

The young fellow sitting near me winked; and the divinity-student said in an undertone,—
Optime dictum.

Your talking Latin,—said I,—reminds me of an odd trick of one of my old tutors. He read so much of that language, that his English half turned into it. He got caught in town, one hot summer; in pretty close quarters, and wrote, or began to write, a series of city pastorals. Eclogues he called them, and meant to have published them by subscription. I remember some of his verses, if you want to hear them.—you, sir, (addressing myself to the divinity-student) and all such as have been through college, or, what is the same thing, received an honorary degree, will understand them without a dictionary. The old man had a great deal to say about “aestivation,” as he called it, in opposition, as one might say, to *hibernation*. Intra-mural aestivation, or town-life in summer, he would say, is a peculiar form of suspended existence, or semi asphyxia. One wakes up from it about the beginning of the last week in September. This is what I remember of his poem:

AESTIVATION.

An Unpublished Poem, by my late Latin Tutor.

In candent ire the solar splendor flames;
The foles, languescant, pend from arid rames;
His humid front the cive, anhelant, wipes,
And dreams of erring on ventiferous ripes.

How dulce to vive occult to mortal eyes,
Dorm of the herb with none to supervise,
Carp the suave berries from the crescent-vine,
And bibe the flow from longicaudate kine!

To me, alas! no vendurous visions come,
Save yon exiguous pool's conferva-scum,—
No concave vast repeats the tender hue
That laves my milk-jug with celestial blue!

Me wretched! Let me curr to quercine shades!
Effund your albid hausts, lactiferous maids!
Oh, might I vole to some umbrageous clump—
Depart,—be off,—excede,—evade.—erump!

I have lived by the sea-shore and by the mountains.—No, I am not going to say which is best. The one where your place is is the best for you. But this difference there is: you can domesticate mountains, but the sea is *feroe naturoe*. You may have a hut, or know the owner of one, on the mountain-side; you see a light half-way up its ascent in the evening, and you know there is a home, and you might share it. You have noted certain trees, perhaps; you know the particular zone where the hemlocks look so black in October, when the maples and beeches have faded. All the reliefs and intaglios have electrotyped themselves in the medaillons that hang round the walls of your memory's chamber.—The sea remembers nothing. It is feline. It licks your feet,—its huge flanks purr very pleasantly for you; but it will crack your bones and eat you, for all that, and wipe the crisomed foam from its jaws as if nothing had happened. The mountains give their lost children berries and water; the sea mocks their thirst and lets them die. The mountains have a grand, stupid, lovable tranquility; the sea has a fascinating, treacherous intelligence. The mountains lie about like huge ruminants, their broad backs awful to look upon, but safe to handle. The

sea smooths its silver scales until you cannot see their joints,—but their shining is that of a snake's belly, after all.—In deeper suggestiveness I find as great a difference. The mountains dwarf mankind and foreshorten the procession of its long generations. The sea drowns out humanity and time; it has no sympathy with either; for it belongs to eternity; and of that it sings its monotonous song forever and ever.

Yet I should love to have a little box by the seashore. I should love to gaze out on the wild feline element from a front window of my own, just as I should love to look on a caged panther, and see it stretch its shining length, and then curl over and lap its smooth sides, and by and by begin to lash itself into rage and show its white teeth and spring at its bars, and howl the cry of its mad, but, to me, harmless fury.—And then,—to look at it with that inward eye,—who does not love to shuffle off time and its concerns, at intervals,—to forget who is President and who is Governor, what race he belongs to, what language he speaks, which golden-headed nail of the firmament his particular planetary system is hung upon and listen to the great liquid metronome as it beats its solemn measure, steadily swinging when the solo or duet of human life began, and to swing just as steadily after the human chorus has died out and man is a fossil on its shores?

What should decide one, in choosing a summer residence? Constitution, first of all. How much snow could you melt in an hour, if you were planted in a hog'shead of it? Comfort is essential to enjoyment. All sensitive people

should remember that persons in easy circumstances suffer much more from cold in summer—that is, the warm half of the year—than in winter, or the other half. You must cut your climate to your constitution, as much as your clothing to your shape. After this, consult your taste and convenience. But if you would be happy in Berkshire, you must carry mountains in your brain; and if you would enjoy Nahant, you must have an ocean in your soul. Nature plays at dominos with you; you must match her piece, or she will never give it up to you.

The schoolmistress said, in rather a mischievous way, that she was afraid some minds or souls would be a little crowded, if they took in the Rocky Mountains or the Atlantic.

Have you ever read the little book called "The Stars and the Earth?"—said I.—Have you seen the Declaration of Independence photographed in a surface that a fly's foot would cover? The forms or conditions of Time and Space, as Kant will tell you, are nothing in themselves,—only our way of looking at things. You are right, I think, however, in recognizing the category of Space as being quite as applicable to minds as to the outer world. Every man of reflection is vaguely conscious of an imperfectly defined circle which is drawn about his intellect. He has a perfectly clear sense that the fragments of his intellectual circle include the curves of many other minds of which he is cognizant. He often recognizes these as manifestly concentric with his own, but of less radius. On the other hand, when we find a portion of an arc outside of our own, we say it *intersects* ours, but

are very slow to confess or to see that it *circumscribes* it. Every now and then a man's mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation, and never shrinks back to its former dimensions. After looking at the Alps, I felt that my mind had been stretched beyond the limits of its elasticity, and fitted so loosely on my old ideas of space that I had to spread these to fit it.

If I thought I should ever see the Alps:—said the schoolmistress.

Perhaps you will, some time or other,—I said.

It is not very likely,—she answered.—I have had one or two opportunities, but I had rather be anything than governess in a rich family.

[Proud, too, you little soft-voiced woman! Well, I can't say I like you any the worse for it. How long will School-keeping take to kill you? Is it possible the poor thing works with her needle, too? I don't like those marks on the side of her forefinger.

Tableau. Chamouni. Mont Blanc in full view. Figures in the foreground; two of them standing apart; one of them a gentleman of—oh—ah,—yes! the other a lady in a white cashmere, leaning on his shoulder.—The ingenuous reader will understand that this was an internal, private, personal, subjective diorama, seen for one instant on the back-ground of my own consciousness and abolished into black nonentity by the first question which recalled me to actual life, as suddenly as if one of those iron shop-blinds (which I always pass at dusk with a shiver, expecting to stumble over some poor but honest shop-boy's head, just taken off by its sudden and unexpected descent, and left outside

upon the sidewalk) had come down "by the run."]

—Should you like to hear what moderate wishes life brings one to at last? I used to be very ambitious, wasteful, extravagant, and luxurious in all my fancies. Read too much in the "Arabian Nights." Must have the lamp,—couldn't do without the ring. Exercise every morning on the brazen horse, Plump down into castles as full of little milk-white princesses as a nest is of young sparrows. All love me dearly at once—Charming idea of life, but too high-colored for the reality. I have outgrown all this; my tastes have become exceedingly primitive,—almost, perhaps, ascetic. We carry happiness into our condition, but must not hope to find it there; I think you will be willing to hear some lines which embody the subdued and limited desires of my maturity.

CONTENTMENT.

"Man wants but little here below."

Little I ask; my wants are few;
I only wish a hut of stone,
(A *very plain* brown stone will do,
That I may call my own;—
And close at hand is such a one,
In yonder street that fronts the sun.

Plain food is quite enough for me;
Three courses are as good as ten;
If Nature can subsist on three,
Thank Heaven for three. Amen!
I always thought cold victuals nice,—
My *choice* would be vanilla ice.

I care not much for gold or land;—
Give me a mortgage here and there,—
Some good bank-stock,—some note on hand,
Or trifling railroad share;—

I only ask that Fortune send
A *little* more than I shall spend.

Honors are silly toys, I know,
And titles are but empty names;
I would *perhaps*, be Plenipo,
But only near St. James;
I'm very sure I should not care
To fill our Gubernator's chair.

Jewels are baubles; 'tis a sin
To care for such unfruitful things;
One good-sized diamond in a pin,
Some, *not so large*, in rings,
A ruby, and a pearl, or so,
Will do for me,—I laugh at show.

My dame should dress in cheap attire;
(Good, heavy silks are never dear;)
I own perhaps I *might* desire
Some shawls of true cashmere,
Some marrowy crapes of China silk,
Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.

I would not have the horse I drive
So fast that folks must stop and stare;
An easy gait,—two-forty five—
Suits me, I do not care;
Perhaps, for just a *single spurt*
Some seconds less would do no hurt.

Of pictures, I should like to own
Titians and Raphaels three or four,
I love so much their style and tone,
One Turner, and no more
(A landscape, foreground golden dirt;
The sunshine painted with a squirt).

Of books, but few, some fifty score
For daily use, and bound to wear;
The rest upon an upper floor;
Some *little* luxury *there*
Of red morocco's gilded gleam,
And vellum rich as country cream.

Busts, cameos, gems,—such things as these,
Which others often show for pride,
I value for their power to please,
And selfish churls deride;
One Stradivarius, I confess,
Two Meerschaums, I would fain possess.

Wealth's wasteful tricks I will not learn,
Nor ape the glittering upstart fool;
Shall not carved tables serve my turn?
But *all* must be of buhl.
Give grasping pomp its double share,
I ask but *one* recumbent chair.

Thus humble let me live and die,
Nor long for Midas' golden touch;
If Heaven more generous gifts deny,
I shall not miss them *much*,
Too grateful for the blessing lent
Of simple tastes and mind content!

MY LAST TALK WITH THE SCHOOL- MISTRESS.

(*A Parenthesis.*)

I can't say just how many walks she and I had taken together before this one. I found the effect of going out every morning was decidedly favorable on her health. Two pleasing dimples, the places for which were just marked when she came, played, shadowy, in her freshening cheeks when she smiled and nodded good-morning to me from the schoolhouse-steps.

I am afraid I did the greater part of the talking. At any rate, if I should try to report all that I said during the first half-dozen walks we took together, I fear that I might receive a gentle hint from my friends the publishers, that a separate volume, at my own risk and expense, would be the proper method of bringing them before the public.

I would have a woman as true as Death. At the first real lie which works from the heart outward, she should be tenderly chloroformed into a better world, where she can have an angel for a governess, and feed on strange fruits which will make her all over again, even to her bones and marrow.—Whether gifted with the accident of beauty or not, she should have been moulded in the rose-red clay of Love, before the breath of life made a moving mortal of her. Love-capacity is a congenital endowment; and I think, after a while, one gets to know the warm-hued natures it belongs to from the pretty pipe-clay counterfeits of it.—Proud she may be in the sense of respecting herself; but pride, in the sense of contemning others, less gifted than herself, deserves the two lowest circles of a vulgar woman's Inferno, where the punishments are Small-Pox and Bankruptcy.—She who nips off the end of a brittle courtesy, as one breaks the tip of an icicle, to bestow upon those whom she ought cordially and kindly to recognize, proclaims the fact that she comes not merely of low blood, but of bad blood. Consciousness of unquestioned position makes people gracious in proper measure to all; but if a woman puts on airs with her real equals, she has something about herself or her family she is ashamed of, or ought to be. Middle, and more than middle-aged people, who know family histories, generally see through it. An official of standing was rude to me once. Oh, that is the maternal grandfather,—said a wise old friend to me,—he was a boor.—Better too few words, from the woman we love, than too many; while she is

silent, Nature is working for her; while she talks, she is working for herself.—Love is sparingly soluble in the words of men; therefore they speak much of it; but one syllable of woman's speech can dissolve more of it than a man's heart can hold.

—Whether I said any or all these things to the schoolmistress or not,—whether I stole them out of Lord Bacon,—whether I cribbed them from Balzac,—whether I dipped them from the ocean of Tupperian wisdom,—or whether I have just found them in my head, laid there by that solemn fowl, Experience, (who according to my observation, cackles oftener than she drops real live eggs.)—I cannot say. Wise men have said more foolish things,—and foolish men, I don't doubt have said as wise things. Anyhow, the schoolmistress and I had pleasant walks and long talks, all of which I do not feel bound to report.

—You are a stranger to me, Ma'am:—I don't doubt you would like to know all I said to the schoolmistress.—I shan't do it;—I had rather get the publishers to return the money you have invested in this. Besides, I have forgotten a good deal of it. I shall tell only what I like of what I remember.

My idea was, in the first place, to search out the picturesque spots which the city affords a sight of, to those who have eyes. I had a good many, and it was a pleasure to look at them in company with my young friend. There were the shrubs and flowers in the Franklin Place front-yards or borders; commerce is just putting his granite foot upon them. Then there are

certain small seraglio gardens, into which one can get a peep through the crevices of high fences,—one in Myrtle Street, or backing on it,—here and there one at the North and South Ends. Then the great elms in Essex Street, Then the stately horse-chestnut in that vacant lot in Chambers Street, which hold their outspread hands over your head, (as I said in my poem the other day,) and look as if they were whispering, “My grace, mercy, and peace be with you!”—and the rest of that benediction. Nay, there are certain patches of ground, which, having lain neglected for a time, Nature, who always has her pockets full of seeds, and holes in all her pockets, has covered with hungry plebian growths, which fight for life with each other, until some of them get broad-leaved and succulent, and you have a coarse vegetable tapestry which Raphael would not have disdained to spread over the foreground of his masterpiece. The Professor pretends that he found such a one in Charles Street, which, in its dare-devil impudence of rough-and-tumble vegetation, beat the pretty-behaved flower-beds of the Public Garden as ignominiously as a group of young tatterdemalions playing pitch-and-toss beats a row of Sunday-school boys with their teacher at their head.

But then the Professor has one of his burrows in that region, and puts everything in high colors relating to it. That is his way about everything.—I hold any man cheap,—he said,—of whom nothing stronger can be uttered than that all his geese are swans.—How is that, Professor?—said I;—I should have set you down for

one of that sort.—Sir,—said he,—I am proud to say, that Nature has so far enriched me, that I cannot own so much as a *duck* without seeing in it as pretty a swan as ever swam the basin in the garden of the Luxembourg. And the Professor showed the whites of his eyes devoutly, like one returning thanks after a dinner of many courses.

I don't know anything sweeter than this leaking in of Nature through all the cracks in the walls and floors of cities. You heap up a million tons of hewn rocks on a square mile or two of earth which was green once. The trees look down from the hill-sides and ask each other, as they stand on tiptoe,—“What are these people about?” And the small herbs at their feet look up and whisper back,—“We will go and see.” So the small herbs pack themselves up in the least possible bundles, and wait until the wind steals to them at night and whispers,—“Come with me.” Then they go softly within into the great city,—one to a cleft in the pavement, one to a spout on the roof, one to a seam in the marbles over a rich gentleman's bones, and one to the grave without a stone where nothing but a man is buried,—and there they grow, looking down on the generations of men from mouldy roofs, looking up from between the less-trodden pavements, looking out through iron cemetery-railings. Listen to them, when there is only a light breath stirring, and you will hear them saying to each other,—“Wait awhile!” The words run along the telegraph of the narrow green lines that border the roads leading from the city, until they reach the slope of the hills, and the trees repeat in low murmurs

to each other,—“Wait awhile!” By-and-by the flow of life in the streets ebbs, and the old leafy inhabitants—the smaller tribes always in front—saunter in, one by one, very careless seemingly, but very tenacious, until they swarm so that the great stones gape from each other with the crowding of their roots, and the feldspar begins to be picked out of the granite to find them food. At last the trees take up their line of march, and never rest until they have encamped in the market-place. Wait long enough and you will find an old dotting oak hugging a huge worn block in its yellow underground arms; that was the corner-stone of the State House. Oh, so patient she is, this imperturbable Nature!

—Let us cry!—

But all this has nothing to do with my walks and talks with the schoolmistress. I did not say that I would not tell you something about them. Let me alone, and I shall talk to you more than I ought to, probably. We never tell our secrets to people that pump for them.

Books we talked about, and education. It was her duty to know something of these, and of course she did. Perhaps I was somewhat more learned than she, but I found that the difference between her reading and mine was like that of a man's and a woman's dusting a library. The man flaps about with a bunch of feathers; the woman goes to work softly, with a cloth. She does not raise half the dust, nor fill her own eyes and mouth with it,—but she goes into all the corners and attends to the leaves as much as the covers.—Books are the

negative pictures of thought, and the more sensitive the mind that receives their images, the more nicely the finest lines are reproduced. A woman (of the right kind,) reading after a man, follows him as Ruth followed the reapers of Boaz, and her gleanings are often the finest of the wheat.

But it was in talking of life that we came most nearly together. I thought I knew something about that,—that I could speak or write about it somewhat to the purpose.

To take up this fluid earthly being of ours as a sponge sucks up water,—to be steeped and soaked in its realities as a hide fills its pores lying seven years in a tan-pit,—to have winnowed every wave of it as a mill-wheel works up the stream that runs through the flume upon upon its float-boards,—to have curled up in the keenest spasms and flattened out in the laxest languors of this breathing-sickness which keeps certain parcels of matter uneasy for three or four-score years,—to have fought all the devils and clasped all the angels of its delirium,—and then, just at the point when the white-hot passions have cooled down to cherry-red, plunge our experience into the ice-cold stream of some human language or other, one might think would end in a rhapsody with something of spring and temper in it. All this I thought my power and province.

The schoolmistress had tried life, too. Once in a while one meets with a single soul greater than all the living pageant that passes before it. As the pale astronomer sits in his study, with sunken eyes and thin fingers, and weighs Uranus

or Neptune as in a balance, so there are meek, slight women who have weighed all this planetary life can offer, and hold it like a bauble in the palm of their slender hands. This was one of them. Fortune had left her, sorrow had baptized her; the routine of labor and the loneliness of almost friendless city-life were before her. Yet, as I looked upon her tranquil face, gradually regaining a cheerfulness that was often sprightly, as she became interested in the various matters we talked about and places we visited, I saw that eye and lip and every shifting lineament were made for love,—unconscious of their sweet office as yet, and meeting the cold aspect of Duty with the natural graces which were meant for the reward of nothing less than the Great Passion.

I never spoke one word of love to the schoolmistress in the course of these pleasant walks. It seemed to me that we talked of everything but love on that particular morning. There was, perhaps, a little more timidity and hesitancy on my part than I have commonly shown among our people at the boarding-house. In fact, I considered myself the master at the breakfast-table; but, somehow, I could not command myself just then so well as usual. The truth is, I had secured a passage to Liverpool in the steamer which was to leave at noon,—with the condition, however, of being released in case circumstances occurred to detain me. The schoolmistress knew nothing about all this, of course, as yet.

It was on the Common that we were walking. The *mall*, or boulevard of our common, you

know, has various branches leading from it in different directions. One of these runs downward from opposite Joy Street southward across the whole length of the Common to Boylston Street. We called it the long path, and were fond of it.

I felt very weak indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit) as we came opposite the head of this patch on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question,—Will you take the long path with me. Certainly,—said the schoolmistress,—with much pleasure. Think, I said, before you answer; if you take the long path with me now, I shall interpret it that we are to part no more! The schoolmistress stepped back with a sudden movement, as if an arrow had struck her.

One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by,—the one you may still see close by the Ginkgo tree. Pray sit down, I said. No, no, she answered, softly, I will walk the *long path* with you.

The old gentleman who sits opposite met us walking, arm in arm, about the middle of the long path, and said very charmingly: "Good morning, my dears!"

[I did not think it probable that I should have a great many more talks without company, and therefore I was anxious to get as much as I could into every conversation. That is the reason why you will find some odd, miscellaneous facts here, which I wished to tell at least once, as I should not have a chance to tell them habitually, at our breakfast-table.—We're very free

and easy, you know; we don't read what we don't like. Our parish is so large, one can't pretend to preach to all the pews at once. Besides, one can't be all the time trying to do the best of one's best; if a company works a steam fire-engine, the firemen needn't try by straining themselves all day to squirt over the flagstaff. Let them wash some of those lower-story windows a little. Besides, there is no use in our quarreling now, as you will find out when you get through this paper.]

—Travel, according to my experience, does not exactly correspond to the idea one gets of it out of most books of travels. I am thinking of travel as it was when I made the Grand Tour, especially in Italy. Memory is a net: one finds it full of fish when he takes it from the brook; but a dozen miles of water have run through it without sticking. I can prove some facts about travelling by a story or two. There are certain principles to be assumed,—such as these:—He who is carried by horses must deal with rogues.—To-day's dinner subtends a larger visual angle than yesterday's revolution, A mote in my eye is bigger to me than the biggest of Dr. Gould's private planets. Every traveller is a self-taught entomologist. Old jokes are dynamometers of mental tension; an old joke tells better among friends travelling than at home, which shows that their minds are in a state of diminished, rather than increased vitality. There was a story about "strahps to your pahnts," which was vastly funny to us fellows—on the road from Milan to Venice. *Coelum, non animum*, travellers change their guineas, but not their characters. The

bore is the same, eating dates under the cedars of Lebanon, as over a plate of baked beans in Beacon street. Parties of travellers have a morbid instinct for "establishing raws" upon each other. A man shall sit down with his friend at the foot of the Great Pyramid and they will take up the question they had been talking about under "the great elm," and forget all about Egypt. When I was crossing the Po, we were all fighting about the propriety of one fellow's telling another that his argument was *absurd*; one maintaining it to be a perfectly admissible logical term, as proved by the phrase, "*reductio ad absurdum*;" the rest badgering him as a conversational bully. Mighty little we troubled ourselves for *Padus*, the Po; "a river broader and more rapid than the Rhone," and the times when Hannibal led his grim Africans to its banks, and his elephants thrust their trunks into the yellow waters over which that pendulum ferry boat was swinging back and forward every ten minutes!

Here are some of those reminiscences, with morals prefixed, or annexed, or implied.

Lively emotions very commonly do not strike us full in front, but obliquely from the side; a scene or incident in *undress* often affects more than one in full costume.

"Is this the mighty ocean? is this all?"

says the Princess in Gebir. The rush that should have flooded my soul in the Colosseum did not come. But walking one day in the fields about the city I stumbled over a fragment of broken masonry, and lo! the World's Mistress in

her stone girdle—*alta moenia Romæ*—rose before us and whitened my cheek with her pale shadow as never before or since.

I used very often, when coming home from my morning's work at one of the public institutions of Paris, to stop at the dear old church of St. Etienne du Mont. The tomb of St. Genevieve, surrounded by burning candles and votive tablets was there; the mural tablet of Jacobus Benignus Winslow was there; there was a noble organ with carved figures; the pulpit was borne on the oaken shoulders of a stooping Samson; and there was a marvelous staircase like a coil of lace. These things I mention from memory, but not all of them together impressed me so much as an inscription on a small slab of marble fixed in one of the walls. It told how this church of St. Stephen was repaired and beautified in the year 16**, and how, during the celebration of its reopening, two girls of the parish (*filles de la paroisse*) fell from the gallery, carrying a part of the balustrade with them, to the pavement, but by a miracle escaped uninjured. Two young girls, nameless, but real presences to my imagination, as much as when they came fluttering down on the tiles with a cry that outscrambled the sharpest treble in the Te-Deum! (Look at Carlyle's article on Boswell, and see how he speaks of the poor young woman Johnson talked with in the streets one evening.) All the crowd gone but these two "*filles de la paroisse*,"—gone as utterly as the dresses they wore, as the shoes that were on their feet, as the bread and meat that were in the market on that day.

Not the great historical events, but the personal incidents that call up single sharp pictures of some human being in its pang or struggle, reach us most nearly. I remember the platform at Berne, over the parapet of which Theobald Weinzäppli's restive horse sprung with him and landed him more than a hundred feet beneath in the lower town, not dead, but sorely broken, and no longer a wild youth, but God's servant from that day forward. I have forgotten the famous bears, and all else. I remember the Percy lion on the bridge over the little river at Alnwick,—the leaden lion with his tail stretched out straight like a pump-handle,—and why? Because of the story of the village boy who must fain bestride the leaden tail, standing out over the water,—which breaking, he dropped into the stream far below, and was taken out an idiot for the rest of his life.

Arrow-heads must be brought to a sharp point, and the guillotine-axe must have a slanting edge. Something intensely human, narrow, and definite pierces to the seat of our sensibilities more readily than huge occurrences and catastrophes. A nail will pick a lock that defies hatchet and hammer. "The Royal George" went down with all her crew, and Cowper wrote an exquisitely simple poem about it; but the leaf that holds it is smooth, while that which bears the lines on his mother's portrait is blistered with tears.

My telling these recollections sets me thinking of others of the same kind that strike the imagination, especially when one is still young. You remember the monument in Devizes market to the woman struck dead with a lie in her mouth.

I never saw that, but it is in the books. Here is one I never heard mentioned;—if any of the "Note and Query" tribe can tell the story, I hope they will. Where is this monument? I was riding on an English stage-coach when we passed a handsome marble column (as I remember it) of considerable size and pretensions. What is that?—I said. That,—answered the coachman,—is the *hangman's pillar*. Then he told me how a man went out one night, many years ago, to steal sheep. He caught one, tied its legs together, passed the rope over his head, and started for home. In climbing a fence, the rope slipped, caught him by the neck, and strangled him. Next morning he was found hanging dead on the one side of the fence and the sheep on the other; in memory whereof the lord of the manor caused this monument to be erected as a warning to all who love mutton better than virtue. I will send a copy of this record to him or her who shall first set me right about this column and its locality.

And telling over these old stories reminds me that I have something that may interest architects and perhaps some other persons. I once ascended the spire of Strasburg Cathedral, which is the highest, I think, in Europe. It is a shaft of stone filigree-work, frightfully open, so that the guide puts his arms behind you to keep you from falling. To climb it is a noonday nightmare, and to think of having climbed it crisps all the fifty-six joints of one's twenty digits. While I was on it, "pinnacled dim in the intense inane," a strong wind was blowing, and I felt sure that the spire was rocking. It

swayed back and forward like a stalk of rye or a cat-o-nine-tails (bulrush) with a bobolink on it. I mentioned it to the guide and he said that the spire did really swing back and forward,—I think he said some feet.

Keep any line of knowledge ten years and some other line will intersect it. Long afterwards, I was hunting out a paper of Dumeril's in an old journal.—the "Magazin Encyclopédique" for *l'an troisieme*, (1795), when I stumbled upon a brief article on the vibrations of the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. A man can shake it so that the movement shall be shown in a vessel of water nearly seventy feet below the summit, and higher up the vibration is like that of an earthquake. I have seen one of those wretched wooden spires with which we very shabbily finish some of our stone churches (thinking that the lidless blue eye of heaven cannot tell the counterfeit we try to pass on it) swinging like a reed, in a wind, but one would hardly think of such a thing's happening in a stone spire. Does the Bunker-Hill monument bend in the blast like a blade of grass? I suppose so.

You see, of course, that I am talking in a cheap way;—perhaps we will have some philosophy by and by;—let me work out this thin mechanical vein.—I have something more to say about trees. I have brought down this slice of hemlock to show you. Tree blew down in my woods (that were) in 1852. Twelve feet and a half round, fair girth;—nine feet, where I got my section, higher up. This is a wedge, going to the centre, of the general shape of

a slice of apple-pie in a large and not opulent family. Length, about eighteen inches. I have studied the growth of this tree by its rings, and it is curious. Three hundred and forty-two rings. Started, therefore, about 1510. The thickness of the rings tells the rate at which it grew. For five or six years the rate was slow,—then rapid for twenty years. A little before the year 1550 it began to grow very slowly, and so continued for about seventy years. In 1620 it took a new start and grew fast until 1714; then for the most part slowly until 1786, when it started again and grew pretty well and uniformly until within the last dozen years, when it seems to have got on sluggishly.

Look here. Here are some human lives laid down against the periods of its growth, to which they corresponded. This is Shakespeare's. The tree was seven inches in diameter when he was born; ten inches when he died. A little less than ten inches when Milton was born; seventeen when he died. Then comes a long interval, and this thread marks out Johnson's life, during which the tree increased from twenty-two to twenty-nine inches in diameter. Here is the span of Napoleon's career:—the tree doesn't seem to have minded it.

I never saw the man yet who was not startled at looking on this section. I have seen many wooden preachers,—never one like this. How much more striking would be the calendar counted on the rings of one of those awful trees which were standing when Christ was on earth, and where that brief mortal life is chronicled with the stolid apathy of vegetable being, which

remembers all human history as a thing of yesterday in its own dateless existence!

I have something more to say about elms. A relative tells me there is one of great glory in Andover, near Bradford. I have some recollections of the former place, pleasant and otherwise. [I wonder if the old Seminary clock strikes as slowly as it used to. My room-mate thought, when he first came, it was the bell tolling deaths, and people's ages, as they do in the country. He swore—(minister's sons get so familiar with good words that they are apt to handle them carelessly)—that the children were dying by the dozen, of all ages, from one to twelve, and ran off next day in recess, when it began to strike eleven, but was caught before it got through striking.] At the foot of "the hill," down in town, is, or was, a tidy old elm, which was said to have been hooped with iron to protect it from Indian tomahawks, (*Credat Hahnemannus*,) and to have grown round its hoops and buried them in its wood. Of course, this is not the tree my relative means.

Also, I have a very pretty letter from Norwich, Connecticut, telling me of two noble elms which are to be seen in that town. One hundred and twenty-seven feet from bough-end to bough-end! What do you say to that? And gentle ladies beneath it, that love it and celebrate its praises! And that in a town of such supreme, audacious, Alpine loveliness as Norwich!—Only the dear people there must learn to call it Norridge, and not be misled by the mere accident of spelling.

Norwich.
 Portsmouth.
 Cincinnati.

What a sad picture of our civilization.

I did not speak to you of the great tree on what used to be the Coleman farm, in Deerfield, simply because I had not seen it for many years, and did not like to trust my recollection. But I had it in memory, and even noted down, as one of the finest trees in symmetry and beauty I had ever seen. I have received a document, signed by two citizens of a neighboring town, certified by the post-master and a selectman; and these again corroborated, reinforced, and sworn to by a member of the extraordinary college-class to which it is the fortune of my friend the Professor to belong, who, though he has *formerly* been a member of Congress, is, I believe, fully worthy of confidence. The tree "girts" eighteen and a half feet, and spreads over a hundred, and is a real beauty. I hope to meet my friend under its branches yet; if we don't have "youth at the prow," we will have "pleasure at the 'elm."

And just now, again, I have got a letter about some grand willows in Maine, and another about an elm in Wayland, but too late for anything but thanks.

[And this leads me to say, that I have received a great many communications, in prose and verse, since I began printing these notes. The last came this very morning, in the shape of a neat and brief poem, from New Orleans. I could not make any of them public, though sometimes requested to do so. Some of them have given me great pleasure, and encouraged

me to believe I had friends whose faces I had never seen. If you are pleased with anything a writer says, and doubt whether to tell him of it, do not hesitate; a pleasant word is a cordial to one, who perhaps thinks he is tiring you, and so becomes tired himself. I purr very loud over a good, honest letter that says pretty things to me.]

—Sometimes very young persons send communications, which they want forwarded to editors; and these young persons do not always seem to have right conceptions of these same editors, and of the public, and of themselves. Here is a letter I wrote to one of these young folks, but, on the whole, thought it best not to send. It is not fair to single out one for such sharp advice, where there are hundreds that are in need of it.

DEAR SIR:—You seem to be somewhat, but not a great deal, wiser than I was at your age. I don't wish to be understood as saying too much, for I think, without committing myself to any opinion on my present state, that I was not a Solomon at that stage of development.

You long to "leap at a single bound into celebrity." Nothing is so common-place as to wish to be remarkable. Fame usually comes to those who are thinking about something else,—very rarely to those who say to themselves, "Go to, now, let us be a celebrated individual!" The struggle for fame, as such, commonly ends in notoriety,—that ladder is easy to climb, but it leads to the pillory which is crowded with fools who could not hold their tongues, and rogues who could not hide their tricks.