

THE ADIRONDACS

A JOURNAL

DEDICATED TO MY FELLOW TRAVELLERS IN AUGUST, 1858

Wise and polite, — and if I drew
Their several portraits, you would own
Chaucer had no such worthy crew,
Nor Boccace in Decameron.

WE crossed Champlain to Keeseville with our friends,
Thence, in strong country carts, rode up the forks
Of the Ausable stream, intent to reach
The Adirondac lakes. At Martin's Beach
We chose our boats; each man a boat and guide, —
Ten men, ten guides, our company all told.

Next morn, we swept with oars the Saranac,
With skies of benediction, to Round Lake,
Where all the sacred mountains drew around us,
Taháwus, Seaward, MacIntyre, Baldhead,
And other Titans without muse or name.
Pleased with these grand companions, we glide on,
Instead of flowers, crowned with a wreath of hills.
We made our distance wider, boat from boat,
As each would hear the oracle alone.
By the bright morn the gay flotilla slid

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Through files of flags that gleamed like bayonets,
Through gold-moth-haunted beds of pickerel-flower,
Through scented banks of lilies white and gold,
Where the deer feeds at night, the teal by day,
On through the Upper Saranac, and up
Père Raquette stream, to a small tortuous pass
Winding through grassy shallows in and out,
Two creeping miles of rushes, pads and sponge,
To Follansbee Water and the Lake of Loons.

Northward the length of Follansbee we rowed,
Under low mountains, whose unbroken ridge
Ponderous with beechen forest sloped the shore.
A pause and council: then, where near the head
Due east a bay makes inward to the land
Between two rocky arms, we climb the bank,
And in the twilight of the forest noon
Wield the first axe these echoes ever heard.
We cut young trees to make our poles and thwarts,
Barked the white spruce to weatherfend the roof,
Then struck a light and kindled the camp-fire.

The wood was sovran with centennial trees, —
Oak, cedar, maple, poplar, beech and fir,
Linden and spruce. In strict society
Three conifers, white, pitch and Norway pine,
Five-leaved, three-leaved and two-leaved, grew thereby.
Our patron pine was fifteen feet in girth,
The maple eight, beneath its shapely tower.

‘Welcome!’ the wood-god murmured through the leaves, —
 ‘Welcome, though late, unknowing, yet known to me.’

Evening drew on; stars peeped through maple-boughs,
 Which o’erhung, like a cloud, our camping fire.
 Decayed millennial trunks, like moonlight flecks,
 Lit with phosphoric crumbs the forest floor.

Ten scholars, wanted to lie warm and soft
 In well-hung chambers daintily bestowed,
 Lie here on hemlock-boughs, like Sacs and Sioux,
 And greet unanimous the joyful change.
 So fast will Nature acclimate her sons,
 Though late returning to her pristine ways.
 Off soundings, seamen do not suffer cold;
 And, in the forest, delicate clerks, unbrowned,
 Sleep on the fragrant brush, as on down-beds.
 Up with the dawn, they fancied the light air
 That circled freshly in their forest dress
 Made them to boys again. Happier that they
 Slipped off their pack of duties, leagues behind,
 At the first mounting of the giant stairs.
 No placard on these rocks warned to the polls,
 No door-bell heralded a visitor,
 No courier waits, no letter came or went,
 Nothing was ploughed, or reaped, or bought, or sold;
 The frost might glitter, it would blight no crop,
 The falling rain will spoil no holiday.

We were made freemen of the forest laws,
 All dressed, like Nature, fit for her own ends,
 Essaying nothing she cannot perform.

In Adirondac lakes,
 At morn or noon, the guide rows bareheaded:
 Shoes, flannel shirt, and kersey trousers make
 His brief toilette: at night, or in the rain,
 He dons a surcoat which he doffs at morn:
 A paddle in the right hand, or an oar,
 And in the left, a gun, his needful arms.
 By turns we praised the stature of our guides,
 Their rival strength and suppleness, their skill
 To row, to swim, to shoot, to build a camp,
 To climb a lofty stem, clean without boughs
 Full fifty feet, and bring the eaglet down:
 Temper to face wolf, bear, or catamount,
 And wit to trap or take him in his lair.
 Sound, ruddy men, frolic and innocent,
 In winter, lumberers; in summer, guides;
 Their sinewy arms pull at the oar untired
 Three times ten thousand strokes, from morn to eve.

Look to yourselves, ye polished gentlemen!
 No city airs or arts pass current here.
 Your rank is all reversed; let men of cloth
 Bow to the stalwart churls in overalls:
 They are the doctors of the wilderness,
 And we the low-priced laymen.

In sooth, red flannel is a saucy test
 Which few can put on with impunity.
 What make you, master, fumbling at the oar?
 Will you catch crabs? Truth tries pretension here.
 The sallow knows the basket-maker's thumb;
 The oar, the guide's. Dare you accept the tasks
 He shall impose, to find a spring, trap foxes,
 Tell the sun's time, determine the true north,
 Or stumbling on through vast self-similar woods
 To thread by night the nearest way to camp?

Ask you, how went the hours?
 All day we swept the lake, searched every cove,
 North from Camp Maple, south to Osprey Bay,
 Watching when the loud dogs should drive in deer,
 Or whipping its rough surface for a trout;
 Or, bathers, diving from the rock at noon;
 Challenging Echo by our guns and cries;
 Or listening to the laughter of the loon;
 Or, in the evening twilight's latest red,
 Beholding the procession of the pines;
 Or, later yet, beneath a lighted jack,
 In the boat's bows, a silent night-hunter
 Stealing with paddle to the feeding-grounds
 Of the red deer, to aim at a square mist.
 Hark to that muffled roar! a tree in the woods
 Is fallen: but hush! it has not scared the buck
 Who stands astonished at the meteor light,
 Then turns to bound away, — is it too late?

Our heroes tried their rifles at a mark,
 Six rods, sixteen, twenty, or forty-five;
 Sometimes their wits at sally and retort,
 With laughter sudden as the crack of rifle;
 Or parties scaled the near acclivities
 Competing seekers of a rumored lake,
 Whose unauthenticated waves we named
 Lake Probability, — our carbuncle,
 Long sought, not found.

Two Doctors in the camp

Dissected the slain deer, weighed the trout's brain,
 Captured the lizard, salamander, shrew,
 Crab, mice, snail, dragon-fly, minnow and moth;
 Insatiate skill in water or in air
 Waved the scoop-net, and nothing came amiss;
 The while, one leaden pot of alcohol
 Gave an impartial tomb to all the kinds.
 Not less the ambitious botanist sought plants,
 Orchis and gentian, fern and long whip-scorpion,
 Rosy polygonum, lake-margin's pride,
 Hypnum and hydnum, mushroom, sponge and
 moss,
 Or harebell nodding in the gorge of falls.
 Above, the eagle flew, the osprey screamed,
 The raven croaked, owls hooted, the woodpecker
 Loud hammered, and the heron rose in the swamp.
 As water poured through hollows of the hills
 To feed this wealth of lakes and rivulets,

So Nature shed all beauty lavishly
From her redundant horn.

Lords of this realm,
Bounded by dawn and sunset, and the day
Rounded by hours where each outdid the last
In miracles of pomp, we must be proud,
As if associates of the sylvan gods.
We seemed the dwellers of the zodiac,
So pure the Alpine element we breathed,
So light, so lofty pictures came and went.
We trode on air, contemned the distant town,
Its timorous ways, big trifles, and we planned
That we should build, hard-by, a spacious lodge
And how we should come hither with our sons,
Hereafter, — willing they, and more adroit.

Hard fare, hard bed and comic misery, —
The midge, the blue-fly and the mosquito
Painted our necks, hands, ankles, with red bands:
But, on the second day, we heed them not,
Nay, we saluted them Auxiliaries,
Whom earlier we had chid with spiteful names.
For who defends our leafy tabernacle
From bold intrusion of the travelling crowd, —
Who but the midge, mosquito and the fly,
Which past endurance sting the tender cit,
But which we learn to scatter with a smudge,
Or baffle by a veil, or slight by scorn?

Our foaming ale we drank from hunters' pans,
Ale, and a sup of wine. Our steward gave
Venison and trout, potatoes, beans, wheat-bread;
All ate like abbots, and, if any missed
Their wonted convenance, cheerly hid the loss
With hunters' appetite and peals of mirth.
And Stillman, our guides' guide, and Commodore,
Crusoe, Crusader, Pius Æneas, said aloud,
"Chronic dyspepsia never came from eating
Food indigestible": — then murmured some,
Others applauded him who spoke the truth.

Nor doubt but visitings of graver thought
Checked in these souls the turbulent heyday
'Mid all the hints and glories of the home.
For who can tell what sudden privacies
Were sought and found, amid the hue and cry
Of scholars furloughed from their tasks and let
Into this Oreads' fended Paradise,
As chapels in the city's thoroughfares,
Whither gaunt Labor slips to wipe his brow
And meditate a moment on Heaven's rest.
Judge with what sweet surprises Nature spoke
To each apart, lifting her lovely shows
To spiritual lessons pointed home,
And as through dreams in watches of the night,
So through all creatures in their form and ways
Some mystic hint accosts the vigilant,
Not clearly voiced, but waking a new sense

Inviting to new knowledge, one with old.
 Hark to that petulant chirp! what ails the warbler?
 Mark his capricious ways to draw the eye.
 Now soar again. What wilt thou, restless bird,
 Seeking in that chaste blue a bluer light,
 Thirsting in that pure for a purer sky?

And presently the sky is changed; O world!
 What pictures and what harmonies are thine!
 The clouds are rich and dark, the air serene,
 So like the soul of me, what if 't were me?
 A melancholy better than all mirth.
 Comes the sweet sadness at the retrospect,
 Or at the foresight of obscurer years?
 Like yon slow-sailing cloudy promontory
 Whereon the purple iris dwells in beauty
 Superior to all its gaudy skirts.
 And, that no day of life may lack romance,
 The spiritual stars rise nightly, shedding down
 A private beam into each several heart.
 Daily the bending skies solicit man,
 The seasons chariot him from this exile,
 The rainbow hours bedeck his glowing chair,
 The storm-winds urge the heavy weeks along,
 Suns haste to set, that so remoter lights
 Beckon the wanderer to his vaster home.

With a vermilion pencil mark the day
 When of our little fleet three cruising skiffs

Entering Big Tupper, bound for the foaming Falls
 Of loud Bog River, suddenly confront
 Two of our mates returning with swift oars.
 One held a printed journal waving high
 Caught from a late-arriving traveller,
 Big with great news, and shouted the report
 For which the world had waited, now firm fact,
 Of the wire-cable laid beneath the sea,
 And landed on our coast, and pulsating
 With ductile fire. Loud, exulting cries
 From boat to boat, and to the echoes round,
 Greet the glad miracle. Thought's new-found
 path

Shall supplement henceforth all trodden ways,
 Match God's equator with a zone of art,
 And lift man's public action to a height
 Worthy the enormous cloud of witnesses,
 When linkèd hemispheres attest his deed.
 We have few moments in the longest life
 Of such delight and wonder as there grew, —
 Nor yet unsuited to that solitude:
 A burst of joy, as if we told the fact
 To ears intelligent; as if gray rock
 And cedar grove and cliff and lake should know
 This feat of wit, this triumph of mankind;
 As if we men were talking in a vein
 Of sympathy so large, that ours was theirs,
 And a prime end of the most subtle element
 Were fairly reached at last. Wake, echoing caves!

Bend nearer, faint day-moon! Yon thundertops,
Let them hear well! 't is theirs as much as ours.

A spasm throbbing through the pedestals
Of Alp and Andes, isle and continent,
Urging astonished Chaos with a thrill
To be a brain, or serve the brain of man:
The lightning has run masterless too long;
He must to school and learn his verb and noun
And teach his nimbleness to earn his wage,
Spelling with guided tongue man's messages
Shot through the weltering pit of the salt sea.
And yet I marked, even in the manly joy
Of our great-hearted Doctor in his boat
(Perchance I erred), a shade of discontent;
Or was it for mankind a generous shame,
As of a luck not quite legitimate,
Since fortune snatched from wit the lion's part?
Was it a college pique of town and gown,
As one within whose memory it burned
That not academicians, but some lout,
Found ten years since the Californian gold?
And now, again, a hungry company
Of traders, led by corporate sons of trade,
Perversely borrowing from the shop the tools
Of science, not from the philosophers,
Had won the brightest laurel of all time.
'T was always thus, and will be; hand and head
Are ever rivals: but, though this be swift,

The other slow, — this the Prometheus,
And that the Jove, — yet, howsoever hid,
It was from Jove the other stole his fire,
And, without Jove, the good had never been.
It is not Iroquois or cannibals,
But ever the free race with front sublime,
And these instructed by their wisest too,
Who do the feat, and lift humanity.
Let not him mourn who best entitled was,
Nay, mourn not one: let him exult,
Yea, plant the tree that bears best apples, plant,
And water it with wine, nor watch askance
Whether thy sons or strangers eat the fruit:
Enough that mankind eat and are refreshed.

We flee away from cities, but we bring
The best of cities with us, these learned classifiers,
Men knowing what they seek, armed eyes of experts.
We praise the guide, we praise the forest life:
But will we sacrifice our dear-bought lore
Of books and arts and trained experiment,
Or count the Sioux a match for Agassiz?
O no, not we! Witness the shout that shook
Wild Tupper Lake; witness the mute all-hail
The joyful traveller gives, when on the verge
Of craggy Indian wilderness he hears
From a log cabin stream Beethoven's notes
On the piano, played with master's hand.
'Well done!' he cries; 'the bear is kept at bay,

The lynx, the rattlesnake, the flood, the fire;
 All the fierce enemies, ague, hunger, cold,
 This thin spruce roof, this clayed log-wall,
 This wild plantation will suffice to chase.
 Now speed the gay celerities of art,
 What in the desert was impossible
 Within four walls is possible again,—
 Culture and libraries, mysteries of skill,
 Traditioned fame of masters, eager strife
 Of keen competing youths, joined or alone
 To outdo each other and extort applause.
 Mind wakes a new-born giant from her sleep.
 Twirl the old wheels! Time takes fresh start again,
 On for a thousand years of genius more.'

The holidays were fruitful, but must end;
 One August evening had a cooler breath;
 Into each mind intruding duties crept;
 Under the cinders burned the fires of home;
 Nay, letters found us in our paradise:
 So in the gladness of the new event
 We struck our camp and left the happy hills.
 The fortunate star that rose on us sank not;
 The prodigal sunshine rested on the land,
 The rivers gambolled onward to the sea,
 And Nature, the inscrutable and mute,
 Permitted on her infinite repose
 Almost a smile to steal to cheer her sons,
 As if one riddle of the Sphinx were guessed.

BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,
 Or if the slain think he is slain,
 They know not well the subtle ways
 I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
 Shadow and sunlight are the same;
 The vanished gods to me appear;
 And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
 When me they fly, I am the wings;
 I am the doubter and the doubt,
 And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
 And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
 But thou, meek lover of the good!
 Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

NEMESIS

ALREADY blushes on thy cheek
The bosom thought which thou must speak ;
The bird, how far it haply roam
By cloud or isle, is flying home ;
The maiden fears, and fearing runs
Into the charmed snare she shuns ;
And every man, in love or pride,
Of his fate is never wide.

Will a woman's fan the ocean smooth ?
Or prayers the stony Parcaë soothe,
Or coax the thunder from its mark ?
Or tapers light the chaos dark ?
In spite of Virtue and the Muse,
Nemesis will have her dues,
And all our struggles and our toils
Tighter wind the giant coils.

FATE

DEEP in the man sits fast his fate
To mould his fortunes, mean or great :
Unknown to Cromwell as to me
Was Cromwell's measure or degree ;
Unknown to him as to his horse,
If he than his groom be better or worse.
He works, plots, fights, in rude affairs,
With squires, lords, kings, his craft compares,
Till late he learned, through doubt and fear,
Broad England harbored not his peer :
Obeying time, the last to own
The Genius from its cloudy throne.
For the prevision is allied
Unto the thing so signified ;
Or say, the foresight that awaits
Is the same Genius that creates.

FREEDOM

ONCE I wished I might rehearse
Freedom's pæan in my verse,
That the slave who caught the strain
Should throb until he snapped his chain.
But the Spirit said, 'Not so;
Speak it not, or speak it low;
Name not lightly to be said,
Gift too precious to be prayed,
Passion not to be expressed
But by heaving of the breast:
Yet,— wouldst thou the mountain find
Where this deity is shrined,
Who gives to seas and sunset skies
Their unspent beauty of surprise,
And, when it lists him, waken can
Brute or savage into man;
Or, if in thy heart he shine,
Blends the starry fates with thine,
Draws angels nigh to dwell with thee,
And makes thy thoughts archangels be;
Freedom's secret wilt thou know? —
Counsel not with flesh and blood;
Loiter not for cloak or food;
Right thou feelest, rush to do.'

ODE

SUNG IN THE TOWN HALL, CONCORD, JULY 4, 1857

O TENDERLY the haughty day
Fills his blue urn with fire;
One morn is in the mighty heaven,
And one in our desire.

The cannon booms from town to town,
Our pulses beat not less,
The joy-bells chime their tidings down,
Which children's voices bless.

For He that flung the broad blue fold
O'er-mantling land and sea,
One third part of the sky unrolled
For the banner of the free.

The men are ripe of Saxon kind
To build an equal state, —
To take the statute from the mind
And make of duty fate.

United States! the ages plead, —
Present and Past in under-song, —
Go put your creed into your deed,
Nor speak with double tongue.

For sea and land don't understand,
 Nor skies without a frown
 See rights for which the one hand fights
 By the other cloven down.

Be just at home ; then write your scroll
 Of honor o'er the sea,
 And bid the broad Atlantic roll,
 A ferry of the free.

And henceforth there shall be no chain,
 Save underneath the sea
 The wires shall murmur through the main
 Sweet songs of liberty.

The conscious stars accord above,
 The waters wild below,
 And under, through the cable wove,
 Her fiery errands go.

For He that worketh high and wise,
 Nor pauses in his plan,
 Will take the sun out of the skies
 Ere freedom out of man.

BOSTON HYMN

READ IN MUSIC HALL, JANUARY 1, 1863

THE word of the Lord by night
 To the watching Pilgrims came,
 As they sat by the seaside,
 And filled their hearts with flame.

God said, I am tired of kings,
 I suffer them no more ;
 Up to my ear the morning brings
 The outrage of the poor.

Think ye I made this ball
 A field of havoc and war,
 Where tyrants great and tyrants small
 Might harry the weak and poor ?

My angel, — his name is Freedom, —
 Choose him to be your king ;
 He shall cut pathways east and west
 And fend you with his wing.

Lo! I uncover the land
 Which I hid of old time in the West,
 As the sculptor uncovers the statue
 When he has wrought his best ;