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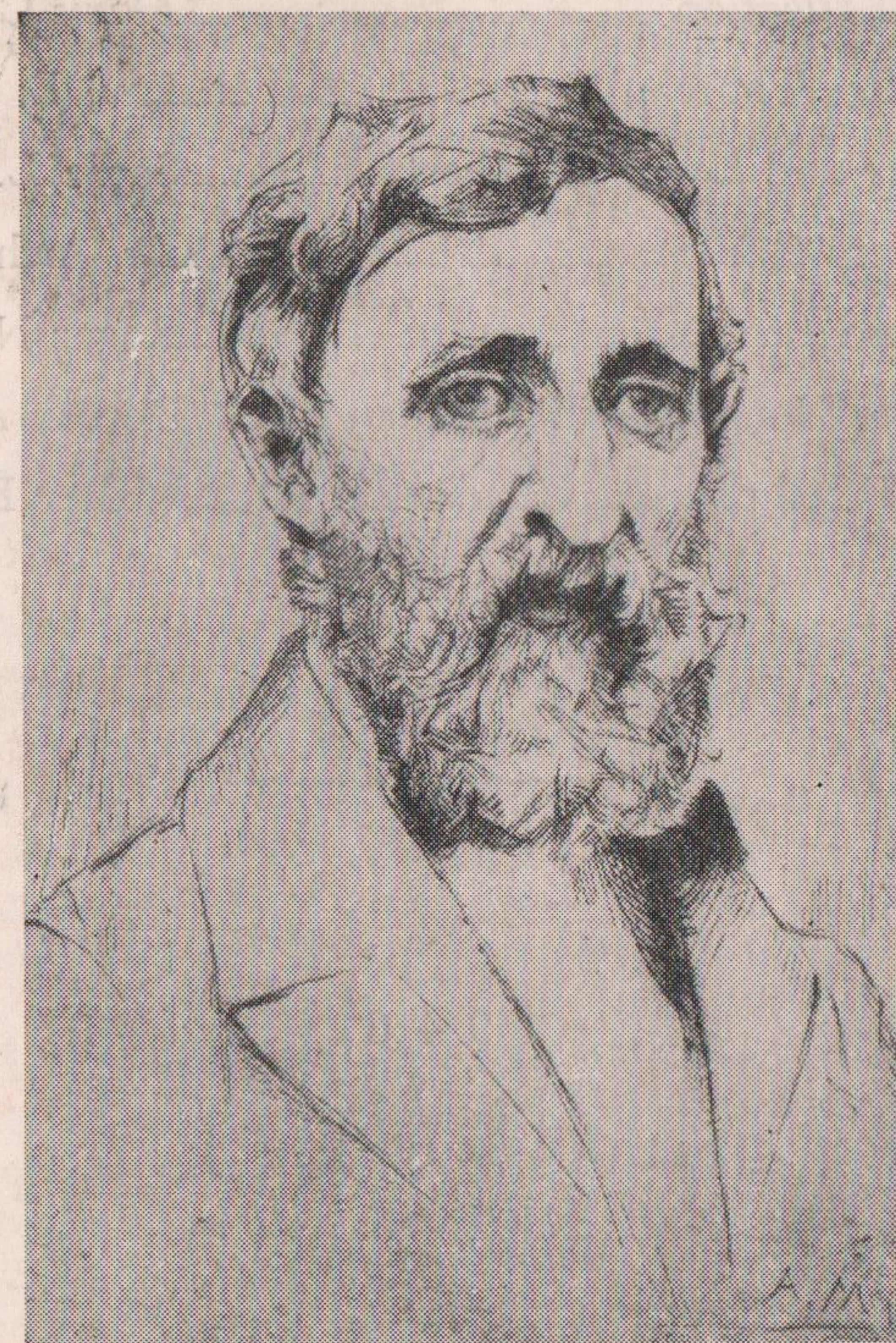
THOREAU

"The Cosmic Yankee"



Centennial Appreciations

Baillie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subject	Author	Page
Foreword	Dr. Frederic W. Roman	1
Thoreau: "The Cosmic Yankee"	Joseph Ishill	3
Thoreau, Apostle of Freedom Through Simplification	Dr. Pryns Hopkins	11
Lecture on Thoreau by Dr. Edward Howard Griggs	Mary Louise White, A.B.	12
Thoughts on the Thoreau Centennial	Jo Ann Wheeler	17
Thoreau and Modern Education	Alexis C. Ferm	19
One Hundred Years After Thoreau	Paul E. Hunt	24
Thoreau the Freethinker and Lover of Liberty	Sadie L. Cook	26
Thoreau's Man in Society	Dr. Arthur E. Briggs	29
Thoreau the Libertarian	Roger N. Baldwin	34
The Gospel According to Henry David Thoreau	Doreen Antoinette Tucker	36
Thoreau: Pioneer for Freedom	Walter Harding	38

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FOREWORD

By DR. FREDERICK W. ROMAN

THE pages that follow will give an exposition of an American genius and an original thinker who is destined to be the symbol that is at once truly American and at the same time a free lance, that will serve as the inspiration for courage and independence in all lands and for future ages.

Despite the originality of Henry David Thoreau and a willingness to step forward in untrammeled fashion in opposition to the accepted conventions of his time, he is yet an American. He presents an idealism and an acceptance of a form of justice, a moral code, an ethical conduct that bears the hue and tinge of Americanism, that represented the thought-form of the 19th century at its best. The European and the Asiatic, the cosmopolitan from all lands will always be able to enjoy Henry David Thoreau; and yet it seems certain that, in spite of the universality that characterized his wide sympathies and his courage it will always be said that Thoreau belonged to the 19th century and that he was an American. His fight for justice, his willingness to oppose the accepted modes of thought and action of his own generation can only be understood in terms of the economic, political and social struggles that were a part of the immediate time in which he lived. A European can understand him but his thought-form must always be presented on the New England background.

The life and writings of Thoreau have demonstrated in the highest degree that here was a character, an independent genius that could inspire the potentiality and creativeness in other men and women who have been hovering within the realms of independent thought and action.

The short Essays by the writers in this volume are evidence of this power on the part of Thoreau. I think it may be said with a high degree of justice, that each contributor whose thoughts are submitted

in the pages that follow has been drinking at the Thoreau fountain and as a consequence one has rallied forth in newer and more divergent forms that still carry the light and power of inspiration that was original in Thoreau. And yet in each case we note how each one has found it possible to adjust the free striving of Thoreau into the problems of our own decade and generation. In spite of the seeming variation that may be found in the contributions submitted there will be noted a unity of agreement in the general path that is trailed by all their efforts.

Our times are in chaos. The spirit of man, for the world as a whole, has been lagging behind the technical age that is so manifest in the middle of this century. In so far as there still lies the gleam of hope for a security, a more substantial readjustment on the morrow, it will have to be born out of some thought-form that is allied, deep in the recesses of the spirit of mankind. Thoreau will ever be nominated as the well-spring, the spontaneous fountain where yearning spirits will quench their thirst on the highway that will mark the evolution of progress.

The authors of the articles that are here presented are genuine types of the unending stream of the literary pilgrims that will arise in the generations and the centuries to come, all having received a definite inspiration, a quota of assurance and joy that comes from the satisfaction in asserting independence and in the willingness to be a pioneer who does not hesitate to look into the dim future in search for a gleaming light that will point the way to a greater and more durable justice.

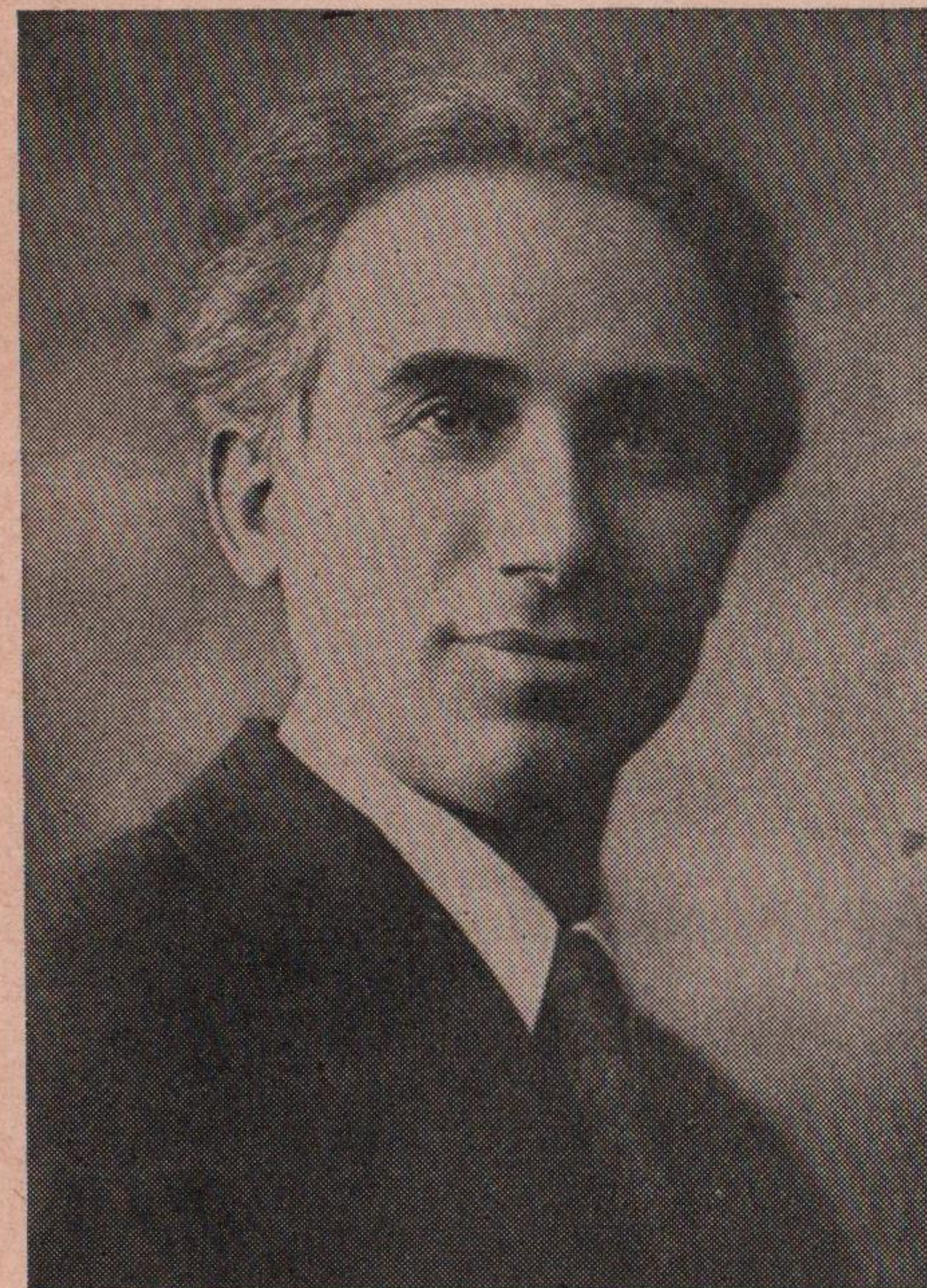
This is the achievement of Henry David Thoreau. The writings represent a small number of his apostles who, for the present hour, are carrying the banner of freedom forward.

Thoreau: "The Cosmic Yankee"

(With Gleanings from his Writings)

By Joseph Ishill

Director: Oriole Press



Joseph Ishill

It seems peculiarly appropriate to begin this script with the nostalgic title of W. H. Hudson's book: "Far Away and Long Ago"—For I was very young and very far from these shores when I first chanced upon one of Thoreau's essays: "Civil Disobedience," in the Rumanian language (Revista Sociala, Bucaresti, 1897).

This universal and cosmic essay gave me the initial impetus in the direction of the loftiest ideals, like snow-crowned peaks tinged with the purest sunlight and coloring all my thoughts.

Like Thoreau, I too, from the earliest stages of my life drank from the brimming cup of nature and rejoiced in her variegated treasures both in meditation and ecstasy. Therefore in a spirit of serenity I may say that though I have been far from those regions visited by Thoreau yet I was very near him in spirit and later on when the fate of an emigrant transplanted me to this side of the Atlantic, I was still closer to him who generated so much cosmic wisdom and enlightenment.

I am most grateful to Thoreau because he has shown us the path which leads to a broad understanding of mankind from all its complicated social ramifications and a simpler attitude towards all manifestations of life—a life free from external intrusions.

His love of freedom, of natural beauty and truth were the cardinal virtues of his life, to which he tenaciously clung to the very last breath. All through his writings and his activities he is seen as a stoic libertarian of an original Yankee pattern, whose ideas today are identified as the Thoreau school of thought.

His clarity was exemplary when describing a passage from Nature or an idea emerging from his mind and he wrought in a style which has the basic quality of permanence in any literature. To what greater heights can mortal aspire when the essence of his creative genius rests on the utmost summit of achievement?

This year is marked as the centenary of Thoreau's adventure at Walden Pond where, for the first time, he exercised his full independence and freedom of expression in a manner that left a permanent mark on the annals of human behavior. Further on I shall intersperse this article with some excerpts, reminiscences of those days which portray his unique character in its defiance of the State and that State's socially parasitic conventionalities.

It was not at all surprising that only a while ago, this year, Thoreau's name just failed to be chosen for election to the Hall of Fame of Great Americans although the tabulation of the final balloting did show a large number of votes in his favor. Instead, among others the name of Booker T. Washington is enrolled in that Hall of Fame. Of this I am certain: had he lived to see such an event, he would have been

delighted for he was one of the very few who courageously fought for the emancipation of the negro race.

Here it would be fitting to mention, even if briefly, a few of the characteristics of Thoreau's parents and his environment, which should further elucidate the origin of Thoreau's thoughts that led him toward rebellion against all oppressive measures and above all, against man-made laws.

The following lines were recorded in the Boston Daily Advertiser of Feb. 18, 1883, written by a friend of Thoreau's mother and regarding her:

"She was an excellent mother and housewife. In the midst of poverty she brought up her children to all the amenities of life, and if she had a crust of bread for dinner, she would see that it was properly served. She was never so poor or so busy that she did not find means of helping those poorer than herself."

There was much economic struggle to keep the family together and though his father, by occupation a pencil maker, put out the best pencil in the Country, he was far from reaping any substantial gain from his excellent product. Instead he himself had to work hard and his entire family had to work along with him so as to carry on the burden of daily life. The crew of this tedious and onerous labor consisted of his wife and four children, two boys and two girls, who really did most of the "helping" in the manufacture of the lead-pencils, during afterschool hours and as part of their "homework." No doubt the black lead which was the main ingredient of those well-made pencils helped undermine young Henry's health quite early in life, for the tubercular bacillus was already making deep inroads within him and instinctively he groped for an escape into the open—the fresh country air where he could recuperate and shake off the poison of black lead in his system which seemed to lay as heavy on his spirit as on his chest.

It is easy to understand why, in such an environment, his cravings should be so strongly inclined toward the green and open spaces which gave him, beside spiritual solace, also self-expression.

Aside from his scholastic tasks, that is during the first decade of his mature life, from 1837 to 1847, he was also busily engaged in the profession of surveying, and since he had intimate knowledge of the Concord surroundings, his services in this capacity were more and more appreciated.

Expressive of his emotions we find these few words written by him in Dec. 1841, that is, before his adventure in Walden Pond, which he realized four years later. Thus he writes:

"I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear the wind whispering among the reeds. It will be success if I shall have left myself behind. But my friends ask what I will do when I get there. Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the seasons?"

Toward spring in 1845, having reached his 28th birthday he decided to build himself a small cabin on the shore of Walden Pond and settle there as a free "squatter" which would be in harmony with his intellectual and spiritual nature. Since the aim of his retirement is incorrectly interpreted by many readers, it would be suitable to quote him verbatim:

"Finding that my fellow-citizens were not likely to offer me any room in the court-house, or any curacy or living anywhere else, but that I must shift for myself, I turned my face more exclusively than ever towards the woods, where I was better known. I determined to go into business at once, and not wait to acquire the usual capital, using such slender means as I had already got. My purpose in going to Walden Pond was not to live cheaply nor live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles. . .

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Sparta-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swathe and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the

whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the World; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion". . .

Quite naturally Walden Pond then was to Thoreau what the little Colony of Brook Farm was to the other Transcendentalists such as Emerson, Hawthorne, Channing, Ripley and a few other distinguished intellectuals—a suitable spot for spiritual recreation and of course a simpler way of putting into practice one's physical abilities which translate themselves into a pleasanter and healthier way of life. And since Thoreau preferred nature to art, he valued life above literature. At the same time he very much liked to combine intellectual and manual work so that to him this way of life was a unification with his individual expression toward a better form of creative living. This exemplary method was to some extent also practised and advocated by such men as William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malastesta and other doctrinaires of revolutionary trend. With Thoreau this division between labor and intellect was rather in the light of a protest against civilization as a whole, which to a great degree is responsible for robbing away the benefits of both productive capacities which should instead have been encouraged and developed simultaneously in every individual. To practice otherwise, as is so often the case in our so-called civilization, produces nothing but a state of decadence and discontent. But here let Thoreau himself enlarge upon this point—extracted from the pages of his *The Week*:

"Can there be any greater reproach than idle learning? Learn to split wood at least. The necessity of labor and conversation with many men and things to the scholar is rarely well remembered; steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing. If he has worked hard from morning till night, though he may have grieved that he could not be watching the train of his thoughts during that time, yet the few hasty lines which at evening record his days experience will be more musical and true than his freest but idle fancy could have furnished. Surely the writer is to address a world of laborers, and such therefore must be his own discipline. He will not idly dance at his work who has wood to cut and cord before nightfall in the short days of winter, but every stroke will be husbanded, and ring soberly through the wood; and so will the strokes of that scholar's pen, which at evening record the story of the day, yet cheerily on the ear of the reader, long after the echoes of his axe have died away."

And a bit further on in the same essay he sums up the point thus:

"I trust it does not smell so much of the study and library, even of the poet's attic, as of the fields and woods; that it is an hypaethral or unfolded book, lying open under the ether, and permeated by it, open to all weathers, not easy to be kept on a shelf."

Here I would add a few more lines from a letter Thoreau addressed to his class secretary. These are words which penetrate the heart's core as experiences which some of us have gone through—at any rate I was no exception in my youthful days; for I feel that Thoreau, above anyone else, was closest to Nature and that is why his writings are timeless and for all time. Environment and habit in human nature may alter but Nature is changeless; it is perpetual and self-generative in countless nuances according to atmospheric and climatic laws. But its entity is immutable and eternal. These are his memorable words:

"Though bodily I have been a member of Harvard University, heart and soul I have been far away among the scenes of my boyhood. Those hours that should have been spent in scouring the woods and exploring the lakes and streams of my native village immured within the dark but classic walls of a Stoughton or a Hollis, my spirit yearned for the sympathy of my old friend, Nature."

Thoreau, being a surveyor by profession, among other skilled and unskilled aptitudes, was perhaps the greatest of all surveyors when it was a case of spanning and plumbing the depths and scope of Nature. Of course I do not mean the phy-

sical aspects of certain strata and angles composing an undulating vale or hilltop or a vast panoramic view unfolding before the vision but rather, the depths of poetic insight which no surveyor, merely as such, could measure in the infinite distances which only the soul can span and which correspond to the microcosm within the sensitive human heart; not chalk, not stakes, but the delicate antennae spun out from the spirit and reaching and recording within itself the vibrations of a universe—such a Naturalist and such a surveyor was Henry David Thoreau.

In the Introduction to his Work, The Week, he gives a penetrating glimpse of a casual survey of his eye; it was his unique gift to know how to condense the essence of the exquisite into a short paragraph like the following:

"The sluggish artery of the Concord meadows steals thus unobscured through the Town without a murmur or a pulse-beat, its general course from south-west to north-east, and its length about fifty miles; a huge volume of matter, ceaselessly rolling through the plains and valleys of the substantial earth, with the moccasined tread of an Indian warrior, making haste from the high places of the earth to its ancient reservoir."

Above all else Thoreau was a professional "saunterer" as he called it; for him it would have been a sin not to spend half his days in the open air, so as to watch at close range the unfolding dawns, and feast his eyes on the rapturous sunsets; to interpret what was in the wind, to gather the latest news from the forest and to be "self-appointed inspector of snow-storms." These duties he subsequently declared he faithfully and regularly performed.

After days of work he often spent in his library and in manual pursuits, he would also, at times, take off entire days, spending them in leisure; that is, when he could not afford to "sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands."

"Sometimes," he says "in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie amidst the pines, and hickories, and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiseless through the house, until, by the sun falling in at my West window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time."

Of all out-door sports which Thoreau gave up, "fishing was the only sport which he did not abandon." Many vegetarians today are under the impression that Thoreau professed strict vegetarianism in accordance with his ethical and philosophical precepts. This was a mistake, for Thoreau never claimed to be a vegetarian, in proof of which I quote my dear friend Henry S. Salt, a strict vegetarian for over fifty years, from Salt's work on Thoreau:

"He (Thoreau) had strong preference at all times for a vegetarian diet, though he would occasionally catch a mess of fish for dinner from Walden Pond, and pleads guilty on one occasion to having slaughtered and devoured a wood-chuck which had made inroads on his bean field."

Aside from the above authoritative statement, any reader, acquainted with Thoreau's work, will find included in his diet the coarse item of salt-pork! That, however, does not in the least detract from his greatness as a Naturalist.

There is also an anecdote concerning Thoreau's dietetic preferences to be found in Emerson's writings in which the latter says that once while he was at table in the company of other guests he, Emerson, asked Thoreau when the food was being served, which dish Thoreau preferred, to which came the unhesitating reply: "The nearest."

After spending two full years at Walden Pond as a "squatter" he arrived at this conclusion: "to maintain oneself on earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if he will live simply and wisely."

And having earned the expenses necessary for keeping body and soul together he felt justified in spending the remainder of his time on his own pre-occupations, as he states:

". . . if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours; in proportion as he simplifies

his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness."

Walden, Thoreau's most famous work, which contains the full account of his life in the woods, did not see the light in print until 1854. But in September 1847, after having returned to Concord in order to help his father who badly needed assistance in his pencil business which consumed an immense amount of labor, Thoreau was resigned to give up the "Simple life" for something which had not the least attraction for him. This sacrifice was due to the great love and admiration he felt for his parents in their struggle for existence. But Thoreau never complained since after all, philosophically interpreted, this phase of his life was but another "experience" and not what others might construe as a "failure!"

Perhaps, and without further explanation, the following excerpt best justifies Thoreau's life at Walden Pond:

"I left the woods, for as good reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one." —"Why did I leave the woods?"— he wrote in his journal some years later "I do not think that I can tell. I do not know any better how I came to get there. I have often wished myself back. Perhaps I wanted change. There was a little stagnation, it may be, about two o'clock in the afternoon. Perhaps if I lived there much longer, I might live there forever. One might think twice before he accepted heaven on such terms."

In spite of the close affinity he felt for his parents and the rest of the household, his own being was decidedly Yankee or American Indian in character, now more appropriately defined as "rugged individualism". But the philosophy of this sort of individualism has also expanded into more universal scope.

Thoreau's writings show no selfish motivations inspiring the "rugged individualism" so often discernable in our present day politicians—and no more or less than a snare for the simple and not politically aware common people. Thoreau's was the opposite type of Stirner's individualism; while one was selfish the other was generous for Thoreau liked to share with others what Nature so lavishly bestowed on him. Above all else Thoreau, in my estimation was not only the most unique but also the greatest Naturalist this Country, or for that matter, any other country in the world, has produced. And here his sort of "rugged individualism" crystalizes into a shining philosophy which commands our deepest respect and greatest admiration.

Yet Thoreau means even more than this to those who go beyond his Nature Studies, which in themselves are so fascinating and inspiring to the point of exaltation. For he was also a great rebel both in the conduct of his life and in his philosophic perceptions. On perhaps the most remarkable trend in his life most of the Academicians are silent or fear to elaborate in their studies on Thoreau. Very often it is either side-tracked or altogether ignored in their analysis. Of course, Thoreau as a Naturalist, gives no offense to society; but Thoreau as a rebel-thinker would be branded as dangerous and subversive by American intellectual standards.

Closely allied with Thoreau's particular individualism are decidedly his libertarian doctrines so authentically Yankee, yet in substance, anarchistic. Thoreau regards all established forms of government as, at best, a necessary evil which he deems at times ought to be tolerated as long as our patience endures, especially during a transition period such as this present society is undergoing; but with this understanding: that the final condition of mankind will resemble the primal one of individual liberty. Politics he always considered as "unreal, incredible and insignificant." How apropos was his new version of the Beatitudes when he says; "Blessed are the young, for they do not read the President's message!"

Undoubtedly all of Thoreau's social doctrines pointed toward that goal: the road to the development of individual character must be left open and unobstructed as he states in his *Resistance to Social Government* (see his *Aesthetic Papers*) —; he says:

"There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and

independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining the State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen. . . . "

Here must also be noted an important incident which happened to Thoreau in connection with his devotion to the Abolitionist Movement which occurred during his first year at Walden Pond.

It was the season of Autumn when his individualistic view of life led him, as it led other Transcendentalists, to the adoption of Anarchistic precepts. He then heartily accepted and endorsed the dictum: "that government is best which governs not at all." Thoreau's protest at the foreign policy of the United States in the War with Mexico, as well as his deep detestation of the Government's sanction of negro slavery at home, led directly to his active personal antagonism to the State and its representatives and he felt that something more effective than verbal protest was demanded from those who, like himself, were required to show their allegiance in the form of paying taxes.

"I meet this American Government, or its representative, the State Government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-gatherer. . . . If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills, this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood." (*Duty of Civil Disobedience.*)

One afternoon when Thoreau happened to have gone in from Walden to the Village to get a shoe from the cobbler's he was arrested and lodged in the Town Jail.

"Henry, why are you here?" asked Emerson when he came to pay a visit to his friend in his new quarters.

"Why are you *not* here?" was the significant reply of the prisoner, an allusion to the characteristic caution of Emerson.

A humorous account of the night he spent in jail and of the fellow-criminals he met there was later written by Thoreau, thus:—

"It was like travelling," he tells us, "into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there one night. It seemed to me that I had never heard the town-clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village, for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was a closer view of my native Town. I was fairly inside of it. I never had seen its institutions before. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about."

The following morning he was discharged, his mother and aunts having paid the tax, of course without Thoreau's consent— a somewhat tame conclusion to the dispute, on which he had not reckoned. The payment of this tax has been wrongly ascribed to Emerson. The money was actually paid by his sister, Marie Thoreau who disguised herself by wearing a wrap around her head. The jailer to whom this money was paid, still living in 1894, said that the payment made Thoreau "mad as the devil!"

In October of 1859, when John Brown, the great American Abolitionist visited Concord for the last time—that is, a few weeks before his execution—it was there at the Sanborn's home that he met Thoreau and other Abolitionists. But it was Thoreau's boldness and sincerity that gave the first public utterance in behalf of this arch-enemy of the Virginia slaveholders, and that, at a time when the entire American press was raging with hate and ridicule against this noble and heroic soul who championed the emancipation of the negro race up to his last breath. It was then announced that Thoreau would speak in the Town Hall on Sunday evening, October 30, the topic of his lecture being: "The Plea for Captain John Brown." When this met with the disapproval of some Republicans and Abolitionists alike as being a hasty move and

ill-advised, he sprang to his feet and told them that he had not sent for advice but to announce his intention to speak.

In spite of their vigorous protestations a large audience assembled, composed of men of various parties, to hear Thoreau's Address. This was one of the finest ever delivered. These challenging words for freedom and truth are now included among his writings. He avowed absolute approval of the conduct of men like John Brown who was indicted as a rebel and a traitor.

Havelock Ellis in one of his Essays remarks on this historic event in these terms:

"He [Thoreau] was *the one* man in America to recognize the greatness of the occasion and to stand up publicly on his side."

Great and significant as was this occasion, Thoreau's audacity is still greater when measured by the depth and sincerity of his words, summing up so eloquently and so prophetically the life of a man near to his heart. What he says about this immortal hero will stand as long as there is any language left on earth in which is recorded the yearnings for Justice abstract and absolute:

"Think of him!—Of his qualities! Such a man takes ages to make, and ages to understand; no mock hero, nor the representative of any Party. A man such as the sun may not rise upon again in this benighted Land. To whose making went the costliest material, the finest adamant; sent to be redeemer of those in captivity; and the only use to which you can put him is to hang him at the end of a rope!"

What finer expression could there be on such an occasion than these words from the heart's core? Great men never fear the obstacles in their path especially when it is a question of justice and righteousness for the oppressed. The dictum of the great is to utter the truth on any eventuality. And how well has Thoreau defined the interpretation of an attitude he himself took when he explains:

"The one great rule of composition—and if I were a professor of rhetoric I should insist on *this* is to *speak the truth.* This first, this second, this third. . . . The theme is nothing; the life is everything. Give me simple, cheap and homely themes. I omit the unusual, the hurricanes and earthquakes, and describe the common. This has the greatest charm, and is the true theme of poetry. Give me the obscure life, the cottage of the poor and humble, the work-days of the world, the barren fields. . . "

What better could I bring to my readers concerning Thoreau's style and eloquence than the critical appreciation of one of his contemporaries, the eminent James Russell Lowell, who, though not always sympathetic to Thoreau in the evaluation of his life and works, nevertheless at times felt that *truth* does not always stand for fancies and inclinations and that here, as always, truth speaks for itself. It is worth extracting a few lines from an antagonist, for such Lowell was—but in justice to Thoreau's writing he says:

"With every exception, there is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind that is comparable with it in degree, where it is best. His range was narrow, but to be a master is to be a master. There are sentences of his as perfect as anything in the language, and thoughts as clearly crystalized; his metaphors and images are always fresh from the soil."

Not less important was a critical evaluation of Thoreau's life and work published in England many years ago in which the author—(the late Eton Professor, Henry S. Salt, and one of the ablest students on this subject,) gives us some remarkable analytical observations. Though many years have passed since this work was written it is as fresh and interesting as it was when it came off the press. I here extract from Salt's book a few passages so that others may share my delight in his appraisal of our Yankee philosopher and Naturalist.

"As a poet-naturalist, however, Thoreau is distinctly akin to Richard Jefferies and other writers of that School. Jefferies' character was richer and more sensuous than Thoreau's but they had the same mystic religious temperament, the same passionate love of woods and fields and streams and the same gift of brilliant language in which to record their observations. It is curious to compare these modern devotees of country life with the old-fash-

ioned Naturalists of whom Isaac Walton and Gilbert White are the most illustrious examples. . . . It is mainly to Thoreau in America and to Jefferies in England, that we owe the recognition and study of what may be called the poetry of natural history—a style of thought and writing which is peculiar to the last 30 or 40 years. [This was published in 1896.]

"Of all the Concord group, by far the most inspired, stimulating and vital personality is Thoreau's and when time has softened down the friction caused by superficial blemishes and misunderstandings, the world will realize that it was no mere Emersonian disciple but a master-mind and heart of hearts who left that burning message to his fellow men."

While I am quoting, I cannot overlook the sentiments expressed by another Englishman, a contemporary writer, Holbrook Jackson, one of the finest Critics and Essayists in modern literature, in addition to being among the greatest bibliophiles of our century and who also gave us not so long ago that most interesting and valuable work: *The Anatomy of Bibliomania.* It is a pity that space does not permit me to quote him in full:

"The most remarkable incident in the wilful endeavors of Thoreau was his *Walden* experiment, which, if it had no further results, has produced one of the most delightful books, even from the merely literary point of view, in the English language.

"Few of the readers of *Walden* want to become hermits, but it is conceivable that after reading it they may want to become themselves and possess some knowledge of how to carry out the wish. . .

"As a matter of fact, Thoreau's life was a continuous experiment. He liked a margin to his days, and so he endeavored to reduce to a minimum the drudgery we all endure for the sake of subsistence. . . .

"He was a strange combination of scholar and vagabond, with the poetic sense so often a characteristic of the latter. . . .

"He possessed the spirit of a boy, backed by the wisdom of the ages, and he learned how to taste all the stars and all the heavens in a crust of bread."

As we approach the end of a man's life we are eager to learn what were his particular interests and how he viewed *life* with its intricate problems, and here, again, Henry S. Salt expresses this at his best. He seems to have plumbed the very depths of Thoreau's soul and brought up the pearl of Thoreau's last meditation of a horizon fading before his mortal vision:

"My greatest skill," says Thoreau himself in words that might stand as his epitaph, "has been to want but little. For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it. And then I think of those amongst men who will know that I love them, though I tell them not. Truly there is a love that needs not telling—that is the deepest and tenderest untold." And those who understand this love will understand the secret of Thoreau's story, and will never fail to own and reverence the sincerity and heroism of his life.

Thoreau, Apostle of Freedom Through Simplification

By Dr. Pryns Hopkins

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Dr. Pryns Hopkins

When Henry David Thoreau found that the law operated to return runaway slaves to their masters and that it martyred the liberator, John Brown, he protested collectively and individually. He organized opposition among his fellow citizens. He also seceded personally from the State and struck at its life by refusing to pay taxes, so that he has become in our time the inspiration of Gandhi's civil disobedience movement. Yet this man was so gentle that beasts of the wild, birds and even fishes were without fear towards him.

When he found that the crude materialism of pioneer America exploited human life for the sake of wealth, he removed himself from Concord town into Walden Woods. In the simple house he built there with his own hands, he showed that contented frugality leads to freedom more surely than does feverish industry. With no illusions of his power in the face of a capitalism which found nature mere food for the maw of its factories, he still held individual development to be the social aim and reckoned the cost of any article in terms of the amount of *Life* which went into making it.

When he found men enchained by the obsession of founding families and leaving a numerous posterity to perpetuate their banal physiognomies, he recoiled to the opposite extreme. By never even marrying, he denied himself needlessly the harmony and the influence toward loving cooperation which flow from a happy fireside and sweet children's voices.

When Thoreau observed his Puritan neighbors imprisoned in their Churches, he preferred to remain a "happy heathen," as he called himself, and refrained all his life from entering one of these buildings. Even in the Transcendentalist circle in which he moved with Emerson, he was not caught in the loose optimism of the elder leader. One thing for which I honor him was that he was not bound in the conceit that mankind is necessarily "nobler" than animals. The project which Walt Whitman proposed in immortal verse,

> "I could turn and live with animals,
> They are so placid and self-contained
> I stand and look at them long and long.
> They do not sweat and whine about their condition.
> They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins."

That project Thoreau, in his Walden Woods, enacted in an immortal experiment in living.

When Thoreau beheld the spontaneity of young persons around him being repressed under the dominating parenthood and stern scholastic "character-moulding"

approved of in that artificial, Victorian age, he set against it the example of a more enlightened way. He had no chance to learn from the as-yet unborn mental-hygiene movement, how harsh frustrations create the hate that seeks release in war or in industrial strife. His was a natural sympathetic understanding—noted for his manner with children, just, affectionate and gentle. Finally, when he found that the very men who had sought freedom by fleeing from the Old World to the New promptly forged new chains for themselves by deliberately acquiring addictions for tobacco and the intemperate use of alcohol, he took a firm stand against these unnatural slaveries. He found them to be pointless complications of life and new conspiracies against human liberty.

Such was Henry David Thoreau who, more than any other American fighter for ideals, saw that Happiness meant Freedom, and Freedom meant, Simplicity.

Lecture on Thoreau by Dr. Edward Howard Griggs

Author and Lecturer

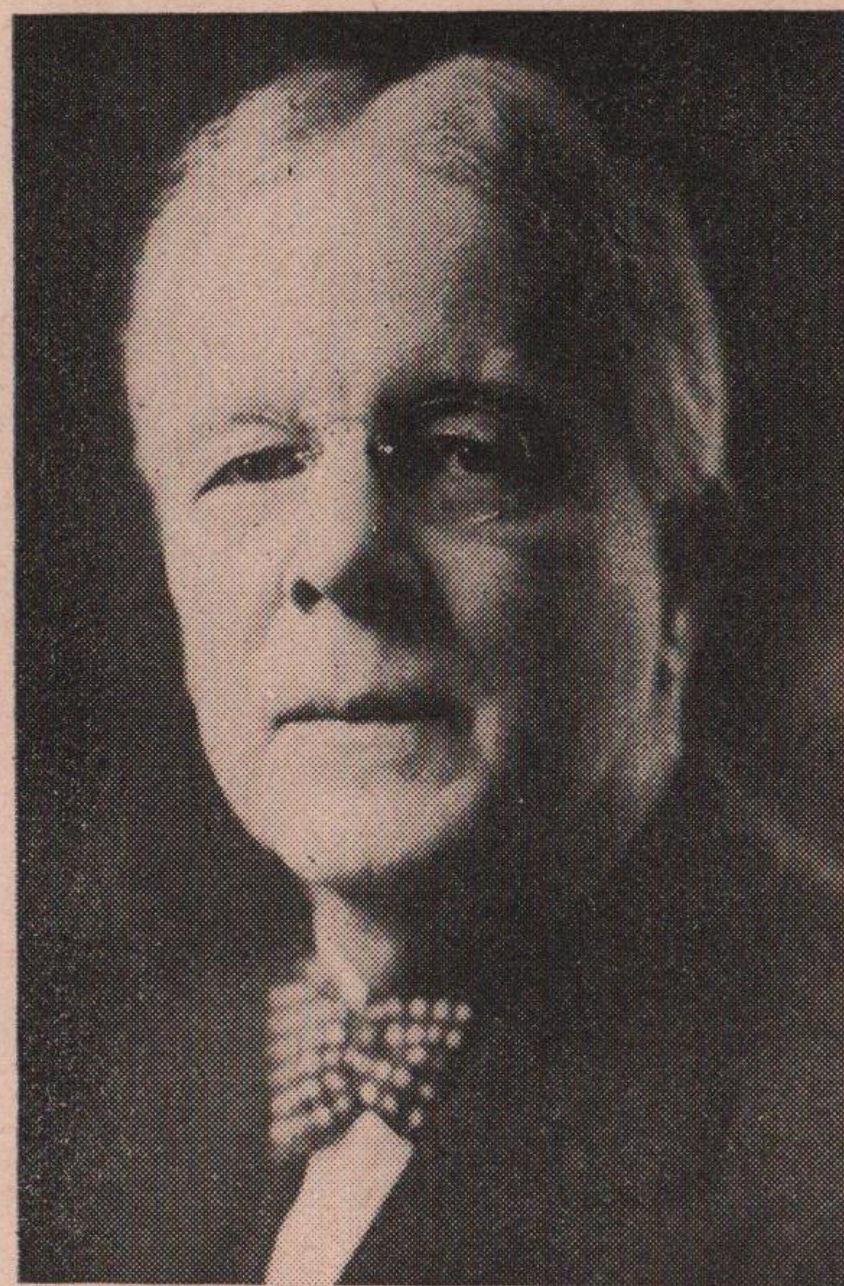
Reported by Mary Louise White, A.B.

As time went on, these Colonies reached out and expanded in size, making headway against the wilderness, the neglect of the Mother Country, and the warfare with the Indians and the French. During that period of thirty or forty years, the Colonies were undergoing the first birth-throes of a Nation, and all thought was focused upon the struggle in hand. Patriotism and the principles of government were the sources of literature.

French social and political ideas reached this Country through the writings of Thomas Paine, Franklin, and even those of Washington himself. The same idealism that permeated the French Revolution influenced us.

The first expression of artistic strivings in literature appeared in the New York School, in the writings of such poets as Bryant, Longfellow, and Whittier, and such novelists as Cooper and Irving. A gradation was being made from the political range of ideas into the philosophic trend of thinking prevalent in New England, which was called the Unitarian Movement.

Then came a second great stream of Continental thought from German literature and philosophy at the highest point of its development in Germany. Carlyle became a great exponent of German thought to the English-speaking Countries.



Dr. Edward Howard Griggs

Emerson published and sold a large part of "Sartor Resartus" in this Country before it was published in England. Many books by German authors were translated by American writers.

The Transcendental school borrowed its name from Emanuel Kant but was actually different. It expressed the feeling of young people all over New England that they did not believe as did their fathers (in an absolutism) but perceived a new dignity in man—a dignity and importance in the conduct of life. It was this general awakening that was termed Transcendentalism.

Concord was the scene of its greatest development, for here lived Emerson and Thoreau and many other Transcendentalists. Of all the Concord group only Thoreau was born in that Town, and in his life he best represented the Transcendental Movement. Thoreau was younger than Emerson, just young enough to be his disciple, to express and develop Emerson's ideas.

Thoreau's father was of French extraction, and his mother, Scottish. He was born July 12, 1817, a time when his father was in straitened circumstances. The elder Thoreau operated a small business, manufacturing lead-pencils. Enough money was raised, however, to enter their son in college at Harvard. His work was linguistic and literary with a small amount of natural science included. He acquired a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin. He could translate Greek literature into English. He had also studied several modern languages. He was influenced by James Very and other Transcendental Scientists.

Emerson published his first book while Thoreau was in college,—the little book, "View of Nature." It expressed the idea that man and Nature are mutually interdependent. Man should live close to Nature, because Nature has the deepest influence upon the development of a balanced spiritual life. This became Thoreau's program, on which he based his own thinking and his life. His was not the attitude of desiring to find out facts about Nature, and to hand them on. Although his observations are remarkably good, his guiding idea was to live in relation to Mother Nature and to make Nature the chief influence on the development of his own spiritual life. In his senior year at Harvard College, Emerson was invited to give an address on "The American Scholar," which has since been termed "our American declaration of literary independence."

"Don't be a thinker," he said, "but a man thinking." One should be a whole human being in his job. When a man becomes either a head or a hand, we don't get either good head-work or good hand-work. He was anticipating the wide development of specialization in educational and industrial business life.

While Thoreau was at Harvard, Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" was published in America. An entire chapter based on the Philosophy of Clothes was to appear in Thoreau's first book, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers," showing Carlyle's influence on Thoreau.

The personal friendship with Emerson began when Thoreau came home to work. He got an idea for making better lead-pencils than were being made in Europe and imported here. All of his friends thought that now Thoreau was established in business, but Thoreau said, "Why should I make a repetition of what I have done. I have made an improvement in lead-pencils, and now I am through." Once in a while he would return to their manufacture to make the necessary money to support his other ventures, but he refused to devote himself to pencil making.

He began teaching at a school with his brother John. He was criticized for not using physical punishment to control his six pupils, flogged all six of them, and then resigned his job. He decided that he didn't like school teaching. He had to do what his employers wanted him to do, and could not follow his own ideas; therefore, he gave up school teaching.

About this time Ellen Sewell came to Concord. Both Thoreau and his brother John fell in love with her. John tried first of all to win the young woman in marriage. She became engaged but her father disapproved. Ellen seemed more drawn to Henry, and she broke her engagement with John. Henry asked her hand, and was refused. Thus Henry had to sublimate his love for Ellen Sewell. In many respects Thoreau's life was to be largely negative, for he had no fulfillment in his personal relationships nor in his occupation. Yet there were some affirmations in his life and literature, sufficient to make his achievement in life remarkable.

He spent a week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers with his brother John. Henry kept a meticulous Journal of his experiences with farmers and his observations of the natural world, which was to be his first book and one of two published during his lifetime. He called it "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers." The reader is impressed by his closeness to Nature. Animals seemed to love him. Speaking of fish, he writes, "They are so tame that I can stand close by them and examine then for an hour at a time, stroke them, and take them gently out of the water with my hand. He could do things no one else could do with animals. Yet he made no contribution to natural Science. He wanted to study his relation to Nature, and the effect of Nature on the soul and the deeper spiritual life— "the moments when all anxiety is calmed in the infinite repose of Nature." His aim, already formulated, was to live his ideals and then to interpret them in writing. From the very beginning he had those two in writing. "The true poem is not that aims to live and then to interpret his life which the reader reads. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with its expression in the poet's life." What has the man become through the work? How far has the experience taken form in the life of the artist? "My life has been the poem I would have written, but I could not both live and tell it." This is the best line expressing his belief among all that he wrote. He only partially succeeded in interpreting it.

He wrote sentences and paragraphs rather than essays, a characteristic of style which he shared with Emerson. Thoreau struggled for the epigrammatic or paradoxical statement, pungently formulated.

In the course of the week on these rivers he introduced long pages of meditation, one on friendship, one about books and reading, and another concerning the different phases of human life. In one of these discourses, he asserted, "To some extent mythology is only history and contains enduring truth." And then he came to the conclusion: "The poet is he who can write some pure mythology today without the aid of posterity."

Another passage affirms: "The wisest man preaches no doctrines, has no schemes, sees no rafter, not even a cobweb against the heavens. It is clear sky."

Again he says: "I never read a novel. There is so little real life in them." Instead, he stated that he liked to read the Scriptures, although he had passed over that of the Hebrews. And he comes to the final thought, "There is more religion in most silence than there is silence in most religion."

He advises: "Read the best books first or you may not have a chance to read them at all." Further—"He who resorts to the easy novel because he is languid, does no better than if he took a nap."

He says: "The desire to form a perfectly healthy sentence is extremely rare for the most part". . . "A man's whole life is taxed for the least thing well done."

Thoreau was a great individualist. He wanted to live in accordance with his own nature, to escape from the restless class of reformers. "Even virtue is no longer such if it be stagnant." "The expedients of the nations clashed with one another. Only the absolutely right is expedient for all."

It took ten years to get his first volume published. He tried publisher after publisher. The book which he had written at twenty-two was not published until he was thirty-two, and then it was published at his own expense. He had made some lead-pencils and done some surveying, and in these ways gathered together enough to publish his volume. Four years later, when Thoreau was thirty-six, the publisher complained about the presence of the volumes on his shelves, and Thoreau took all of the unsold copies home. He said, "I have a library of nine hundred volumes, about seven hundred of which I wrote myself." He had some sense of humor, fortunately.

Meanwhile his friendship with Emerson was developing. When Thoreau was 24 years old, Emerson invited him to come into his family and take care of odd jobs. For two years he lived there from the age of 24 to that of 26. His friendship with Mrs. Lucy Jackson Brown, a sister-in-law of Emerson began at this time. Thoreau could express himself better to a sympathetic woman. He wrote one of his first poems for her. It was published in the

"Dial." He developed much the same type of affection for Emerson's wife (the sister of Lucy). She was shy, a recluse, and an invalid, and Thoreau had a fine, spiritual, high attitude toward her. After two years Emerson thought it best for Thoreau to get out into the world.

Thoreau went to Staten Island and tutored in Emerson's brother's family. New York, however, represented everything foreign to his ideas of how one ought to live, and, after a short period here, he went back to Concord, and again went to live at Emerson's home. He wrote a letter to Emerson's wife from Staten Island saying, "You represent woman to me." Generally, Thoreau covers up references to Mrs. Emerson in his Journal by using the masculine pronoun rather than the feminine. He says that he wishes that she were his mother or his sister. In his latter passages he deplores the fading out of their friendship. She withdrew a bit.

In the Spring of the year, after talking his plans over thoroughly with Emerson, he decided to build himself a little cottage near Walden Pond on Emerson's land which extended to Walden Pond. Emerson favored it highly, and Thoreau earned a little money, borrowed some, and built a cabin with his own hands at a cost of about thirty dollars. In it he had a desk and a chair. For two years and two months he lived in that cottage. In "Walden" he says, "I went to the woods because I wanted to live naturally, to face the essential facts of life, and to learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not yet learned to live. . . . Living is so dead. Nor would I want to practice resignation unless it was necessary . . . to live sturdily and Spartanly. If I were mean, I wanted to get the full knowledge of it, and, if I were sublime, to enjoy it." "This moment is the meeting of two eternities," said Carlyle, and Thoreau adopted this saying and made it his own.

During his two years at Walden he was not a recluse. His friends came out to see him, attracted by his plan. It was only a little walk out of Concord, so he was in constant contact with the outside, yet he had the solitude and silence and stimulus of the beautiful world.

He had not completed the manuscript of "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers" until this time. The book was not published until Thoreau was thirty-two years old. "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers" and "Walden" were the only books published during his lifetime, except for a few things published in magazines, although he wrote a great deal.

He has more poetry in his prose writing than in his verse. No where is his verse equal to his prose. He doesn't have the ability Emerson had to give in a few lines of verse what could not be adequately expressed in prose. His prose is best.

At the beginning of "Walden" he protests against the ordinary conduct of life. He is the great protestant against material advancement such as he saw about him. At the beginning of his book he decries the way of living followed by most New Englanders: "The twelve labors of Hercules were small in comparison with those my neighbors have undertaken. See this young man whose misfortune it is to have acquired barns and houses so that he is held and possessed by these. Better to have lived in fields and to have been suckled by a wolf!" . . . "Why should they begin to dig their graves long before death? It is labor enough to cultivate a few cubic feet of blood and flesh. Things are in the saddle and man must get out of this slavery to things. There are only two ways to do this— one is to increase one's income, the other to decrease one's desires, to reduce the needs of life to the utmost minimum so that one has freedom to spend his time as he desires."

" . . . Laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt. It is a foolish life as he will find when he gets to the end of it. Most men through mere ignorance and mistake . . . finer fruits cannot be picked by them. Their fingers are too clumsy at toil."

"I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I threw them out the window in disgust because they gathered dust. I would rather sit on the pumpkin and have it all to myself than to share a velvet cushion."

Thoreau protested against the accumulation of tasteless stuff with which we encumber ourselves. He was resolved to free himself from it. "Why should students undertake education as they do. They should not merely play it, but earnestly live their education from the beginning to the end instead of being supported by the community." "Men are not so much the keeper of herds as herds are the keepers of men." "Education . . . common schools. It is time for uncommon schools. It is time that villages were colleges, and their elder inhabitants the fellows of that college.'

"Every man is the builder of a temple called his body, nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features, any meanness to brutalize them."

He left Walden after two years and two months "for as good a reason as I went there —because I had several more lives to live and could not be the prisoner of this one" . . . "Castles should be built in the air, but now put the foundations under them. Live the dream—live the expression."

At the age of thirty-one he went to his home in Concord to remain for the remainder of his life. He devoted his time to the meticulous observation and recording of the natural life about him. He tried lecturing, and although he attracted audiences, made no profit therefrom.

In 1849 at the age of 37 he thought it was time for him to make a protest against the way Massachusetts sanctioned the Fugitive Slave Law. Consequently, he refused to pay his poll-tax and was sent to jail. Emerson paid the tax to secure his release, but for six years Thoreau kept on not paying it. He was not prosecuted, however. He wrote an Essay on "Civil Disobedience" to insist that any man should make a protest against civil actions of which he disapproved at no matter what cost to himself. It is the only way he can make headway against it. He influenced Gandhi.

In 1854 Massachusetts sent back a slave under the Fugitive Slave Law, using its own police. Thoreau published an Essay on "Slavery in Massachusetts." He met John Brown. In 1859 John Brown made the raid at Harpers Ferry. When he was thrown into jail and sentenced to death, Thoreau walked from house to house, saying that he was going to make a speech on John Brown. His friends tried to dissuade him but he resisted them and spoke before a hostile audience. It was his personal protest which he felt was the only way to live his convictions. One should not trust to pulling legislative strings.

In 1854 Thoreau realized he had tuberculosis in a bad form. In 1862 he died and was buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where all of the great Transcendentalists were to be buried, including Emerson.

Was this a defeated life? He had no complete personal relationship. As to his vocational success, he kept a Journal and wrote enough for nineteen volumes, but only two were published during his lifetime, and one of these at his own expense. He published several Essays including "Civil Disobedience." One of the most charming essays was entitled "Walking."

It was too negative—a life of constant protest. Yet, how completely he lived his own expression and how fully he interpreted that range of ideas in his writings. His writing has progressed in gaining critical approval. Today he is greater than ever, influencing more lives more and more widely. We must realize that it was a life of great achievement, a life singularly American. His ideas are as important now and as significant in the changing character of our present lives as they were in the times when he wrote and lived.

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Thoughts on the Thoreau Centennial

By Jo Ann Wheeler
Teacher: Ferrer Modern School

ONE hundred years ago a young man went to live in a woodland hut which he had built for himself by the side of a quiet pond. His purpose was twofold; to write, and to get acquainted with himself and life.

"I wished," he said, "to live deliberately, to front only the essentials of life and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover I had not lived."

No one who has the slightest acquaintance with Henry David Thoreau will attempt to deny the success of his venture, for this experience helped to crystalize a Philosophy of Freedom that has had an ever-growing appeal. His was the queer notion that men had not so much a right as a *duty* to be free, a notion that strikes the thoughtful mind as ever fresh and new. And can anyone who aspires to freedom fail to respond to the clear, cool stimulant that is "Walden"—the bugle-call of "Civil Disobedience" — the denunciation of servility in the "John Brown" papers or "Slavery in Massachusetts," and the astringent analysis of modern society in "Life Without Principle"?

These were the ideas of a young man considered crabbedly eccentric because he dared to be himself. For that is his greatest appeal, that in so far as it was humanly possible, or socially desirable, he dared to follow the dictates of his inner nature. How many of us could say as much? "Know thyself," says Socrates. "Be thyself," says Thoreau. Excellent advice; but are we not cowards, afraid to attempt either? Do we not wriggle and squirm out of every opportunity life affords us to do more than vegetate?

"Reaction" is a word in common use today, perhaps, because it is so evident that this Age in which we live *is* one of reaction . . . a running away from the complexities of our times . . . an escape, if you will, from the hideous mess we have made of this little world of ours from our craven fears and uncertainties. We are afraid to look ahead; the present is unbearable; consciously or unconsciously we turn our faces to what lies behind us. We are in the midst of a Revolution, but it is revolving backward.

Take the two most prominent trends of thought: Collectivism—which in practise proves to be a centralization of power in a Super-State — and that other trend which I shall call medievalism, which shows itself, either as a glorification of the great minds of the past—the 100-best-books-school-of-thought or in the form of a religious mysticism which chants of a great revival of faith. I'm not criticising these ideas unless calling them reactionary is criticism. But are they not a return to the dead past? Certainly the idea that all wisdom has been compressed in the philosophies of a few men of the past, no matter how great, with nothing for future generations to add or take away, is a little narrow, to say the least, and in the case of a few of our servants, is it not even a little bigoted? And there are many of the mystics who honestly advocate a return to the Middle Ages, in thought, at least.

On the other hand the Planned Society of the Collectivists bears not a little resemblance in practice to the despotism of those of the more enlightened of the Oriental Despots; or, to come a little nearer to our own time, what of the planned society of Rome on the eve of its decline? It is a little startling to compare the workings of the State-controlled life of the Romans under Diocletion and his successors with the collectivist societies of the twentieth century.

"Man must find God," say the mystics. "Man must find Security," say the Collectivists. I think that it might be most desirable to find God, if that is possible, and there can be no quarrel with security—and yet—from my ivory tower I have watched the ways of men as they try to achieve both objectives and it has seemed to me that when they are most triumphantly proclaiming their success they are

the farthest from their goal. I think that Man will not find either God or Security until he has found himself.

I have heard individualism held up to scorn by both schools of thought. Each held it to be synonymous with selfishness. Yet the exaltation of the man who feels himself "at one" with God or with the collectivist State, seems to me to smack of more egotistic satisfaction than is entirely consistent with its professed selflessness. There seems to me more selflessness in the individualism of a Thoreau, who refused his assent to a society which lived upon the exploitation of helpless human beings, or in moral courage of the scientist who refused to continue atomic research when he knew it was to be used for destructive purposes. (I wish I knew his name. I should like to "make him my reverence" as the Irish say).

The objection is made that these very ideas I criticize are but a revolt from that period of rank individualism from which we have just emerged. I answer that we have never yet reached an Age of Individualism for we have never yet developed a completely "whole" individual, though we have at times come close to such achievement. But it has been only by sheer accident and fortunate circumstance. We have paid lip service to individualism, but that is all. What has passed for individualism is the mad race in which each member of the herd tries to trample other members in the mad scramble to be first at the materialistic feed-trough of this machine age society. There has been a lust for *things* at the expense of *living*. It cannot be truly said that we have ever lived in a time when the individual—Man—was of any real importance except to the very few.

Never has there been so much respect paid to the "people" — that amorphous nonentity—so little regard for Man. We first inquire whether he be a Jew or Negro;—Anti-Semite or Communist;—German or Japanese;—or any other pigeonhole to which we may conveniently file him for reference. Labeled almost out of existence into a negative anonymity, he has come to accept his own unimportance—even to glorify it. But out of nothing only nothing can come. A society built on negative men can only be doomed to sterility and ultimate extinction. There is no vitality at the core.

Let politicians prate of the "people." Who are the "people"? I do not know them; they are of no importance. But *you* are important; *I* am important; and *you* over there; and *you* and *you*—personality, character — individual — Man—each important, to himself and to that larger group of individuals we call Society.

"The fate of the Country does not depend upon how you vote at the polls—the worst man is as good as the best at that game; does not depend upon what kind of a paper you drop in the ballot-box once a year; but on the kind of a man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning."

"O for a man who is a man . . . How many *men* are there to a square thousand miles in this country? Hardly one." (Essay on "*The Duty of Civil Disobedience*")

How can we be men—whole, upright individuals—how can we be ourselves as we are born to be, when from childhood on we are cramped and warped to fit a ready-made mold; when we are taught unthinking obedience to authority, and conformity to accepted patterns of thought and action; when every free impulse and every original action is punished as rebellion?—When Mother knows best, and Father knows best and Teacher knows best and the State knows best and God knows best—and "God knows" how we ever *know* anything at all!

The greatest hope of humanity is that a few great minds have been able to keep their integrity in spite of all attempts to imprisonment and regimentation. It speaks well for the toughness of the human race that they were able to survive. If we were not afraid to allow our children to grow in freedom, might they not achieve originality, and dare to think for themselves? Would there not be a freer world in proportion to the free minds that inhabit it? Would not great minds be even more daring and mediocre minds set free? Is it not at least worth trying? Is it not preferable that Man should place his reliance upon himself, rather than in some outward concept of power? How weak this prayer for help, for security, emotional or economic!

We look to God or to the State for succor and are bewildered when we find each taking on the attributes of the other. When each individual shall become his own perfect state, relying upon his own inner powers; when he shall find the divinity that shapes his ends *within himself*, then there will be some hope of that perfect society of which we have dreamed.

It will be a society of men and women who dare to be themselves, each one independent and whole, yet capable of forming with other "whole" men and women a larger and still harmonious "Whole." That is the only "wholeness" or holiness worth achieving.

One need not be a Thoreau to be independent. Each must follow his own road to freedom. Each must be unique, himself, and from his own recognized selfhood reach out to the selfhood of his neighbor. But Self cannot be realized until we learn to rely upon that inborn love of freedom which is in every individual. Until we commonly recognize the need to develop inner capacities more fully, so that we may learn to live with ourselves, we may not be able to live decently with our fellow-men.

Unless we fully accept the truth that a free world demands free men; that free men can only develop from children reared in an atmosphere of freedom and that the free individual is the "whole" one—willing and ready to accept responsibility for his own thoughts and deeds—unless we fully accept all this, all efforts to create a habitable world for civilized human beings will go for nothing. We shall continue to be the half-savage creatures we are today living in a house built on the shifting sands of hate, suspicion and fear.

Neither societies nor individuals can be planned from without; they must grow from within, and in the long run, the kind of world we live in is the kind of world we deserve. There's no use running. We cannot run away from ourselves.

Thoreau and Modern Education

By Alexis C. Ferm

Principal: Ferrer Modern School

"MODERN Education" cannot be evaluated like public school education, as it is not static, is not built according to a prescribed formula, is not mapped out by a "Board" or any group of individuals.

But why should education have a modifying word and why should it be confused with pedagogy? As Elizabeth Byrne Ferm said in one of her talks: "Education means development from within."

Pedagogy means filling up from without.

Education is the path to discovery, to knowledge.

Pedagogy is the path to the discovered, to information.

This would be true of education whether modern or ancient.

Education is as individual as the individuals who are providing it, as individual as the educators who are associating with the children who are to grow into adulthood.

But the basis of "Modern Education"

Alexis C. Ferm

should be freedom. An educational environment that does not manifest the spirit of freedom may have slightly changed or varied methods of teaching, but belongs to the old-time regimented schools.

Freedom in education—self-activity, initiative, creativeness—is not a conception of today for it was voiced by many rebels of the past, such as Rousseau, Herbert, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Jacotot, Tolstoi, and Ferrer. But Froebel said it would take two hundred years for people to understand his educational philosophy.

However, there may be hope for the individual and the human race in the revival of the writings of one of the greatest individualists of the past century, right in the midst of a terrific and insidious drive towards regimentation in the schools as well as in business and government. We may wonder how many persons in the great mass of human beings are able to appreciate the writings of so decidedly an individual as Henry David Thoreau, but at least those who are able to appreciate the work of Josiah Warren and "Education of Man" by Frederick Froebel and "The Ego and His Own" by Max Sterner, should derive much satisfaction and corroboration from the writings of Thoreau. The great majority of folks are very likely to think of the Thoreau and Sterner types as being selfish and egotistic, rather than ego-altruistic, which, essentially, they are.

Thoreau believed in Man but not in a herd of men; in man as an individual striving to express the best of which he is capable, and he believed that only in freedom can the human being grow into Manhood:

"Nations! What are nations? Tartars! Huns! Chinamen! Like insects they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a Man that there are so many men. It is individuals that populate the world"...

"The mass never comes up to the standard of the best, but on the contrary degrades itself to the level with the lowest"..

"All this worldly wisdom was once the unamiable wisdom of some wise man."

The lowest did not refer to the lowest in a material or social sense. He admired the fisherman who hauled the driftwood home for his winter fire—that life seemed to him to be so direct, so honest. It was the directness, that honesty in revealing oneself, that self-reliance, that fascinated him, in contrast to sophistication, to imitation, to pretense:

"I see the old pale-faced farmer out again on his sled now for the five-thousandth time,— Cyrus Hubbard, a man of a certain New England probity and worth, immortal and natural, like a natural product, like the sweetness of a nut, like the toughness of hickory. *He, too, is a redeemer for me.*"

It was not enough for Thoreau to find out that he was a human being, he aimed at growing into a human being plus. He wanted to know his own ability, his capacity, he wanted to know himself and Nature unadorned artificially.

When he knew that he could make a good pencil, a pencil of fine workmanship, he was no longer interested in making pencils excepting as he felt that he had to help out in the family, as pencil making had become his father's occupation.

He did not retire to Walden Pond because he wanted to be a hermit but because he wanted to pry into the depths of his own nature.

He was neither scientist nor religionist nor materialist:

"The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot" he said in a good humored strain, because he wanted to transcend the heights above and beyond material things. He not only wanted to know himself but the life around him and the earth from which he derived his sustenance.

He lived but a short part of his life at Walden Pond and while there he was not left alone. Alcott, Channing, Cholmondeley, Emerson,—great minds all, were his visitors repeatedly; but in the meantime he would tread the untrodden path "where my spirit is free."

"Without being the owner of any land, I find that I have a civil right to the river. ... In relation to the river, I find my natural rights least infringed on. It is an extensive common, still left. Certain savage liberties still prevail in the oldest and most civilized countries... Nobody legislated for me, for the way would be not to legislate at all."

"The man for whom law exists—the

man of forms, the conservative, is a tame man."

Thoreau would have man learn and grow through his experiences, instead of living by faith in a religion, a philosophy or a law.

"I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which make transient and partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith and another's—as Christian and heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher all sects, all nations, are alike. I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, The Great Spirit, as well as God."

And that he might continue to have faith in himself and in Man he wrote in his diary, as if talking to himself, as a silent prayer,—"May I love and revere myself above all the Gods that man ever invented. May I never let the fires go out in my recesses."

All great men, all outstanding writers, have had imitators, followers and "fans," but you will be able to deduce from writings that Thoreau did not believe that there could be any more Thoreaus, any human beings just like himself, even though some humans seem like peas in a pod, because each human being must be a unique individual if he would be a free individual, mentally and spiritually. As there are no two blades of grass alike so there cannot be two individuals alike. Though many Educators have recognized this fact there has been a great deal of difficulty in meeting the issue of individual initiative in the schools where they have had to deal with large numbers and where certain standards are required by those "higher up." The trouble would be solved, however, by permitting each one to get what he can from the matter presented, from his surroundings, from his experiences, from his activities, instead of holding him up to the standard of some other child or adult, of grading him according to some standard or arbitrary test. If the human is to become a real individual he must be treated as such and not be graded like an apple in a barrel of apples or like a pig in a litter of pigs.

Who is so wise that he can know just what the child will get from a certain experience or what he will get from a lesson in mathematics?

We,—those of us who believe in *freedom,* must make up our minds whether we want strong, self-reliant individuals, with the hope that through them a better society will be inaugurated, or if we shall be satisfied merely to mouth freedom while the human being is being regimented and trained to follow to any goal that some leader may decide for him, with the consequence that society will continue to repeat the miserable mistakes of the past.

In "The Origin and Ideals of the Modern School" Francisco Ferrer writes—"On the other hand our teaching has nothing to do with politics. It is our work to form individuals in the full possession of all their faculties, while politics would subject their faculties to other men... political systems retard it (the development of humanity) by encouraging men to depend for everything on the will of others, on what are supposed to be men of a superior character—on those, in a word, who from tradition or choice, exercise the profession of politics. It must be the aim of the rational schools to show the children that there will be tyranny and slavery as long as one man depends upon another, to study the cause of prevailing ignorance..."

"We will not, therefore, lose our time seeking from others what we can get for ourselves."

Ferrer, probably, did not mean that we could *form* individuals, but that we should permit human beings to grow into individuals, through their experiences, for unless the individual grows through his experiences he will not be able to understand the work that has gone before and will not be able to profit by the experiences of others for he will not have the capacity to assimilate the store of information that the world has accumulated; he will not be able to learn anything from history.

Thus Thoreau wrote:— "How vain to try to teach youth or anybody, truths! They can learn them only after their own fashion, and when they get ready."

"A man receives only what he is ready to receive, whether physically or intellectually or morally,... If there is something which does not concern me, which is out of my line, which by experience or by gen-

ius my attention is not drawn to, however novel and remarkable it may be, if it is spoken, we hear it not, if it is written we read it not, or if we read it it does not detain us. Every man thus tracks himself through life, in all his hearing and reading and observation and traveling. His observations make a chain."

Though Thoreau was an intellectual, though it may be said that he belonged to the intelligencia, he could do anything that he wanted to do with his hands. To whatever he put his hands, he seemed to do well. He knew that experience was not merely a matter of having a scrap with somebody, or attending a meeting of other individuals or discussing the probability of finding the Fourth Dimension or in being a "hail fellow, well met," but rather in seeing what could be done with the hands and feet.

"All perception of truth is the detection of an analogy; we reason from our hands to our heads."

"A man thinks as well through his arms and legs as his brain."

Thus the education of man would have to be acquired, if it could not be all gotten in the open, in workrooms as well as classrooms, for his education would have to be in the doing of things as well as of reading about them. To do something with the hand, *provided it is not designed and guided by a teacher*, requires thought, design, initiative and the use of the creative faculty.

In his "Education of Man" Froebel wrote:—

"Whoever is to do with self-determination and freedom that which is divine and eternal, must be at *liberty* to that which is earthly and finite."

Though we may have a desire or feeling for freedom we cannot understand it by way of regimentation, rules of conduct or the memorizing of the achievements of the past. First we must do something in the present freely.

If it is true that we get from a book what we bring to it, it is as true in the making of things. If I know nothing about the making of a cabinet, if I have had no experience in cabinet making how much will I understand in reading about how Chippendale made his beautiful furniture?

But it is not for the sake of being able to make cabinets or chairs or tables that the child should have the experience of using his hands, of being permitted to make things, should have work-rooms as well as "class-rooms" and academic work, but in order to enlarge his capacity for *anything.* It is not merely a matter of acquiring ability to do a specific thing, such as carpentering, painting or plumbing, but in order to grow into a *capacity for any activity.*

"We do not acquire the ability to do new deeds, but a new capacity for all deeds. My recent growth does not appear in any visible new talent, but its deed will enter into my gaze when I look into the sky, or vacancy."

In education the individual experience must be recognized as unique. Each child's life must be recognized as *his* life, not merely a reflection of the life of his parents or teachers.

As Elizabeth Byrne Ferm wrote:—"The child's life is just as complex in its nature as the life of the adult. His experiences, according to his need and capacity, are just as vital and hold as much for him as any experience of adulthood can hold for adult life."

When Thoreau was thirty-four he wrote in his Journal:—"I think that no experience which I have today comes up to, or is comparable with the experiences of my boyhood."

And before that he wrote:—"I have lived some thirty odd years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably can tell me nothing to the purpose. There is life, an experiment untried by me, and it does not avail me that you have tried it. If I have any valuable experiences I am sure to reflect that this my mentors said nothing about. What were mysteries to the child remain mysteries to the old man."

Thus the individual must reflect on his own experience if he would acquire the wisdom that is considered so valuable in the social order, in which we live, or any social order. No matter how much the instructor will try to urge his way of thought on the child, the child will think for himself. But the trouble is that while

he is trying to think through his experiences or just meditating about them or trying to digest them spiritually, he is bothered by the pressure from without, from well-meaning adults, pressure groups, a pressure that is likely to disturb his cogitations so that he is unable to assimilate what he has tried to digest. We see that lack of development in the acts and thinking of our young people who have passed through the regular school régime. It seems to make them so dependent on the outside for support, for direction, that when left to themselves they know not where to turn or how, so they call for Security, for Placement, for help from the Government, for help from any authority.

It may be that the same thing will happen to the individual who has been brought up in the spirit of freedom, since human nature is unpredictable, but is there any other way of helping the human being to become a Man, an Individual, than by letting him have his experiences while young and growing, experiences with his own boys and girls, his materials, his tools, whether mechanical or mental?

The whole process of specialization, of training for a trade, is a process of limitation, of confining the human being to a specific way of doing something, a specific way of life. The incentive to experimentation becomes atrophied. Not that the growing individual may not take up a specific way of doing something, but it must come from himself, as a specific need, from his desire to acquire that knowledge or ability, after he has been permitted to develop his own initiative in life in general. As Thoreau puts it for "the enlarging of his capacity."

Thoreau was essentially and positively an honest man—a rare being. The schools do not consider such an individual in their curriculum. I was talking to a High School girl, a former pupil of mine, who was concerned about passing through High School so she could easily enter the music school. She complained because the mathematics teacher would not pass her in mathematics on her 65% when she was supposed to have 70%. Her interest is not in mathematics but in musical composition, to which she takes naturally or for which she "has a gift," so she resents having to spend her time in studies that she feels do not help in what to her are real studies—musical composition. What then does she get? She will eventually "pass" in the studies that she is compelled by authorities to take if she would be graduated from High School, but she will not *know* them; she will pretend to know them in order to pass. So she will have had her lesson in pretense, dishonesty, in falsehood if you will; in anything but mathematics, literature or honesty. Mathematics, Literature, English, Science, become mere side issues, something to get through. Is it worth while?

"All the community may scream because one man is born who will not do as it does, who will not conform because conformity to him is death—he is so constituted. They know nothing about his case; they are fools when they presume to advise him. The man of genius knows what he is aiming at; nobody else knows. And he alone knows when something comes between him and his object. In the course of generations, however, men will excuse you for not doing as they do, if you will bring enough to pass your way."

The prime object of the modern school aims at education and not mere teaching, must be to provide an atmosphere where the spirit of freedom may function, in order to develop character through experience—experience, with humans and things, of the body and mind—where initiative may develop self-reliance and judgment and the creative faculty.

Therefore any markings or gradings that will make one feel inferior and another superior must be abolished—self-activity substituted for directed or induced activity; personal judgment for teacher's decisions; recognition of each child's efforts in place of condemnation.

If the human being has developed character and capacity it will not be necessary to advise him in Thoreau's words:—

"Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction—a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. So will help you God, and so only. Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work."

One Hundred Years After Thoreau

By Paul E. Hunt

Bookman and Mining Engineer

If Henry David Thoreau could return to us for a brief visit, he would not be very impressed with the progress we have made in our fight for equality, justice, and better government. The principles Thoreau stated in his writings and fought for in his daily life are as alive today as they were one hundred years ago.

One principle he fought for was the right to vote without payment of a poll-tax. He went to jail rather than pay and thus started a fight to banish that tax from our political scene. It has been a fairly successful fight as the poll-tax is only in effect today in a few unenlightened States of the South.

Our Latin American neighbors often become suspicious of our "good intentions" when we try to interfere in their political games and demand that they hold "free" elections and/or remove some "despot." Our great (?) newspapers headline conditions of oppressed people of this or that country and demand that our Government do something. However, our neighbors are very cognizant of our own shortcomings and resent our attitude. If we really desire to have peaceful and happy relations with our neighbors we must first put our own house in order. One of our first steps should be to finish the fight against the poll tax that Henry Thoreau began nearly one hundred years ago.

Thoreau did not object to paying legitimate taxes but he did protest when he thought the tax money was not being spent properly. His protest was loud when money was spent for guns for soldiers. Men, he said, served the State as machines when they served as soldiers and not as men with a conscience. We can take his protest in principle if not in subject, and demand that our tax money be properly spent. We should insist on a follow-up investigation of reports that our wounded men are not being given proper care; that material is being wasted or was wasted along the Alaskan highway and other places; that high-ranking officers, flying around the Country in aeroplanes and ships, come back carrying ballast while our non-ranking men sit on islands or in Europe waiting transportation home. The same holds for the building program; commercial structures go up while people sleep in tents, trailers, shacks, etc. The big alibi is material but the contradiction won't hold.

While Thoreau is well known for many parts of his writings, he is probably best known for his political theory now called passive resistance. He started it with his refusal to pay the poll-tax. His political theory, like that of Thomas Jefferson, was "the best government is that government which governs the least." In fact, he even went farther and said "that government is best which governs not at all."

He was, however, willing to forego the extermination of government if better government could be achieved. Thoreau felt that each individual should make known what he wanted in the way of better government. Contrary to some ideas still prevalent, Thoreau was an actionist when his beliefs and principles were concerned. He was against the poll-tax and went to jail rather than pay it. He built a house for himself and proved his theory of working one day a week and resting six. Thoreau was unconsciously the forerunner of today's Labor Movement which is trying to obtain a shorter working week for labor in the wake of technological advances.

There are two ways — according to Thoreau — of achieving better and less government: demand it, and prepare for it. We have failed, notably, in both ways. The majority never vote. Thousands can't vote because of the registration restrictions of the poll-tax. A candidate can receive a majority of votes cast for President and still not be elected.

We do not require any really important qualifications of our candidates, which is, without question, the main reason we have more government, and inefficient government in federal, state, county and city offices instead of less and better government. We put up with a multitude of laws which overlap and contradict one another from city to city and State to State. There is an entire lack of uniformity in all types of laws and regulations from Coast to Coast.

We put up with a multiple of little governments. We allow houses to burn down because a fire truck "can't" cross a boundary. We allow people to die because ambulances "can't" cross a boundary. Our citizens are slugged, raped and murdered while an inefficient Mayor and City Council debate on silly questions, instead of increasing the police-force. We allow our streets to be unpoliced while a hundred or more police loaf around a movie-studio because of a strike.

We allow a ten million dollar surplus to lie in our municipal Power Department treasury while our streets are kept in darkness—without lights; and what lights we do have are turned off long before the sun comes up—even though cars must have lights on for the driver to light his way. Thoreau would really protest such asinine government.

We cannot expect to have honesty, efficiency and justice in government until we require every candidate for *ALL* government offices to have specific qualifications which will enable him to properly discharge the duties of his job. How many of us earnestly study our political, economic environment in an effort to give constructive criticism to the men we put in office? I dare say that the majority of us end our study of Government and Economics when we leave school.

We do not require our office-holders to divest themselves of outside business or financial interests. David Loth, in his book "Public Plunder" quotes Senator Maclay of Pennsylvania: "You will always find the merchant uppermost" when he found out that so many of his colleagues in Congress were acting in the double capacity of legislator and importer. Many words have been written about scandals caused by public office-holders playing both ends. Much more will be written. Just recently we had a scandal in the State Printing Office in Sacramento which was hushed up after the State printer resigned and made a cash "restitution" to the State.

I wonder if our G. I.'s who were involved in "black market" operations in Europe and Asia will be allowed to resign and make a cash restitution? I doubt it—as we have two sets of laws or interpretations of laws—one for politicians and the other for citizens who run afoul of the "law." Thoreau should be here today to write an article for us on "double law."

Thoreau's political-action theory of refusal to pay taxes to stop what he thought was an unjust government action was adopted and expanded by Gandhi and Nehru of India into the now momentous "Passive Resistance Movement." It is a Movement which shook the British Empire to its very foundations.

Many attempts have been made by British imperialists to "write off" as a passing phase of political expendiency. It is, however, a permanent part of the international political and economic scene and will ultimately, as a political-economic philosophy, have a more far-reaching effect than the philosophy of Karl Marx. The large number of India's masses aligned with Gandhi and Nehru is best shown by the British action of releasing Nehru from jail in 1941 to invoke his leadership in an effort to preserve India from the threat of Japan.

Henry David Thoreau is more "alive" today than when he actually walked the woods around Walden. His political-economic philosophy has spread across the world, the poll-tax is on its way out; labor has improved its status and cut its working hours; and there is the possibility that the rumblings we hear once in a while is a sign that the people are awakening from their Rip-Van-Winkle-sleep and are beginning to realize the part they must play if less and better government is ever to be a reality.

One Hundred Years after Thoreau we must acknowledge that his role of a Teacher is more important today than when he refused to pay a tax to support preachers because preachers paid no tax to support teachers.

Thoreau the Freethinker and Lover of Liberty

By Sadie L. Cook
Ass't Secretary: Rocker Publications Committee

HENRY David Thoreau, the American naturalist and writer, was born at Concord, Massachusetts, in the year 1817. As a boy, he learned to love nature as he roamed through the countryside around Concord. When he was only 12, he made a collection of specimens for the great Swiss naturalist, Agassiz.

Thoreau was never a good student in the conventional sense: his eager inquiring mind was oppressed by and revolted against the dry and academic methods of instruction which prevailed at that time. Although his family was not in prosperous circumstances, they managed to send Henry David to Harvard, where he spent most of his time in the University library. Because the Harvard authorities recommended that students wear black coats, Thoreau insisted upon arraying himself in an outer garment of verdant green.

After he left Harvard, he taught school for a time, but had little taste for the work; he particularly disliked to inflict corporal punishment, which in those days was considered an essential part of the curriculum. After giving up the teaching profession, he lived for a time in the home of Emerson, who took great pleasure in the young man's company, and encouraged him in his ambition to become a writer.

The first work of Thoreau's: "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" was not received favorably by the public. As no publisher was interested, he brought it out at his own expense. Only about 200 copies were sold—the rest he stored in his father's attic. The author worked for a year at the trade of pencil-making to earn a hundred dollars which he owed to his publisher thereon. From his study of life and books, Thoreau came to the conclusion that men were the slaves of their possessions: he agreed with Socrates, "How many things there are that I do not need."

Desiring leisure in which to meditate

Sadie L. Cook

and write, he took up residence at Walden Pond, where for two years he lived in a log cabin he had built himself. Here, in accord with his philosophy, he lived a life of Spartan simplicity, sustaining himself by the produce of his garden and occasional odd jobs. He was a deep thoughtful man, who sincerely desired to formulate a realistic philosophy of life, and went into a rustic retreat where he could be free to write and think. His famous essay on "Solitude" justifies his attitude of seclusion.

Was he lonely from living alone? He admitted feeling oppressed by solitude but once, yet somehow he became conscious of the friendliness of nature surrounding him and said he never felt lonely again. He was like one dandelion in a pasture, a single horsefly or bumblebee, or the first spider building a new house—always surrounded by nature.

Before he went to Walden, he lived in

a boarding-house chiefly occupied by women. Their chattering attention could not be escaped. He had purposes in life of which they were never really aware. He was not anti-social but longed for more isolation — something gregarious women generally could not understand.

Thoreau had a manner toward those he felt to be unsympathetic toward his views of life that didn't add to make him better thought-of in his community. He simply wasn't concerned with what "they say." Pretty Concord girls gave him up as hopeless. He seemed more interested in the charm of eighty year old Aunt Mary Emerson, or maybe even a "scrub oak."

Besides the thinking he set out to do, one of his problems was the execution of his own housework. This he did with such ease and dispatch that it would make even a Danish housewife blush with embarrassment. He put his few pieces of furniture out on the grass where they were sterilized by the sun and the wind whisked away the dust. With water and white sand from Walden's pond shore, he scrubbed his floor immaculate with a mere broom. He baked his own bread outside—probably in some sort of a dutch-oven.

Whenever he felt it was wisest, he put aside his thinking and gave attention to the business of raising and selling produce, or to occupying himself with carpentry, local surveying of land or other day labor in the community.

It was Thoreau's intention to reduce life to simple terms. "As you simplify your life, laws of the universe will be less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, or poverty poverty, or weakness weakness." Liberty is increased by our freedom from enslavement to things: a smaller house, less furniture, fewer superfluities.

It was significant for Thoreau to see a white water lily rising from the mud or a stunted berry-bush blooming and giving forth its fruit as an example that man too can persist under unfavorable circumstances and come to his fruition. Man must think for himself fully and freely in order to live his life likewise.

Thoreau was an ardent Libertarian. Above all, he detested the tyranny of government, which saw fit to dictate the conscience of its subjects. During his stay at Walden, he was imprisoned because he refused to pay the Poll tax, and he also protested the tax from the Mexican War. Emerson visited him in jail and asked: "Henry, why are you here?" Thoreau answered: "Why are you not here?"—which was a justified reproach, as Emerson professed the same sentiments towards war and tyranny as did Thoreau, but was not willing to suffer persecution to uphold them.

While at Walden Pond, after having refused to pay his poll tax and going to jail at the time when the Government was sanctioning slavery, his aunt (not Emerson) paid the tax, much to his annoyance. His last words on this incident came some years later written while there, and published in his famous essay on "Civil Disobedience." Really he was amused watching how carefully and futilely the jailer locked up his body, while the only dangerous part of him—his thoughts—drifted out of the cell without handicap.

Thoreau was an ardent abolitionist and wrote fearlessly in defense of the cause, when to do so, was not safe, even in the North. John Brown's daring raid at Harper's Ferry prompted him to write "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in which he scathingly criticized the Federal Government and its coercive attempts to uphold the institution of slavery.

Not only did he profoundly believe in the dignity of the individual but despised every type of slavery. He was an apostle of life—not of traditional thinking about it.

His opinion of Government in general was as follows: "I heartily accept the motto—'That Government is best which governs least;' and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe—'That Government is best which governs not at all;' and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient."

Thoreau had no patience with the dry rot of theology. In philosophy, he was an Agnostic, as the following quotation indicates: "The wisest man preaches no doc-

trines; he has no scheme; he sees no rafter—not even a cobweb, against the heavens. It is clear sky. . . . Tell me of the height of the mountains of the moon, or of the diameter of space, and I may believe you; but of the secret history of the Almighty, and I shall pronounce thee mad."

"The Church! — it is eminently the timid Institution, and the heads and pillars of it are constitutionally and by principle the greatest cowards in the community. The voice that goes up from the monthly concerts is not brave and cheering as that which rises from the frog-ponds of the land. The best 'preachers,' so-called, are an effeminate class; their bravest thoughts wear petticoats. If they have any manhood they are sure to forsake the ministry, though they were to turn their attention to baseball."

Thoreau succumbed to the ravages of consumption at the age of 45. A zealous friend visiting him shortly before his death inquired if he had made his peace with God. Thoreau's reply is a classic of gentle irony: "I have never quarreled with Him."

Here are a few of Thoreau's fine Epigrams:

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer."

"If there is an experiment you would like to try—try it. Do not entertain doubts if they are not agreeable to you."

"Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much in life, so aim above morality. Be not simply good: Be good for something."

"It is impossible to give the soldier a good education without making him a deserter. His natural foe is the government that drills him."

"In my short experience of human life, the outward obstacles, if there were any such, have not been living men, but the institutions of the dead."

"The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off."

"When I have not paid the tax which the State demanded for that protection which I did not want, itself has robbed me; when I have asserted the liberty it presumed to declare it has imprisoned me."

"There is something servile in the habit of seeking after a law which we may obey. We may study the laws of matter at and for our convenience, but a successful life knows no law."

"He for whom the law is made, who does not obey the law, but whom the law obeys, reclines on pillars of down, and is wafted at will whither he pleases; for man is superior to all laws, both of heaven and earth, when he takes his liberty."

Thoreau attained an epigramatic style in which he combined simple words to afford a maximum succinctness of meaning that made his writings most remarkable. He evidently loved to use language in this manner and succeeded immensely He made Walden Pond the most wonderful piece of water in the world. He is destined to influence freethinking and liberty-loving people more for generations to come than he has for the past hundred years.

The influence and affectionate concern that Thoreau has already created would as much have astounded him as it would us—had we lived in his day. This reminds one of the story of the little old Concord lady who yearly visits Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and sublimely places flowers on the graves of Hawthorne, of Emerson and the Alcotts. To Thoreau's grave, she says: "None for you, you little atheist." This he would well understand because he failed to go to church and often found an orchard or some other abode of nature much more inspiring.

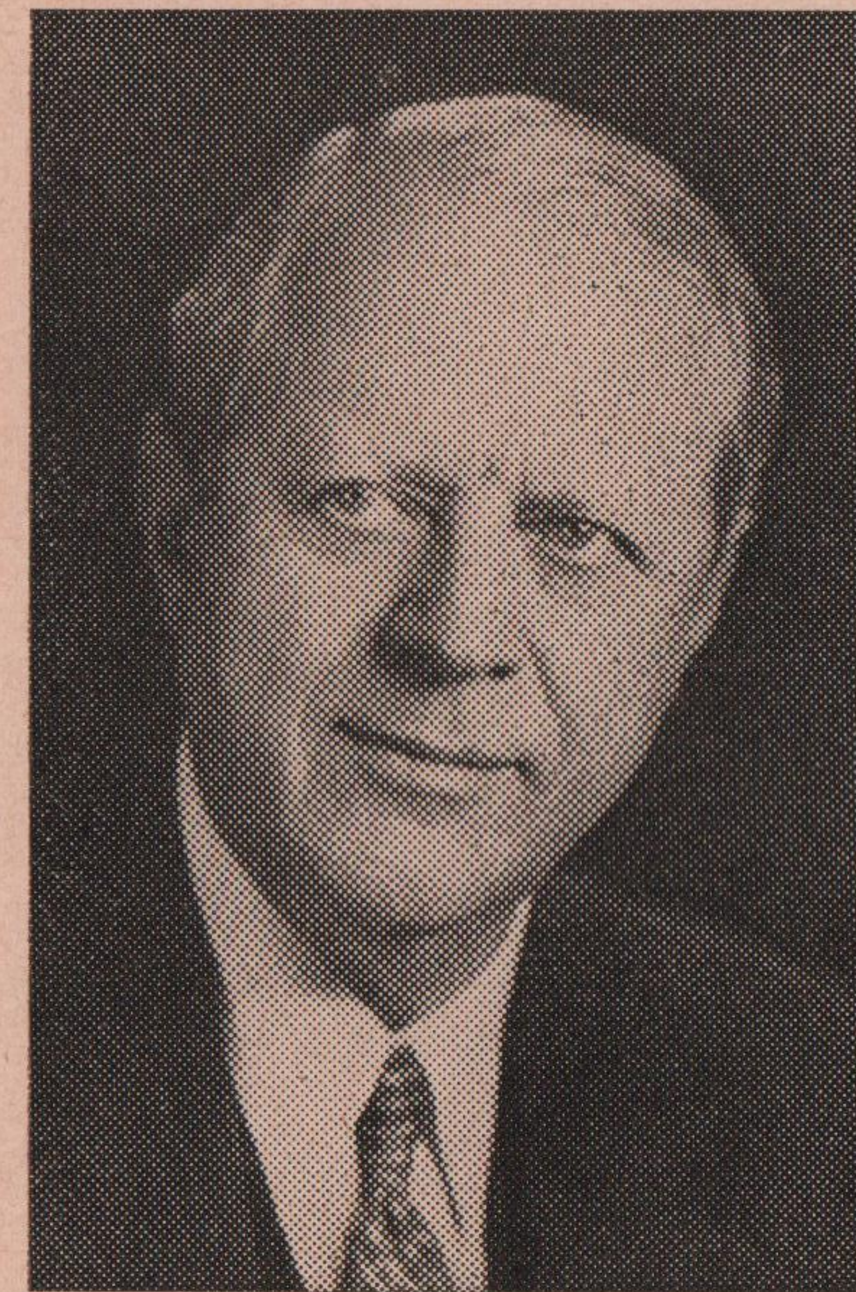
Thoreau says that the world is ruled by the dead, "like some Indian tribes, we bear about with us the mouldering relics of our ancestors on our shoulders. If, for instance, a man asserts the value of individual liberty over the merely political commonwealth, his neighbor still tolerates him, that is, continues living near him, sometimes even sustains him, but never the State."

Thoreau was one of those thinkers whose thoughts were not determined by the traditions that prevailed in his time, and so he became one of the few great Libertarians whose thoughts are valid for all time, for which we admire him today.

Thoreau's Man In Society

By Dr. Arthur E. Briggs

Leader: Ethical Humanist Society



Dr. Arthur E. Briggs

In Canby's selections from the Works of Thoreau he groups three essays under the title of "Man Against the State." That is not Thoreau's expression and it does not correctly state Thoreau's point of view. For Thoreau says in the essay On Civil Disobedience: "Unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but *at once* better government."

Nevertheless, "Thoreau is called the outstanding American anarchist." And "Civil Disobedience" seems such a defiance of State dictation that when Gandhi stepped off the gangplank onto the English soil he bore under his arm ostentatiously a copy of that Essay.

If Thoreau did not mean anarchism, if he did not mean an uncompromising attitude toward the State, what did he mean? I propose to explore his meaning.

This is certainly not an easy task. Intelligent people tell me they do not understand him. He delighted in contradictions. He loved to quote paradoxes of double meanings: "As the Orientals say, 'Greatness doth not approach him who is forever looking down; and all those who are looking high are growing poor.'" "Confucius said: 'If the State is governed by the principles of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if the State is not governed by principles of reason, riches and honor are subjects of shame.'"

In consequence of his paradoxical writings probably most of his readers read him quizzically, laughing at his oddities, and taking his wisdom not too seriously. That is the way we are accustomed to treat the acknowledgedly great in person or in literature. Therefore, Christians can worship Jesus Christ and disregard his principles. Democrats can praise Jefferson and take no heed of his political doctrines. Republicans can profess to be followers of Abraham Lincoln and promote what he condemned. People are wont thus to live "Life without Principle." The apparent contradictoriness of Thoreau may not be in him but in us.

Rated down in his time his books are now in the list of the "best sellers among the Classics." What is it in Thoreau that steadily increases the popularity of his writings? Is it the preaching and practicing of the simple life which our complex civilization compels us to seek again? Is it our consciousness that the Great State is becoming not only more and more an incubus upon human freedom but also a danger to continued existence of human life? Or is it that in our acceptance of a slavery under institutionalism (or socialism), in Thoreau we vicariously become free by his imagination? Shall we take Thoreau at his word? Does he really call upon us to abandon our civilization?

I do not think he means that man is pitted against either the State or society. But rather that the State and society are to be used as instruments by men. Indeed, he says: "I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases."

And of the American Government: "Is it not each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single man; for a single man can bend it to his will."

Remember, Thoreau was writing in the time when, as we look back upon it, many regard that America as in its halcyon days, forgetting that it was the America of slavery, the America of the disgraceful Mexican War, and Thoreau, no hypocritical Abolitionist, was calling on American citizens to resist and refuse to support a Government that was upholding slavery and expanding imperialistically.

He had an intense moral bias. He could not be a conformist. "I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right." "It is true enough to say that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience." He was protesting against those who "as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders serve the State chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God. A very few—as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*—serve the State with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are mainly treated as enemies by it." But the status quo often regards true men as enemies of the State when they resist its wrongful use.

Thoreau is thus to be distinguished from the ranters against the State. He does not reject the State as an instrument. In fact he approves it as such. He notes that "the progress from an Absolute to a Limited Monarchy, from a Limited Monarchy to a Democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual." But he would go beyond Democracy "towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man." The reader of our great Americans, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Whitman, finds them entirely in agreement. American Democracy is an instrument, not an end in itself. It is an instrument for "recognizing and organizing the rights of men."

Thoreau's objection to Democracy was but to the conception of it as the absolute rule of the majority. It is not majorities but only conscience that can decide what is right or wrong. No good or wise man will leave the decision of right to chance or a majority. It is the majorities which crucify Christs, excommunicate scientists, and declare patriots like Franklin and Washington to be rebels, and generally despise the wise minorities. Therefore, we cannot afford to defer to majorities. Moreover, any man who is more right than others is already in a majority. A minority destroys itself when it conforms to a majority. In defense of John Brown he demanded: "When were the good and the brave ever in a majority?" In brief, the right of a majority to rule is not because it is a majority but only when, if ever, it is right. But one might retort on Thoreau: How can one know who is right amid conflicting opinions and when, in such case, there is necessity for collective action?

However, Thoreau is not in the predicament of most anarchists, for he does concede the need for government, and that beyond the minimum and first essential of self-government.

Although "government is at best expedient" and "most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes inexpedient," as we have seen, he does not aim at "no government" but "better government." Even in his righteous anger at the execution of John Brown he continued to recognize right government: "The only government that I recognize . . . is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which establishes injustice." The point he makes is that expediency, which is the essence of State law and the Constitution, is of a lower order than morality which is the higher law. One must constantly seek a higher truth than "the Bible and the Constitution."

He has much to say against lawyers. "The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency or a consistent expediency." "He is not a leader, but a follower." He said of John Brown, "He needed no babbling lawyer, making false issues, to defend him."

I think it is also clear that Thoreau was no worshipper of mere man, or of "the common man" we hear so much about nowadays. He observes, "Man is the cruelest and fiercest animal." Therefore, we should "treat with magnanimity the shark and the tiger" and "not slander the hyena." Yet at that man is better than his governments. "The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more if the Government had not sometimes got in its way."

Indeed, "there is a certain divine energy in every man, but sparingly employed as yet." There is something better in men than the occupations in which they chiefly expend themselves. In Thoreau's time the Australia and California gold rushes were on. Reflecting on the feverish gambling and violent aspects of a miner's life, all so futile, leads him to a profounder meditation: "I ask myself why I might not be washing gold daily, though it were only the finest particles—why I might not sink a shaft down to the gold within me, and work that mine."

We should conclude that Thoreau's impatience was not with man, but with what men do or fail to do with their opportunities.

The individual was very precious to him. He preferred the individual to any government, even a Democracy: "There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. . . . I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all their duties of neighbors and fellowmen." With Socrates he could have said, "The good man, or the righteous man, is the measure of all things."

For Thoreau, our business in this world is to live. Not merely to live, but to live by principle. But principle is changing; it is revolutionary. Getting a living by ordinary pursuits or in the ordinary way is a worthless existence. Money grubbing is the worst of pursuits. Office-holding is for the inefficient. To be born into the world as the heir to a fortune is not to be born but still-born. One should get his "living by loving." The power of love to do things is the greatest of all—it is incalculable.

Probably most practical people get very impatient with this 19th century transcendentalist and individualist and assume too quickly that he never thought out economic problems. They are quite mistaken in that. He was a near contemporary of Marx with an entirely different economic viewpoint. Marx was for reforming man by changing his environment and socializing the individual, by which he meant straight-jacketing him in an ideal society where the means of production are publicly owned and everybody is fitted into a particular job. Marx did not believe in individual freedom.

Thoreau, a true American radical, did not value so much the political forms of freedom excepting as a means to moral freedom. Economic freedom without moral principle was just as hollow and false for him. "A man had better starve at once than lose his innocence in the process of getting his bread." He would have scorned the weakness of those who feel it necessary to compromise principle in order to live well in the present or any other society.

Our time is not unique by the quantity or variety of ideas for economic reform of the world. In fact all the outstanding schemes now prevalent for economic change were current in the first half of the 19th century. To think of it as the century of laissez-faire is wholly to miss the point of its intrinsic character which was not that at all. The average man has more freedom today than he had then. Much of the freedom they dreamed about then has become the commonplace of today.

One of Thoreau's interesting Essays is a review of such a Utopian dream book by a Pennsylvania German named Etzler, who proposed to show his fellowmen how and "where everything desirable for human life may be had by every man in super-abundance, without labor, and without pay," merely by harnessing and con-

trolling the wind, the tide, the waves, and the sunshine.

But for such literary remains as Etzler's and Marx' we might think Technology Inc. and atomic energy schemes absolutely unique to our time. With scientific mind, Thoreau wrote the review, not to confound the author or to convict him of absurdity. On the contrary, he accepted the reasonableness of the ideas presented to achieve a mechanical Utopia on earth.

But Thoreau caught at the phrase: "Anything . . . might be done by the person who *desires* it." This "Paradise Within the Reach of All Men" (as the title went) had a catch in it—there was a crank that had to be turned by man"—the prime mover of all machinery—quite indispensable to all work. . . . In fact, no work can be shirked. It may be postponed indefinitely, but not infinitely. Nor can any really important work be made easier by cooperation or machinery."

A hundred years ago Thoreau was telling us that all our social and mechanical gadgets or biggest machines or organizations cannot get rid of work. But of course that did not discourage the Technocrats. Nor will it discourage anticipations of a Garden of Eden to be created by atomic energy.

Etzler made another error (constantly repeated today) on which Thoreau caught him up. Etzler said: "Nothing great, for the improvement of his own condition, or that of his fellowmen, can ever be effected by individual enterprise." Thoreau saw the eggregious error of that: "Alas, this is the crying sin of the Age, this want of faith in the prevalence of man. Nothing can be effected, but by one man. He who wants help wants everything. We must first succeed alone, that we may enjoy our success together. . . . In this matter of reforming the world, we have little faith in corporations; not thus was it first formed." Why do we not see, that now we have largely cartelized the world, it has created for us only a worse problem to be solved?

A greater oversight, which Etzler had in common with nearly all Utopians, scientific or unscientific, and which is even more characteristically the shortcoming of the so-called practical people, the realists, and also the defect especially of the rationalists, is disregard of the factor Thoreau calls "faith." Our hesitancy to act is the greatest of obstacles. Of the "two main difficulties in the way," the first is "the successful application of the powers by machinery." But the second, "the application of men to the work by faith," "is infinitely harder." "To persuade men to use that which is already offered them" requires that "even a greater than this physical power must be brought to bear upon that moral power. Faith, indeed, is all the reform that is needed." That is why the most feasible and practicable Utopias are unachievable. "Undoubtedly, we are never so visionary as to be prepared for what the next hour may bring forth."

I have often wondered why the fashioners of Utopias always put them far in the past, or distant in the future, or in some unheard of land or inaccessible planet. Any sensible Utopia should be placed right here and now. But Thoreau explains why: None of us has the vision to be ready for the immediate future. It is only the practical dreamers, the true visionaries, who do not live irrevocably in the past. Witness the atomic bomb! We have made it the most destructive instrument. But nobody has fashioned it as an immediately useful instrument, or for many, many years to come. Thoreau would say: It is because our scientists, savants, statesmen, and business men lack the simple faith to do what is right at hand to be done.

But if we stopped there, that would be missing Thoreau's most emphatic point: "A moral reform must take place first, and then the necessity of the other will be superseded, and we shall sail and plow by its force alone. . . . He who is conversant with the supernal powers will not worship these inferior deities of the wind, waves, tides, and sunshine. But we would not discourage the importance of such regulations as we have described. They are truths in physics, because they are true in ethics. . . . Love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. Its power is incalculable; it is many horse power."

All this sounds enigmatical. But it is easily translatable into our own less transcendental language: Human power is primal; no machine or society can operate without it. Man-power requires a motive. That motive is what Thoreau calls loving faith; it is confident good-will courageously and intelligently devoted to a good and useful purpose. And that faith is a moral and effective force.

Thoreau is right. Mechanical forces are inert and dead. Man alone is the mover of them for men. But men without moral force are just as inert and dead as matter. Moral force for human needs is the only effective and useful force.

One question yet remains to my mind: Was Thoreau an absolute idealist? He was certainly not a conformist. A pure anarchist is an absolute idealist; the consistent socialist is a moral conformist. Where stood Thoreau? I think with neither of them but like a practical and sensible man between them and sometimes tending toward one and again toward the other.

Thoreau does not leave us in doubt. He debated the question as to his own conduct; searching himself, he said to himself: "You do not resist cold and hunger, the winds and the waves thus obstinately; you quietly submit to a thousand similar necessities. You do not put your head into the fire. But still in proportion as I regard this as not wholly a brute force, but partly a human force, and consider that I have relations to those millions as to so many millions of men, and not of mere brute or inanimate things, I see that appeal is possible, first and instantaneously, from them to the Maker of them, and, secondly, from them to themselves. . . . I can resist this with some effect, but I cannot expect, like Orpheus, to change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts."

In other words, he conceived it his duty to be obstinate with human beings endowed with reason and to make insistent appeal to that reason on any matter of right and wrong.

Nevertheless, he did not regard it as "a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous, wrongs; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty at least to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it any thought longer, not to give it practically his support." Again, he repeats the idea in his impassioned "Plea for Captain John Brown": "At any rate, I do not think it is quite sane for one to spend his whole life in talking or writing about this matter, unless he is continuously inspired, and I have not done so. A man may have other matters to attend to."

The sum of his counsel is: Either fight the matter out or let it alone, but never consciously give support to a wrong. "A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should do something wrong." This is not the attitude of indifference. It is a highly individualized attitude. My business is my business. I cannot be bothered too much with other people's business. The radical calamity-howlers cannot be interrupting me in my affairs any more than I see fit to let them. Accordingly, he did not let the Abolitionists tell him what he should say when he spoke publicly about Slavery.

Taking stock of Thoreau, I am impressed that his productions are quite usable today. In quoting him I have frequently spoken of his sayings in the present tense, because he has the contemporaneity which lives in literature and thought. In contrast with our Menckens and sophisticates he was not embittered or discouraged with the world, bad as it is and always has been. He was not against the State or society or a recluse from society. He only claimed the right, at will, to withdraw himself from the crowd. He utterly repudiated the Socialist dogma: "There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men." It is more important to be right than to vote with the majority. And to be or get right is a task principally for solitude. It is a one-man-job. This strong individualist felt little need for the stays by which weak-hearted or poorly-minded men support themselves. Wealth he counted as an encumbrance. Cooperation, corporateness, and society are only for the companionableness of enjoying or sharing what one already has possession of, not for getting it. He spoke a hundred years ago as of us: "The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow—one who may be

known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance."

For such plain speaking we exhume him from the graveyard of contemporarily more reputed literary men. His survival and increasing fame attests the fact that a man of faith cannot die. The tubercular germ that consumed his body could not quench his spirit because its high hopefulness had the quality of eternity in it.

Thus Thoreau is the sublimest evidence that man in society is not a human mass or mob-minded man, but the unique and different man whose faith can counter the crowd and not be submerged in it. We do not worship Thoreau. No man or god is worthy of worship. But Thoreau does inspire us. He lives because he breathes his spirit into us. Standing apart and yet of us, he typifies the ideal man in society, one who can stand on his own feet and not on the feet or shoulders of other men.

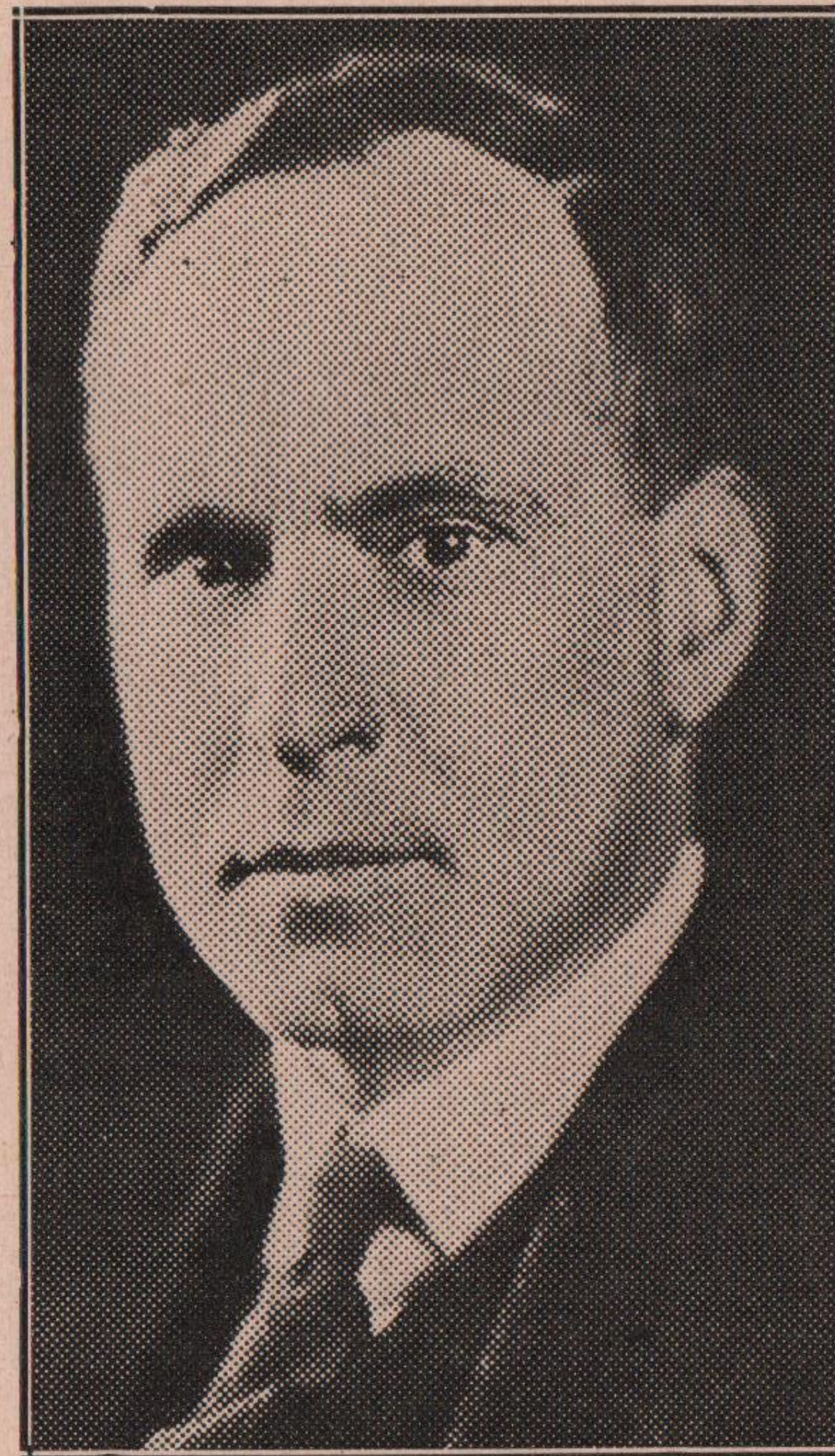
Thoreau the Libertarian

By Roger N. Baldwin

Director: American Civil Liberties Union

It was not until I saw a volume of Thoreau in Gandhi's compartment aboard a train way back in 1931 in France that I appreciated the full extent of the influence of Thoreau as a pioneer in libertarian thinking. Of course the volume contained the "Duty of Civil Disobedience," the ethics and politics of which Gandhi had adopted in India along with the name. But he, the non-violent resister, also was inspired by the Essay on John Brown, written and delivered as a public speech in Concord while the violent resister was in jail and the whole world of respectable Abolitionists in the North were loudly denouncing his folly. Gandhi saw in Thoreau's admiration for resistance to tyranny a creative force out of which all independence and liberty grow.

It would be over-stating the facts to suggest that Thoreau's thinking on the role of the State in relation to the individual has influenced many leaders. Gandhi is the exception, but such an exception as to color the outlook of a vast following throughout the world. Thoreau put into crisp and driving language what men of spirit instinctively feel wherever they confront a tyrannical State or social institutions that overpower the sense of personal independence. It is quite unnecessary, of course, to accept the full measure of Thoreau's detachment from society to feel kin to his affirmations of our ultimate reliance on ourselves, and to his scorn for the compromises we make with admitted evils.



Roger N. Baldwin

It cannot be said with truth that Thoreau left a testament of political philosophy or a theory of the State. He did think, better than that. He left in living language, so simple and so eloquent, the testament of a rebel against conventional restraints on personal freedom. Every man with a sense of Social awareness is touched by the protests of a country Yankee of 100 years ago, whose time is still our time and whose world of Concord we have only magnified a thousand times. Of course Thoreau was not a "practical" man, and his way of life, especially the experiment at Walden, is no example now any more than it was then. But he was a whole man, who acted and lived in a world he pretty much made. We can approach that independence and detachment in the modern mad-house as we retire in spirit to his kind of a world. Over all my years from early youth I have refreshed my inner sense of freedom and escape by constant resort to WALDEN and the Essays, picking up inspiration from a few pages here and there, and always finding new meanings and values even in time-worn passages.

I came to Thoreau by the back-door. I was raised in Massachusetts only a few miles from Concord, and I knew from early boyhood the ponds and rivers and woods which Thoreau frequented. My grandfather's generation had known him, and among the conventional had dismissed him with some amusement as a nature crank and a loafer. It was the back-door of his nature writings that introduced me to the larger world of his social thought. An admirer of Emerson, I did not then know that Emerson himself had described Thoreau as "THE man of Concord," conceding a far more original mind than his own. The increasing popularity of Thoreau, evidenced by new editions of his work and the books about him, and the declining repute of Emerson, testify to the soundness of that judgement. It seems reasonable to conclude that Thoreau fills a need, evidently a growing one, for a reassertion of the worth of personal freedom, and of the dangers of being engulfed by a vastly expanding State power in a complex society. If he had written of theory or ideals he would not be read. He wrote out of conviction, with restrained heat, but with wit, satire, and that art of literary exaggeration that spells truth. He reads out loud with classic simplicity and power. There is in him no smell of the library, but ever of the stuff of the inner man.

Libertarian literature, so far as I am aware, contains no writings on the reactions of an independent man to the social institutions around him comparable to Thoreau. Men do not write like that today because they don't feel as strongly as they did in Massachusetts in the mid 19th century, producing a crop of questioning rebels, heretics, experimenters. Concord had its more than fair share of then disreputable dissenters. Thoreau was the product of his time and place. But out of it he left an undying affirmation of man's inner integrity which is timeless and placeless.

I make few pilgrimages; I have few heroes. But every few years somehow I find myself in Concord, and when I do I cannot resist treading the paths over to Walden and Thoreau's cove, unspoiled since I was a boy, and sitting on the site of his cabin to reflect that here a solitary man penned in words "that lie across the page like granite boulders" the universal struggle of man for spiritual freedom.

The Gospel According to Henry David Thoreau

By Doreen Antoinette Tucker
Sec.-Treas.: Associated Forums, Ltd.
Secretary to Dr. Roman

Doreen Antoinette Tucker

"He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live." John 11:25. Thoreau still lives! His was real believing" in Divinity. "And whomsoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." John 11:26. Yes, you, yourself, if you live a sincere, worthy life will never pass with your disappearance; you will be "found" again and again.

Having found, at the age of fourteen, (without guidance to find) a real friend, in the Library of a High-School, I have felt that companionship ever since. It was Henry David Thoreau I often went to call upon in that Library, and ever as I approached the shelves where were deposited the treasures of the mind that was *said* to *live* only in past years, I experienced the same pleasure I should have had, had he greeted me with smile and handshake. Indeed, I felt our friendship demanded that I stand a moment in his presence and doorway often. In his own words: "Its thin current slides away," (speaking of time) "but eternity remains."

It was a pleasure to hear him say: "Step to the music that you hear," for I could very well see that I should have to do that very thing —I could not see my way to compromise with other people's music however much I might respect it and wish for them ample room for and success in their stepping. During, and since that time, I have found Walden and "The Forest of Arden" one and the same and fortunately populated, though not so densely as would result in remaking, as yet, our world "like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments"; as Thoreau said would be the case "if men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded."

It has seemed to me that Thoreau's life is a true reflection of the Divine. Life's greatest treasures are those which are most natural. "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," said the Master, speaking of the little natural child. Food is best and of most value when it is most natural. People are best before screens have been placed, one after the other—through training, imitation, education, exploitation—between their real selves and their fellows. Life is made hard and troublesome because we do not "hold fast that which is good"—our early nature which is simple and alert to fundamental joy. These things are taught in the Gospel according to Henry David Thoreau. Hear ye him:

"Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure. . . I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be. . . God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. . .The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving them. . . Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, *This is*, and no mistake."

Life would be beautiful if we demanded, as Thoreau did, that only the real should be tolerated or served in, by and through our activities. No one tells us better than Thoreau how to do this. When living fundamentally, we experience Cosmic-Consciousness—we feel related to all; we not only wish everyone equal joy with ourselves, but we *work* toward and for this end; we cultivate a clean, healthy body and mind, (our instruments for living); we delight in preserving the beautiful wherever we see it; we are faithful to our talents *for the good of the whole*; we value playfulness above position; today above yesterday or tomorrow; originality above imitation; and soul above station.

Thoreau's words become a part of one's life and one often finds himself thinking his thoughts and hearing his words without making any effort so to do. This is because Thoreau wrote naturally and simply. His words sink deep into one's life in the same way that we learn the mother-tongue—it is gained without the effort that goes with teaching and learning. You are simply in the Mid-stream of Wisdom when you are with Thoreau in mind, and you float along naturally with his unadorned, unpretentious, wholesome, pristine philosophy of life. Every unspoiled child has the capacity for this Wisdom, but unfortunately it is not this Wisdom that is most valued today. Unquestionably we seem to be out for that which will turn to ashes in our hands after we have given our lives to secure it; to be specific: money, security, individual accumulation of any kind. However Fate is driving us very fast into the corner where we shall be made to strip ourselves of everything save one eternal value, i. e. (you may choose the name)—cosmic-consciousness; unity; oneness with the universe, including every human being which now you may be casting out of your zone of responsibility or interest.

Thoreau is alive today; he is still proclaiming these truths. No matter how many late books you try to read in order to "keep up with Mr. and Mrs. Jones," you could lead a less hectic life if you dusted off your copy of Walden or any Thoreau volume, committed it to memory, lived it, passed on its good advice to your neighbors and friends. "But," you say, "will I find in his volumes the dashing and exciting?" You will find in them what you need most. Perhaps you do not know how to state your desire and you have overworked the word "excitement." You may find that you have a "hidden hunger" that only The Gospel According to Thoreau can satisfy. Hear ye, his Songs and Precepts:

"Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truths are better than make-believe."

"A goose is a goose still, dress it as you will."

"Only that day dawns to which we are awake."

"To affect the quality of the day, that is the art of arts."

"I would just as lief know what it" (a squash) "thinks about God as what most men think, or are said to think."

"Fair thoughts and a serene mind make fair days."

"The man I meet with is not often so instructive as the silence he breaks."

"Great piles of goods, and the means of packing and conveying them, much wrapping paper and twine, many crates and hogsheads and trucks, that is Boston. The more barrels, the more Boston. The museums and scientific societies and libraries are accidental."

"When I am absolutely warmest, I may be coldest to you. . . That I am cold means that I am of another nature. . . . Fire itself is cold to whatever is not of a nature to be warmed by it."

"You call yourself a great traveler,

perhaps, but can you get beyond the influence of a certain class of ideas?"

"I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion."

"If this world were all man, I could not stretch myself. I should lose all hope. He is constraint; she (Nature) is freedom to me. He makes me wish for another world; she makes me content with this.... The joy which nature yields is like that afforded by the frank words of one we love."

Thoreau's Prayer in verse is most bare of the prescribed trimmings for prayers:

"Great God! I ask thee for no meaner pelf
Than that I may not disappoint myself.
And next in value, which thy kindness lends,
That I may greatly disappoint my friends."

And still I have not quoted from the charming nature studies in which one must delight if he is a natural, unspoiled human being. The four books called by the names of the Seasons, for example, are treasure-houses of entertainment and artistic word-pictures. From "Summer" one might give an example: "Myriads of little parasols" (leafing trees,) "are suddenly spread all the country over to shield the earth and the roots of the trees from the parching heat, and they begin to flutter and to rustle in the breeze."

"I hear the note of a bobolink concealed in the top of an apple-tree behind me. . . . It is as if he touched his harp within a vase of liquid melody and when he lifted it out the notes fell like bubbles from the trembling strings. Me thinks they are the most liquidly sweet and melodious sounds I ever heard. . . . Its notes fall with the apple blossoms in the orchard."

And from his "Winter":

"The telegraph harp again. . . . I never hear it without thinking of Greece. How the Greeks harped upon the words, immortal, ambrosial. They are what it says. It stings my ear with everlasting truth. It allies Concord to Athens, and both to Elysium. It always . . . makes me sane, reverses my views of things. I get down the railroad till I hear that which makes all the world a lie. When the. . . . west wind sweeps this wire, I rise to the height of my being. . . . Today I hear this immortal melody while the west wind is blowing balmily on my cheek and a roseate sunset seems to be preparing. . . . "

Though Thoreau is champion for the rights and happiness of all men, he was, and still is a solitary figure. It may be that those who read with understanding his works will also be solitary for long periods of time to come, but time is overrated to say the least—an illusion, if you will—and we may be sure that when the smoke and mist has cleared away from before the eyes of those we seek to reform, including ourselves, Henry David Thoreau will be found to be a Man for the Ages and a part of Truth itself.

Thoreau: Pioneer For Freedom

By WALTER HARDING
Secretary, The Thoreau Society

HENRY David Thoreau is at last coming into his own. For a century we have been trying to dismiss him as a nature-writer, a poet-naturalist, a bachelor of nature. We have lavished praise on his rather puerile essay on the battle of the ants and tried to forget that he had more important words to speak. We have inscribed "Winter Animals" and "Autumnal Tints" into our children's schoolbooks and ignored the far more important "Civil Disobedience" and "Life without Principle." We have praised *Walden* as a sort of civilized *Robinson Crusoe* and attempted to relegate its most significant ideas to an intellectual limbo.

But Henry Thoreau is now coming into his own. At long last we are beginning to see him recognized as an economist, a philosopher, and a thinker. We are not losing sight of the indubitable fact that he is by far the outstanding American nature

writer. His preeminence there is so obvious that it scarcely needs the pointing out. *Walden*, his *Journals*, his travel books and his briefer essays on natural history will always find a prominent shelf in the library of American nature lore. But at last we are beginning to realize that this man was something more than merely a nature writer.

Thoreau's writing is intellectual dynamite. His works are even more explosive today than when they were written. So different are his basic assumptions from those of the ivory-towered writer of *Belles lettres* that the whole world appears topsy-turvy seen through his spectacles. But if one immerses himself in Thoreau's works, he will soon wonder if it is not the world rather than Thoreau that is upside-down.

There were no axioms and no postulates in Thoreau's philosophy. He neither asked nor gave any quarter to religion, nor to the State, nor to his neighbor's opinions. He wanted to live as though life had never been lived before and he succeeded in becoming America's preeminent pioneer though he never lived further west than Concord, Massachusetts. There is a frontier in Thoreau's philosophy as rugged as any in the furthest reaches of the Yukon, but it is a spiritual frontier rather than a physical. It is the frontier of the human soul.

Thoreau is the great American philosopher of freedom and individualism. He stood in the shade of no institution, but out alone in the glaring sun. His horizons were as broad as the skies. To him the most important thing in the world, the very core of the universe about which all else revolved, was the human individual. His was a lifelong expedition to discover life and that he died satisfied with his living is sufficient evidence of his success.

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

"I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavours to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings."

Thoreau's writings are a constant iteration and reiteration of the doctrines of freedom. He asked not that we live by any creed or code but that we discover life for ourselves. "Life without principle" was his motto. Let all tyrannies beware when a man like Thoreau falls in love with freedom. Institutions can be shaken to their very foundations if the cold light of unprejudiced analysis be played on them, if liberty and freedom are the watchwords.

Thoreau's writings have been spread broadcast around the world. He has been published in Russia and China, in India and Japan, in South Africa and South America, in England and Australia. But he needs to be more than published, more than read, he needs to be lived. This is not to imply that everyone should migrate to a cabin in the woods or refuse payment of his taxes. The very basis of Thoreau's philosophy is that each man live his own life and no one else's. We can best follow his philosophy by living our own, by becoming pioneers of personal freedom.

In these days of mechanization and centralization, Thoreau cries out like a voice in the wilderness. I know of no better antidote to the philosophies of fascism and intolerance, whether abroad or at home, than the writings, the beliefs, the life of that inspired Yankee individualist—Henry David Thoreau.

Pioneers of Libertarian Thought in America

By RUDOLF ROCKER

At last, a competent European mind has looked at the evolution of the idea of Liberty in America and put down what he learned. This forthcoming book will be published only when enough people want it—since "best seller" publishers produce books now only to make money.

It is fortunate that Rudolf Rocker, and not somebody else, wrote this book. What an American-born writer would say might be regarded as favoritism. The known fairness of Rocker makes the book overflow with his unique open-mindedness even though he originated in Europe. Rocker is as fair-minded to American pioneers as he is known to be to people of any race.

As soon as enough persons decide that they want this book, the Committee will then order it printed to be distributed at cost. That publishers now think it cannot produce sufficient profit to be worth their while is no reason for going without it unless you already know as much as Rocker about the history of Liberty and Pioneer Libatorians in this country.

Being prepared for publication. Probably 200 pages or more.

ROCKER PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE (A Non-Profit Organization)
2101 So. Gramercy Place, Los Angeles 7, California

Nationalism and Culture

By RUDOLF ROCKER

What Translator Prof. Chase says about this book!

Some reasons why this book is important to you.

Today throughout the world States are being made over: made over peacefully under the forms of ordinary constitutional procedure, as in the United States, England, and (formerly in) France; made over violently by the usurpation of power and its maintenance and enforcement in the hands of a dictatorship through force and terror, as in Germany and Italy; made over by armed intervention from without, as in China; made over by a combination of these processes, as in Spain; but definitely and drastically made over everywhere by one process or another.

By whatever process and in whatever form this reshaping goes on it is accompanied and characterized by two significant manifestations:

First, an intensive centralization of governmental power, involving an almost complete surrender of control by local or district units and an extension of the activities of the State into fields in which it has not previously intervened since the downfall of the absolute monarchies.

Second, a resurgence of power politics or nationalism such as the world has perhaps never before witnessed; nationalist feeling that in some countries approaches hysteria; nationalist structure of the State, aiming at economic self-sufficiency, cultural separateness, hostility to other states and their peoples.

This reshaping of States carries with it many and far-reaching consequences to you:

The status of the individual is being fundamentally altered. His economic independence and his personal freedom are subjected to increasing and already drastic limitations.

Cultures are being changed, in some instances, as in the United States, almost unconsciously, though rapidly, in the course of the accepted processes of adaptation to the changing conditions; in some instances, as in Germany, abruptly by authoritative decree. In the latter case a people is given a new set of social concepts, a new set of ethical values, a new set of artistic and literary norms, new manners, new morals, a new religion, even a new diet, by cataclysmic, revolutionary command; in the former they acquire these in some degree by their own acquiescence in change.

Are these changes, that go on, good changes?

A new world is shaping for men and women to live in. Is it a better world or a worse one than that which they have lived in?

In either case is there anything that they can do about it?

You probably do not feel very sure of the answer to these questions. We want to tell you of a book which will help you to formulate answers if you have already formulated some.

Nationalism and Culture by Rudolf Rocker is a detailed and scholarly study of the development of nationalism and the changes in human cultures from the dawn of history to the present day and an analysis of the relations of these to one another. It tells the story of the growth of the State and the other institutions of authority and their influence on life and manners, on architecture and art, on literature and thought.

It traces the evolution of religious and political systems and their relation to the authoritarian State on the one hand and to the people on the other. It analyzes the Nation as alleged community of race, of culture, of language, of interest.

It presents in its 600 pages a series of cross-sections of European society at successive historical periods and relates them to one another.

It offers copious illustrations of the literature of every period and country.

It is at every point illuminated by the interpretative comment of the author, scholarly, brilliant, poetic, human.

It is the ripened fruit of thirty years of intensive and devoted study by a man in every way fitted for the task.

We are sure that you will want to possess and to read a work that has appealed so strongly to men like Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and other distinguished men. Price $3.50 postpaid.

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