

with a public library or a drinking fountain. If the ground is not prepared, if the people are not fit for self-government, the gift of independence simply means the handing over of the country to the despotic rule of a small coterie of picked men, who, from their foreign education and training and their race identity with the natives, would find it easy to establish

an ascendancy over the masses, which would keep them in a state of political and economic slavery.

Whatever the future may hold for the Filipinos, it is certain that to-day they have scarcely taken the first step on that long road of industry and self-discipline which alone leads to a sane and wholesome national life.

COUNTRY LIFE

BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

“COUNTRY LIFE” was the opening lecture of a course given by Mr. Emerson at the Freeman Place Chapel in Boston, in March, 1858. It was followed by “Works and Days” (printed in *Society and Solitude*), “Powers of the Mind,” “Natural Method of Mental Philosophy,” “Memory” (the matter of these three mostly now found in *Natural History of Intellect*), and “Self-Possession.” “Concord Walks,” which will be printed in connection with “Country Life” in the last volume of the Centenary Edition of Mr. Emerson’s works, was originally a part of the lecture, as given by him to his neighbors in the village Lyceum. — EDWARD W. EMERSON.

The Teutonic race have been marked in all ages by a trait which has received the name of Earth-hunger, a love of possessing land. It is not less visible in that branch of the family which inhabits America. Nor is it confined to farmers, speculators, and filibusters, or conquerors. The land, the care of land, seems to be the calling of the people of this new country, of those, at least, who have not some decided bias, driving them to a particular craft, as a born sailor or machinist. The capable and generous, let them spend their talent on the land. Plant it, adorn it, study it, — it will de-

velop in the cultivator the talent it requires.

The avarice of real estate, native to us all, covers instincts of great generosity, namely, all that is called the love of nature, comprising the largest use and the whole beauty of a farm or landed estate. Travel and walking have this apology, that nature has impressed on savage men periodical or secular impulses to emigrate, as upon lemmings, rats and birds. The Indians go in summer to the coast for fishing; in winter, to the woods. The nomads wander over vast territory, to find their pasture. Other impulses hold us to other habits. As the increasing population finds new values in the ground, the nomad life is given up for settled homes. But the necessity of exercise and the nomadic instinct are always stirring the wish to travel, and in the spring and summer it commonly gets the victory. Chaucer notes of the month of April,

Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes.

And, in the country, nature is always inviting to the compromise of walking as soon as we are released from severe labor. Linnæus, early in life, read a discourse at the University of Upsala *On the necessity of travelling in one’s own country*, based on the conviction that nature was inexhaust-

ibly rich, and that in every district were swamps, or beaches, or rocks, or mountains, which were now nuisances, but, if explored, and turned to account, were capable of yielding immense benefit. At Upsala, therefore, he instituted what were called *herborizations*: he summoned his class to go with him on excursions on foot into the country, to collect plants, and insects, birds, and eggs. These parties started at seven in the morning, and stayed out till nine in the evening; the Professor was generally attended by two hundred students, and, when they returned, they marched through the streets of Upsala in a festive procession, with flowers in their hats, to the music of drums and trumpets, and with loads of natural productions collected on the way.

Let me remind you what this walker found in his walks. He went into Oland, and found that the farms on the shore were perpetually encroached on by the sea, and ruined by blowing sand. He discovered that the *arundo arenaris*, or beach grass, had long firm roots, and he taught them to plant it for the protection of their shores. In Tornea, he found the people suffering every spring from the loss of their cattle, which died by some frightful distemper, to the number of fifty or a hundred in a year. Linnæus walked out to examine the meadow into which they were first turned out to grass, and found it a bog, where the water-hemlock grew in abundance, and had evidently been cropped plentifully by the animals in feeding. He found the plant also dried in their cut hay. He showed them that the whole evil might be prevented by employing a woman for a month to eradicate the noxious plants. When the shipyards were infested with rot, Linnæus was sent to provide some remedy. He studied the insects that infested the timber, and found that they laid their eggs in the logs within certain days in April, and he directed that during ten days, at that time of the year, the logs should be immersed under the water, which being done, the timber was found to be uninjured.

He found that the gout, to which he was subject, was cured by wood-strawberries. He had other remedies. When Kalm returned from America, Linnæus was laid up with severe gout. But the joy in his return, and the curiosity to see his plants, restored him instantly, and he found an old friend as good as the treatment by wood-strawberries. He learned the secret of making pearls in the river-pearl mussel. He found out that a terrible distemper which sometimes proves fatal in the North of Europe, was occasioned by an animalcule, which he called *Furia infernalis*, which falls from the air on the face, or hand, or other uncovered part, burrows into it, multiplies, and kills the sufferer. By timely attention, it is easily extracted.

He examined eight thousand plants; and examined fishes, insects, birds, quadrupeds; and distributed the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. And if, instead of running about in the hotels and theatres of Europe, we would manlike see what grows, or might grow, in Massachusetts, stock its gardens, drain its bogs, plant its miles and miles of barren waste with oak and pine; and following what is usually the natural suggestion of these pursuits, ponder the moral secrets which, in her solitudes, Nature has to whisper to us, we were better patriots and happier men.

We have the finest climate in the world, for this purpose, in Massachusetts. If we have coarse days, and dogdays, and white days, and days that are like ice-blinks, we have also yellow days, and crystal days, — days which are neither hot nor cold, but the perfection of temperature. New England has a good climate, — yet, in choosing a farm, we like a Southern exposure, whilst Massachusetts, it must be owned, is on the Northern slope, towards the Arctic circle, and the Pole. Our climate is a series of surprises, and among our many prognostics of the weather, the only trustworthy one that I know is, that, when it is warm, it is a sign that it is going to be cold. The climate needs, therefore, to be corrected by

a little anthracite coal, — a little coal indoors, during much of the year, and thick coats and shoes must be recommended to walkers. I own I prefer the solar to the polar climates. "I have no enthusiasm for nature," said a French writer, "which the slightest chill will not instantly destroy."

But we cannot overpraise the comfort and the beauty of the climate in the best days of the year. In summer, we have for weeks a sky of Calcutta, yielding the richest growth, maturing plants which require strongest sunshine, and scores of days when the heat is so rich, and yet so tempered, that it is delicious to live.

The importance to the intellect of exposing the body and brain to the fine mineral and imponderable agents of the air makes the chief interest in the subject. "So exquisite is the structure of the cortical glands," said the old physiologist Malpighi, "that when the atmosphere is ever so slightly vitiated or altered, the brain is the first part to sympathize and to undergo a change of state." We are very sensible of this, when, in midsummer, we go to the seashore, or to mountains, or when, after much confinement to the house, we go abroad into the landscape, with any leisure to attend to its soothing and expanding influences. The power of the air was the first explanation offered by the early philosophers of the mutual understanding that men have. "The air," said Anaximenes, "is the soul, and the essence of life. By breathing it, we become intelligent, and, because we breathe the same air, understand one another." Plutarch thought it contained the knowledge of the future. "If it be true, that souls are naturally endowed with the faculty of prediction, and that the chief cause that excites that faculty is a certain temperature of air and winds," etc. Even Lord Bacon said, "The Stars inject their imagination or influence into the air."

The air that we breathe is an exhalation of all the solid material of the globe. . . . It is the last finish of the work of the Creator. We might say, the Rock of Ages

dissolves himself into the mineral air to build up their mystic constitution of man's mind and body.

Walking has the best value as gymnastics for the mind. "You shall never break down in a speech," said Sydney Smith, "on the day on which you have walked twelve miles." In the English universities, the reading men are daily performing their punctual training in the boat-clubs, or a long gallop of many miles in the saddle, or taking their famed "constitutional," walks of eight and ten miles. "Walking," said Rousseau, "has something which animates and vivifies my ideas." And Plato said of exercise, that, "it would almost cure a guilty conscience." "For the living out of doors, and simple fare, and gymnastic exercises, and the morals of companions, produce the greatest effect on the way of virtue and of vice."

Few men know how to take a walk. The qualifications of a professor are endurance, plain clothes, old shoes, an eye for nature, good humor, vast curiosity, good speech, good silence, and nothing too much. If a man tells me that he has an intense love of nature, I know, of course, that he has none. Good observers have the manners of trees and animals, their patient good sense, and if they add words, 't is only when words are better than silence. But a loud singer, or a story-teller, or a vain talker profanes the river and the forest, and is nothing like so good company as a dog.

There is also an effect on beauty. . . . De Quincey said, "I have seen Wordsworth's eyes sometimes affected powerfully in this respect. His eyes are not under any circumstances bright, lustrous, or piercing, but, after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light, but, under favorable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from depths below all depths; in fact, it is more truly entitled to

be held 'the light that never was on land or sea,' a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any that can be named." But De Quincey prefixes to this description of Wordsworth a little piece of advice, which I wonder has not attracted more attention. "The depth and subtlety of the eyes varies exceedingly with the state of the stomach, and, if young ladies were aware of the magical transformations which can be wrought in the depth and sweetness of the eye, by a few weeks' exercise, I fancy we should see their habits in this point altered greatly for the better."

For walking, you must have a broken country. In Illinois, everybody rides. There is no good walk in that State. The reason is, a square yard of it is as good as a hundred miles. You can distinguish from the cows a horse feeding, at the distance of five miles, with the naked eye. Hence, you have the monotony of Holland, and when you step out of the door, can see all that you will have seen when you come home. In Massachusetts, our land is agreeably broken, and is permeable like a park, and not like some towns in the more broken country of New Hampshire, built on three or four hills having each one side at forty-five degrees, and the other side perpendicular: so that if you go a mile, you have only the choice whether you will climb the hill on your way out, or on your way back. The more reason we have to be content with the felicity of our slopes in Massachusetts, undulating, rocky, broken and surprising, but without this alpine inconveniency. Twenty years ago in Northern Wisconsin the pinery was composed of trees so big, and so many of them, that it was impossible to walk in the country, and the traveller had nothing for it, but to wade in the streams. One more inconveniency, I remember, they showed me in Illinois, that, in the bottom lands, the grass was fourteen feet high. We may well enumerate what compensating advantages we have over that country, for 't is a commonplace, which I have frequently heard

spoken in Illinois, that it was a manifest leading of the Divine Providence, that the New England States should have been first settled before the western country was known, or they would never have been settled at all.

The privilege of the countryman is the culture of the land, the laying out of grounds and gardens, the orchard, and the forest. The Rosaceous tribe in botany, including the apple, pear, peach and cherry, are coeval with man. The apple is our national fruit. In October, the country is covered with its ornamental harvests. The American sun paints itself in these glowing balls amid the green leaves, — the social fruit, in which Nature has deposited every possible flavor; whole zones and climates she has concentrated into apples. I am afraid you do not understand values. Look over the fence at the farmer who stands there. He makes every cloud in the sky, and every beam of the sun, serve him. His trees are full of brandy. He saves every drop of sap, as if it were wine. A few years ago, those trees were whipsticks. Now, every one of them is worth a hundred dollars. Observe their form; not a branch nor a twig is to spare. They look as if they were arms and fingers, holding out to you balls of fire and gold. One tree yields the rent of an acre of land. Yonder pear has every property which should belong to a tree. It is hardy, and almost immortal. It accepts every species of nourishment, and yet could live, like an Arab, on air and water. It grows like the ash Ygdrasil. It seems to me much that I have brought a skilful chemist into my ground, and keep him there overnight, all day, all summer, for an art he has, out of all kinds of refuse rubbish, to manufacture Virgaliens, Bergamots, and Seckels, in a manner which no confectioner can approach; and his method of working is no less beautiful than the result.

In old towns, there are always certain paradises known to the pedestrian, old and deserted farms, where the neglected orchard has been left to itself, and whilst

some of its trees decay, the hardier have held their own. I know a whole district, Estabrook Farm, made up of wide straggling orchards, where the apple-trees strive with and hold their ground against the native forest trees: the apple growing with profusion that mocks the pains taken by careful cockneys, who come out into the country, plant young trees, and watch them dwindling. Here, no hedges are wanted; the wide distance from any population is fence enough: the fence is a mile wide. Here are varieties of apple not found in Downing or Loudon. The "Tartaric" variety, and "Cow apple," and the "Bite me if you dare," the "Beware of this." Apples of a kind which I remember in boyhood, each containing a barrel of wind and half a barrel of cider. But there was a contest between the old orchard and the invading forest trees, for the possession of the ground, of the whites against the Pequots, and if the handsome savages win, we shall not be losers.¹ . . .

According to the common estimate of farmers, the woodlot yields its gentle rent of six per cent, without any care or thought, when the owner sleeps or travels, and it is subject to no enemy but fire. Evelyn quotes Lord Caernavon's saying, "Wood is an excrescence of the earth provided by God for the payment of debts." Lord Abercorn, when some one praised the rapid growth of his trees, replied, "Sir, they have nothing else to do."

When Nero advertised for a new luxury, a walk in the woods should have been offered. 'T is one of the secrets for dodging old age. For Nature makes a like impression on age as on youth. Then I recommend it to people who are growing old against their will. A man in that predicament, if he stands before a mirror, or among young people, is made quite too sensible of the fact; but the forest awakes in him the same feeling it did when he was a boy, and he may draw a moral from

¹ Here followed the passage about trees which appears in "The Address at the Consecration of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery" printed in the *Miscellanies* (Centenary Edition).

the fact that 't is the old trees that have all the beauty and grandeur. I admire the taste which makes the avenue to a house, were the house never so small, through a wood; besides the beauty, it has a positive effect on manners, as it disposes the mind of the inhabitant and of his guests to the deference due to each. Some English reformers² thought the cattle made all this wide space necessary between house and house, and that, if there were no cows to pasture, less land would suffice. But a cow does not need so much land as the owner's eyes require between him and his neighbor.

Our Aryan progenitors in Asia celebrated the winds as the conveying Maruts, "traversers of places difficult of access. Stable is their birthplace in the sky, but they are agitators of heaven and earth, who shake all around like the top of a tree. Because they drive the clouds, they have harnessed the spotted deer to their chariot; they are coming with weapons, war-cries, and decorations. I hear the cracking of the whips in their hands. I praise their sportive resistless strength. They are the generators of speech. They drive before them in their course the long, vast, uninjurable, rain-retaining cloud. Wherever they pass, they fill the way with clamor. Every one hears their noise. The lightning roars like a parent cow that bellows for its calf, and the rain is set free by the Maruts. Maruts, as you have vigor, invigorate mankind! Aswins (Waters), long-armed, good-looking Aswins! bearers of wealth, guides of men, harness your car! Ambrosia is in you, in you are medicinal herbs." The Hindoos called fire Agni, born in the woods, bearer of oblations, smoke-bannered and light-shedding, lord of red coursers; the guest of

² These were Mr. Lane and Mr. Wright, the companions of Mr. Alcott in the unsuccessful Fruitlands Community at Harvard, Mass. Oxen and cows were dispensed with there, on the ground that it was wrong to enslave these animals, rob the calf of his food and the creatures of their lives; also the defiling of the ground with manure seemed offensive.

man; protector of people in villages; the sacrificer visible to all, thousand-eyed, all-beholding, of graceful form, and whose countenance is turned on all sides.

What uses that we know belong to the forest, and what countless uses that we know not! How an Indian helps himself with fibre of milkweed, or withe-bush, or wild hemp, or root of spruce, black or white, for strings; making his bow of hickory, birch, or even a fir-bough, at a pinch; hemlock bark for his roof, hair-moss or fern for his bed. He goes to a white birch-tree, and can fit his leg with a seamless boot, or a hat for his head. He can draw sugar from the maple, food and antidotes from a hundred plants. He knows his way in a straight line from watercourse to watercourse, and you cannot lose him in the woods. He consults by way of natural compass, when he travels: (1) large pine-trees, which bear more numerous branches on their southern side; (2) ant-hills, which have grass on their south and whortle-berries on the north; (3) aspens, whose bark is rough on the north, and smooth on the south side. All his knowledge is for use, and it only appears in use, whilst white men have theirs also for talking purposes.

I am a very indifferent botanist, but I admire that perennial four-petalled flower, which has one grey petal, one green, one red, and one white. I think sometimes how many days could Methuselah go out and find something new. In January the new snow has changed the woods so that he does not know them; has built sudden cathedrals in a night. In the familiar forest he finds Norway and Russia in the masses of overloading snow which break all that they cannot bend. In March, the thaw, and the sounding of the south wind, and the splendor of the icicles. On the pond there is a cannonade of a hundred guns, but it is not in honor of election of any President. He went forth again after the rain; in the cold swamp, the buds were swollen, the *ictodes* prepares its flower, and the mallows and mouse-ear. The mallows the Greeks held sacred

as giving the first sign of the sympathy of the earth with the celestial influences. The next day the hylas were piping in every pool, and a new activity among the hardy birds, the premature arrival of the bluebird, and the first northward flight of the geese, who cannot keep their joy to themselves, and fly low over the farms. In May, the bursting of the leaf, — the oak and maple are red with the same colors on the new leaf which they will resume in Autumn when it is ripe. In June the miracle works faster,¹ —

“Painting with white and red the moors
To draw the nations out of doors.”

Man feels the blood of thousands in his body, and pumps the sap of all this forest through his arteries, the loquacity of all birds in the morning; and the immensity of life seems to make the world deep and wide. In August when the corn is grown to be a resort and protection to woodcocks and small birds, and when the leaves whisper to each other in the wind, we observe already that the leaf is sere, that a change has passed on the landscape. The world has nothing to offer more rich or entertaining than the days which October always brings us, when, after the first frosts, a steady shower of gold falls in the strong southwind from the chestnuts, maples and hickories: all the trees are windharps, filling the air with music; and all men become poets, and walk to the measure of rhymes they make or remember. The dullest churl begins to quaver. The forest in its coat of many colors reflects its varied splendor through the softest haze. The witch-hazel blooms to mark the last hour arrived, and that nature has played out her summer score. The dry leaves rustle so loud, as we go rummaging through them, that we can hear nothing else. The leaf in our dry climate gets fully ripe, and, like the fruit when fully ripe, acquires fine color, whilst, in Europe, the damper climate decomposes it too soon.

¹ These descriptions of the advance from Winter to Spring recall the first part of the poem *May-Day*.

But the pleasures of garden, orchard and wood must be alternated. We know the healing effect on the sick of change of air, — the action of new scenery on the mind is not less fruitful. We must remember that man is a natural nomad, and his old propensities will stir at mid-summer, and send him, like an Indian, to the sea. The influence of the ocean on the love of liberty I have mentioned elsewhere. Its power on the mind in sharpening the perceptions has made the sea the famous educator of our race. The history of the world, — what is it, but the doings about the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic? . . .

What freedom of grace has the sea with all this might! . . . The freedom makes the observer feel as a slave. Our expression is so thin and cramped! Can we not learn here a generous eloquence? This was the lesson our starving poverty wanted. . . . At Niagara, I have noticed, that, as quick as I got out of the wetting of the Fall, all the grandeur changed into beauty. You cannot keep it grand, 't is so quickly beautiful; and the sea gave me the same experience. 'T is great and formidable, when you lie down in it, among the rocks. But, on the shore, at one rod's distance, 't is changed into a beauty as of gems and clouds. Shores in sight of each other in a warm climate, make boat-builders; and whenever we find a coast broken up into bays and harbors, we find an instant effect on the intellect and industry of the people.¹

On the seashore the play of the Atlantic with the coast! What wealth is here! Every wave is a fortune, one thinks of Etzlers and great projectors who will yet turn all this waste strength to account: what strength and fecundity, from the sea-monsters, hugest of animals, to the primary forms of which it is the immense cradle, and the phosphorescent infuso-

¹ Here followed the description of the sea written by Mr. Emerson as he sat on the rocks of Pigeon Cove, which he found so metrical that it needed but a few verbal changes to become the poem *Sea-Shore*.

ries; — it is one vast rolling bed of life, and every sparkle is a fish. What freedom and grace with all this might! The seeing so excellent a spectacle is a certificate to the mind that all imaginable good shall yet be realized. The sea is the chemist that dissolves the mountain and the rock; pulverises old continents, and builds new, — forever redistributing the solid matter of the globe; and performs an analogous office in perpetual new transplanting of the races of men over the surface, the Exodus of nations. We may well yield us for a time to its lessons. But the nomad instinct, as I said, persists to drive us to fresh fields and pastures new. Indeed the variety of our moods has an answering variety in the face of the world, and the sea drives us back to the hills.

Dr. Johnson said of the Scotch mountains, "The appearance is that of matter incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care." The poor blear-eyed doctor was no poet. Like Charles Lamb, he loved the sweet security of streets. It was said of him that "he preferred the Strand to the Garden of the Hesperides." But this is not the experience of imaginative men, nor of men with good eyes, and susceptible organizations. "For my own part," says Linnæus, "I have enjoyed good health, except a slight languor, — but as soon as I got upon the Norway Alps, I seemed to have acquired a new existence. I felt as if relieved from a heavy burden. Then, spending a few days in the low country of Norway, though without committing the least excess, my languor or heaviness returned. When I again ascended the Alps, I revived as before." And he celebrates the health and performance of the Laps as the best walkers of Europe. "Not without admiration, I have watched my two Lap companions, in my journey to Finmark, one my conductor, the other my interpreter. For after having climbed the Alps, whilst I, a youth of twenty-five years, was spent and tired, like one dead, and lay down as if to die in those ends of the world, these two old men, one fifty, one

seventy years, running and playing like boys, felt none of the inconveniences of the road, although they were both loaded heavily enough with my baggage. I saw men more than seventy years old put their heel on their own neck, without any exertion. O holy simplicity of diet, past all praise!"¹

But beside their sanitary and gymnastic benefit, mountains are silent poets, and a view from a cliff over a wide country undoes a good deal of prose, and re-instates us wronged men in our rights. The imagination is touched. There is some pinch and narrowness to us, and we are glad to see the world, and what amplitudes it has, of meadow, stream, upland, forest and sea, which yet are lanes and crevices to the great space in which the world shines like a cockboat in the sea.

Of the finer influences, I shall say, that they are not less positive, if they are indescribable. If you wish to know the shortcomings of poetry and language, try to reproduce the October picture to a city company, — and see what you make of it. There is somewhat finer in the sky than we have senses to appreciate. It escapes us, and yet is only just beyond our reach. Is all this beauty to perish? Where is he who is to save the perfect moment, and cause that this beauty shall not be lost? Where is he who has senses fine enough to catch the inspiration of the landscape? The mountains in the horizon acquaint us with finer relations to our friends than any we sustain.

I think 't is the best of humanity that goes out to walk. In happy hours, I think all affairs may be wisely postponed for this walking. Can you hear what the morning says to you, and believe *that*? Can you bring home the summits of Wachusett, Greylock, and the New Hampshire hills? the savin groves of Middlesex? the sedgy ripples of the old Colony ponds? the sunny shores of your own bay, and the low Indian hills of Rhode

¹ From *Flora Laplandica*, translated by Pultenay.

Island? the savageness of pine-woods? Can you bottle the efflux of a June noon, and bring home the tops of Uncanoonuc? The landscape is vast, complete, alive. We step about, dibble, and dot, and attempt in poor linear ways to hobble after those angelic radiations. The gulf between our seeing and our doing is a symbol of that between faith and experience. . . .

Our schools and colleges strangely neglect the general education of the eye. Every acquisition we make in the science of beauty is so sweet, that I think it is cheaply paid for by what accompanies it, of course, the prating and affectation of connoisseurship. The facts disclosed by Winkelmann, Goethe, Bell, Greenough, Ruskin, Garbett, Penrose, are joyful possessions, which we cannot spare, and which we rank close beside the disclosures of natural history. There are probably many in this audience who have tried the experiment on a hill-top, and many who have not, of bending the head so as to look at the landscape with your eyes upside down. What new softness in the picture! It changes the landscape from November into June. My companion and I remarked from the hill-top the prevailing sobriety of color, and agreed that russet was the hue of Massachusetts, but on trying this experiment of inverting the view he said, "There is the Campagna! and Italy is Massachusetts upside down." The effect is remarkable, and perhaps is not explained. An ingenious friend of mine suggested that it was because the upper part of the eye is little used, and therefore retains more susceptibility than the lower, and returns more delicate impressions.

Dr. Johnson said, "Few men know how to take a walk," and it is certain that Dr. Johnson was not one of the few. It is a fine art, requiring rare gifts and much experience. No man is suddenly a good walker. Many men begin with good resolution, but they do not hold out, and I have sometimes thought it would be well to publish an *Art of Walking, with Easy*

Lessons for Beginners. These we call apprentices. Those who persist from year to year, and obtain at last an intimacy with the country, and know all the good points within ten miles, with the seasons for visiting each, know the lakes, the hills, where grapes, berries and nuts, where the rare plants are; where the best botanic ground; and where the noblest landscapes are seen, and are learning all the time; — these we call professors. . . .

Nature kills egotism and conceit; deals strictly with us; and gives sanity; so that it was the practice of the Orientals, especially of the Persians, to let insane persons wander at their own will out of the towns, *into the desert, and, if they liked, to associate with wild animals.* In their belief, wild beasts, especially gazelles, collect around an insane person, and live with him on a friendly footing. The patient found something curative in that intercourse, by which he was quieted, and sometimes restored. But there are more insane persons than are called so, or are under treatment in hospitals. The crowd in the cities, at the hotels, theatres, card-tables, the speculators who rush for investment, at ten per cent, twenty per cent, cent per cent, are all more or less mad, — I need not say it now in the crash of bankruptcy, — these point the moral, and persuade us to seek in the fields the health of the mind.

I hold all these opinions on the power of the air to be substantially true. The poet affirms them; the religious man, going abroad, affirms them; the patriot on his mountains or his prairie affirms them; the contemplative man affirms them.

Nature tells everything once. Our microscopes are not necessary. She shows every fact in large bodies somewhere. On the seashore, she reveals to the eye, by the sea-line, the true curve of the globe. It does not need a barometer to find the height of mountains. The line of snow is surer than the barometer: and the zones of plants, the savin, the pine, vernal gentian, plum, linnæa and the various lichens and grapes are all thermometers which

cannot be deceived, and will not lie. They are instruments by the best maker. The earthquake is the first chemist, goldsmith and brazier: he wrought to purpose in craters, and we borrowed the hint in crucibles. When I look at natural structures, as at a tree, or the teeth of a shark, or the anatomy of an elephant, I know that I am seeing an architecture and carpentry which has no sham, is solid and conscientious, which perfectly answers its end, and has nothing to spare. But in all works of human art there is deduction to be made for blunder and falsehood. Therefore Goethe, whose whole life was a study of the theory of art, said, *No man should be admitted to his Republic, who was not versed in Natural History.*

The college is not so wise as the mechanic's shop, nor the quarter-deck as the fore-castle. Witness the insatiable interest of the white man about the Indian, the trapper, the hunter and sailor. In a water-party in which many scholars joined, I noted that the skipper of the boat was much the best companion. The scholars made puns. The skipper saw instructive facts on every side, and there was no trifle to him. How startling are the hints of wit we detect in the horse and dog, and in the wild animals! By what compass the geese steer, and the herring migrate, we would so gladly know. What the dog knows, and how he knows it, piques us more than all we heard from the chair of metaphysics.

Is it not an eminent convenience to have in your town a person who knows where arnica grows, or sassafras, or pennyroyal, and the mints, or the scented goldenrod, or punk for slow match; or the slippery-elm, or wild cherries, or wild pears? Where are the best hazel-nuts, chestnuts and shagbarks? Where the white grapes? Where are the choice apple-trees? And what are the poisons? Where is the Norway pine, where the beech, where the epigæa, the linnæa, or sanguinaria, or orchis pulcherrima, or sundew, or laurus benzoin, or pink huckleberry? Where trout, woodcocks, wild

bees, pigeons; where the bittern (stake driver) can be seen and heard; where the Wilson's plover can be seen and heard?

The true naturalist can go wherever woods or waters go; almost where a squirrel or a bee can go, he can; and no man is asked for leave. Sometimes the farmer withstands him in crossing his lots, but 't is to no purpose; the farmer could as well hope to prevent the sparrows or tortoises. It was their land, before it was his, and their title was precedent. My naturalist knew what was on his land, and the farmer did not, and sometimes he brought them ostentatiously gifts of flowers, fruits, or rare shrubs they would gladly have paid a price for, and did not tell them that he gathered them in their own woods. Moreover the very time at which he used their land and water (for his boat glided like a trout everywhere unseen), was in hours when they were sound asleep. Before the sun was up he went up and down to survey his possessions, and passed onward, and left them, before the second owners, as he called them, were awake.¹

If we should now say a few words on the advantages that belong to the conversation with Nature, I might set them so high as to make it a religious duty. 'T is the greatest use and the greatest beauty. 'T is the lesson we were put hither to learn. What truth and what elegance belong to every fact of Nature we know. And the study of them awakens the like truth and elegance in the student. One thing, the lover of nature cannot tell the best thing he knows. . . .

What alone possesses interest for us is the *naturel* of each man. This is that which is the saliency, or principle of levity, the antagonist of matter and gravitation, and as good as they. 'This is forever a surprise, and engaging, and lovely. We can't be satiated with knowing it, and about it. It is related to the purest of the

¹ As Thoreau was still living, Mr. Emerson did not name in these paragraphs his invaluable guide and friend.

world, to gravity, the growth of grass, and the angles of crystals. Nature speaks to the imagination; first, through her grand style, — the hint of immense force and unity which her works convey; second, because her visible productions and changes are the nouns of language, and our only means of uttering the invisible thought. Every new perception of the method and beauty of nature gives a new shock of surprise and pleasure; and always for this double reason: first because they are so excellent in their primary fact, as frost, or cloud, or fire, or animal; and, secondly, because we have an instinct that they express a grander law.

'T is not easy to say again what Nature says to us. But it is the best part of poetry, merely to name natural objects well. A farmer's boy finds delight in reading the verses under the Zodiacal vignettes in the Almanac. What is the merit of Thomson's *Seasons* but copying a few of the pictures out of this vast book into words, without a hint of what they signify, and the best passages of great poets, old and new, are often simple enumerations of some features of landscape. And, as man is the object of nature, what we study in nature is man. 'T is true, that man only interests us. We are not to be imposed upon by the apparatus and the nomenclature of the physiologist. Agassiz studies year after year fishes and fossil anatomy of saurian, and lizard, and pterodactyl. But whatever he says, we know very well what he means. He pretends to be only busy with the foldings of the yolk of a turtle's egg. I can see very well what he is driving at; he means men and women. He talks about lizard, shell-fish and squid; he means John and Mary, Thomas and Ann. For nature is only a mirror in which man is reflected colossally. Swedenborg or Behmen or Plato tried to decipher this hieroglyphic, and explain what rock, what sand, what wood, what fire signified in regard to man.

They may have been right or wrong in any particulars of their interpretation, but it is only our ineradicable belief that

the world answers to man, and part to part, that gives any interest in the subject. If we believed that nature was foreign and unrelated, — some rock on which souls wandering in the Universe were shipwrecked, we should think all exploration of it frivolous waste of time. No, it is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, made of us, as we of it. External nature is only a half. The geology, the astronomy, the anatomy, are all good, but 't is all a half, and — enlarge it by astronomy never so far — remains a half. It requires a will as perfectly organized, — requires man. Astronomy is a cold, desert science, with all its pompous figures, — depends a little too much on the glass-grinder, too little on the mind. 'T is of no use to show us more planets and systems. We know already what matter is, and more or less of it does not signify. He can dispose in his thought of more worlds, just as readily as of few, or one. It is his relation to one, to the first, that imports. Nay, I will say, of the two facts, the world, and man, man is by much the largest half.

I know that the imagination . . . is a

coy, capricious power, and does not impart its secret to inquisitive persons. Sometimes a parlor in which fine persons are found, with beauty, culture, and sensibility, answers our purpose still better, striking the electric chain with which we are darkly bound, — but that again is nature, and there we have again the charm which landscape gives us, in a finer form; but the persons must have had the influence of nature, must know her simple, cheap pleasures, must know what Pindar means when he says that "water is the best of things," and have manners that speak of reality and great elements, or we shall know no Olympus.

Matter, how immensely soever enlarged by the telescope, remains the lesser half. The very science by which it is shown to you argues the force of man. Nature is vast and strong, but as soon as man knows himself as its interpreter, knows that nature and he are from one source, and that he, when humble and obedient, is nearer to the source, then all things fly into place, then is there a rider to the horse, an organized will, then nature has a lord.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

NOT far from Paris, in fair Fontainebleau,
 A lovely memory-haunted hamlet lies,
 Whose tender spell makes captive, and defies
 Forgetfulness. The peasants come and go —
 Their backs too used to stoop, and patient sow
 The harvest which a narrow want supplies, —
 Even as when, Earth's pathos in his eyes,
 Millet dwelt here, companion of their woe.

Ah, Barbizon! With thorns, not laurels, crowned,
 He looked thy sorrows in the face, and found —
 Vital as seed warm nestled in the sod —
 The hidden sweetness at the heart of pain;
 Trusting thy sun and dew, thy wind and rain, —
 At home with Nature, and at one with God!