for Sunday, October 16, 1859:

When I get to Willow Bay I see the new musquash houses erected—conspicuous on the now nearly leafless shores— To me this is an important & suggestive sight—as, perchance, in some countries new hay-stacks in the yards.

I remember the phenomenon annually for 30 years. A more constant phenomenon here than the new haystacks in the yard—for they were erected here probably before man dwelt here & may still be erected here when man has departed. For 30 years I have annually observed about this time, or earlier—, the freshly erected winter

lodges of the musquash along the river side reminding us that if we have no gypsies we have a more indigenous race of furry quadrupedal men maintaining their ground in our midst still— This may not be an annual phenomenon to you— It may not be in the Greenwich almanack—or ephemeris—but it has an important place in my Kalendar. So surely as the Sun appears to be in Libra or Scorpio—I see the conical winter lodges of the musquash rising above the withered pontederia & flags— There will be some reference to it, by way of parable or otherwise in my New Testament. Surely, it is a defect in our Bible—that it is not truly ours, but a Hebrew Bible— The most pertinent illustrations for us are to be drawn, not from Egypt or Babylonia—but from New England.

Talk about learning our letters & being literate—why the roots of letters are things. Natural objects & phenomena are the original symbols or types which express our thoughts & feelings—& yet American scholars—having little or no root in the soil—commonly strive with all their might to confine themselves to the imported symbols alone— All the time growth & experience—the living speech, they would fair reject as "Americanism". It is the old error—which the church—the state—the school ever commit—choosing darkness rather than light—holding fast to the old—& to tradition. A more intimate knowledge—a deeper experience will surely originate a word. When I really know that our river pursues a serpentine course to the Merrimack—shall I continue to describe it by referring to some other river no older than itself which is like it—& call it a meander? It is no more meandering than the meander is Musketaquidding.

What if there were a tariff on words—on language—for the encouragement of home manufactures. Have we not the genius to coin our own? Let the schoolmaster distinguish the true from the counterfeit.

They go on publishing the "chronological cycles" & "Moveable festivals of the Church" & the like—from mere habit— but how insignificant are these compared with the annual phenomena of your life—which fall within your experiences. The signs of the zodiac are not nearly of that significance to me—that the sight of a dead sucker in the spring is. That is the occasion for an immoveable festival in my church. Another kind of Lent then begins in my thoughts than you wot of— I am satisfied then to live on fish alone—for a season

Men attach a false importance to Celestial phenomena as compared with terrestrial—as if it were more respectable & elating to watch your neighbors than to mind

your own affairs. The nodes of the stars are not the knots we have to untie The phenomena of our year are one thing—those of the almanac another!

For october, for instance, instead of making the sun enter the sign of the scorpion I would much sooner make him enter a musquash-house

The snapping turtle too—must find a place among the constellations—though it may have to supplant some doubtful character already there. If there is no place for him over head—he can serve us bravely underneath supporting the earth—

In March 1860 Journal entries he did use information drawn from his March lists to try to tell the story of a typical March, but after a robust start the narrative diminishes into a daily weather report. I suspect that he moved to the chart format after that because he had an idea that the charts would yield more or different information. His vision for the project was vast—to explore what he called the “mysterious relation” between himself and the phenomena of nature—and I doubt that vision diminished over time.

Let me close with my own thoughts about this product of Thoreau’s intense involvement with Concord.

Like all phenological charts, Thoreau’s demonstrate the persistent cycles of phenomena through the passage of time. They present the facts of nature, set down as they occurred, but organized so that they reveal cycles of repetition with variation. But thousands of events take place every days and there has to be some principle of selection—these charts contain the phenomena that Thoreau chose, the events he saw as important. The charts have a numinous, essential quality for me because they distil the Concord that Thoreau experienced from 1850 through 1861, allowing me to view that place at that time through his own filter.

I can also imagine Thoreau using the charts as a mnemonic device. He had a prodigious intellectual capacity and a memory to match—he could hold and synthesize details in his mind, and allow the synthesis to evolve there. In an April 8, 1854, Journal entry he wrote:

I find that I can criticise my composition best when I stand at a little distance from it—when I do not see it, for instance—. I make a little chapter of contents which enables me to recall it page by page to my mind—& judge it more impartially when my MSS is out of the way. (*Journal 8*, pp. 59-60)

When he saw his 1851 note on “Gossamer” in the October chart—“Nov. 1 -51 remarkable a bright clear warm day—” [observations often lapse back into the month before or jump forward into the month after the nominal month of the chart]—I can see it calling to his mind the details that made the phenomenon worth noting, as set down in his Journal:

It is a remarkable day for fine gossamer cob-webs. Here on the causeway as I walk toward the sun I perceive that the air is full of them streaming from off the willows & spanning the road—all stretching across the road—and yet I cannot see them in any other direction—and feel not one. It looks as if the birds would be incommoded. They have the effect of a shimmer in the air. This shimmer moving along them as they are waved by the wind gives the effect of a drifting storm of light. It is more like a fine snow storm which drifts athwart your path than anything else. What is the peculiar condition of the atmosphere to call forth this activity. If there were no sunshine I should never find out that they existed— I should not know that I was bursting a myriad barriers. Though you break them with your person you feel not one. Why should this day be so distinguished. (*Journal 4*, pp. 159-160)

For him, the charts would have been like a honeycomb, with each chamber filled with material for his writing.

Cycles form the structure of Thoreau’s two books—going out and returning, moving through a week on the water (condensed from two weeks), living through a year (condensed from two years). In his phenological work, he immerses himself in the most significant cycle of all, the cycle on nature, knowing that it started long before he began recording, or began to be, and would continue long after he was gone. The charts memorialize his personal slice of that vast cycle.

And to return to Thoreau’s aspiration to write a “poem to be called Concord,” though these charts bear no outward resemblance to poetry, I see them as Thoreau’s transcription of the poems that nature composed in Concord year after year, during the last full decade of his life. He never characterized his phenological work this way, but in a Journal entry for Sunday, December 7, 1856, he describes the poem of winter in a way that makes me think he wouldn’t object to being seen as the scribe of nature’s poetry:

That grand old poem called Winter is round again without any connivance of mine— As I sit under Lees Cliff where the snow is melted—amid sere penny royal & frostbitten catnep—I look over my shoulder upon an arctic scene. I see with surprise the pond a dumb white surface of ice speckled with snow, just as so many winters before,—where so lately were lapsing waves or smooth reflecting water. I see the holes which the pickerel fisher has made—& I see him too retreating over the hills drawing his sled behind him. The water is already skimmed over again there. I hear too the familiar belching voice of the pond. It seemed as if winter had come without any interval since mid-summer & I was prepared to see it flit away by the time I again looked over my shoulder. It was as if I had dreamed it. But I see that the farmers have had time to gather their harvests as usual, and the seasons have revolved as slowly as in the first autumn of my life. The winters come now as fast as snow-flakes— It is wonderful that old men do not lose their reckoning. It was summer—& now again it is winter. Nature loves this rhyme so well that she never tires of repeating it. So sweet & wholesome is the winter—so simple & moderate—so satisfactory & perfect that her children will never weary of it. What a poem! An epic, in blanc verse enriched with a million tinkling rhymes. It is solid beauty. It has been subjected to the vicissitudes of millions of years of the gods & not a single superfluous ornament remains— The severest & coldest of the immortal critics have shot their arrows at & pruned it till it cannot be amended.

(Transcript: http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings_journals_pdfs/J11f4-f6.pdf, pp. 123-124; manuscript:

http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings_journals_pdfs/J11TMS22.pdf, pp. 65-66)

Thank you.

Short Titles

- Correspondence 1* *The Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, vol. 1, 1834-1848 (Princeton UP, 2013)
- Correspondence 2* *The Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, with Elizabeth Hall Witherell and Lihong Xie, vol. 2, 1849-1856 (Princeton UP, 2018)
- Journal 1* Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal 1: 1837-1842*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell, et. al (Princeton UP, 1981)
- Journal 4* Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal 4: 1851-1852*, ed. Leonard N. Neufeldt and Nancy Craig Simmons (Princeton UP, 1992)
- Journal 5* Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal 5: 1852-1853*, ed. Patrick F. O'Connell (Princeton UP, 1997)
- Journal 8* Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal 8: 1854*, ed. Sandra Harbert Petrulionis (Princeton UP, 2002)
- Journal 1906* Henry D. Thoreau, *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, 14 vols. (Houghton Mifflin, 1906)
- Laws of Manu* *The Laws of Manu*, trans. by Wendy Doniger with Brian Smith (Penguin, 1991), p. xvii
- RWE Letters* Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph L. Rusk, 6 vols. (Columbia UP, 1939)
- Thoreau: A Life* Laura Dassow Walls, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (U of Chicago P, 2017)
- "Thoreau's Projected Work on the English Poets" Robert Sattelmeyer, "Thoreau's Projected Work on the English Poets," *Studies in the American Renaissance 1980*, ed. Joel Myerson (Twayne, 1980), pp. 239-257
- Walden's Shore* Robert Thorson, *Walden's Shore: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Science* (Harvard UP, 2014)
- A Week* Henry D. Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl F. Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (Princeton UP, 1980)