THOREAU IN TWENTY VOLUMES.

It is a little over fifty years since an obscure American writer recorded in his private journal that he had just received a wagon load of his unsaleable volumes from the publisher. "They are something more substantial than fame," he wrote, "as my back knows, which has borne them up two flights of stairs. My works are now piled up on one side of my chamber, half as high as my head, my *opera omnia*. This is authorship; these are the work of my brain. Nevertheless, in spite of this result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen to-night with as much satisfaction as ever."

What would Thoreau have said, could he have been forewarned, on that evening, that within half-a-century the foremost of American publishing firms would be planning an edition of his works in twenty volumes; that an original copy of his rejected book, the *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, would sell for ten guineas; and that scraps of his handwriting would fetch more than their weight in gold —for this is literally what has happened to the reputation of the "Yankee Diogenes" and the "Rural Humbug," as his contemporaries styled him? Of all the Concord group it is beginning to be seen that Thoreau, the least regarded in his lifetime, will live the longest in the end, by virtue of that rare, pungent, aboriginal flavor of his, which may attract or repel, according to the taste of the reader, but will in no wise suffer itself to be forgotten.

There lies before me, as I write, the new "Walden" edition of *Thoreau*—a truly astonishing monument to a name which has had to fight its way, year by year, against much obloquy and misapprehension, and with little else to aid it than its own quenchless vitality. It is no empty phrase to say that the thanks of all students of Thoreau are owing to the publishers who have thus made due recognition of his genius; for this "Walden" edition, following upon the "Riverside" series of 1894, comes very little short of giving us the complete and definite *Thoreau*.[1] A few further gleanings there will doubtless be of hitherto unpublished poems, variations in the text, omitted passages and a few errors to be corrected, but for all practical purposes the complete works of the author of *Walden* have now been given to the world, and in a form which many a more fastidious classic might envy. I will not say that such an event marks the climax of Thoreau's fame, for I believe that in another half-century he will be still more highly appreciated; but it certainly marks the most important epoch in a great writer's acceptance—the point where he ceases to be classed with the *minora sidera* of his generation, and takes his proper place in the literary heavens.

The published writings fall naturally into two divisions, first, the six volumes of Works, already known to readers of Thoreau, and differing from those included in the earlier "Riverside" edition chiefly in a number of added letters and poems, and in the more convenient grouping of some of the miscellaneous essays; secondly, the much-talked-of Journal, now for the first time printed *in extenso* in fourteen volumes. The appearance of the Journal is, of course, the great feature of this "Walden" edition, and an event of capital importance to Thoreau students. When Thoreau died in 1862 he

[1] "The Writings of Henry David Thoreau," including the Journal of Thoreau, in twenty volumes, illustrated with one hundred photographs from nature. (Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., Boston and New York. The London agents are Messrs. Archibald Constable and Co.)

left no fewer than thirty-nine volumes of closely-written diaries, containing the thoughts and meditations of a lifetime, the raw material from which his two published works, *The Week* and *Walden,* had been constructed, and which were designed to furnish the substance of several more. "We must have our libraries enlarged," so Lowell had remarked in his review of *The Week,* "if Mr. Thoreau intends to complete his autobiography on this scale." Yet soon after Thoreau's death there was some talk of printing the journals, but, owing to the hesitation of Sophia Thoreau, his surviving sister, the plan was not carried out, and the manuscripts lay hidden away until, some twenty years later, Mr. Harrison Blake edited portions of them in four volumes, in which selected passages from different years were grouped together under the heads of *Spring, Summer, Autumn,* and *Winter,* so as to give a connected picture of the seasons. I cannot think that the arrangement was a happy one; for the effect on the reader's mind of being jerked to and fro, from one year to another, in order to maintain a semblance of continuity in the seasons, was often a cause of annoyance, and for some time past it has been felt that this artificial structure must sooner or later be superseded by the publication of the Journals in full. Thanks to the promoters of the "Walden" *Thoreau,* and Mr. Bradford Torrey's editorship, this has now been done, and we have before us the actual record of Thoreau's thoughts—"the very pulse of the machine"—during the period of his active manhood.

Thoreau, of course, did not contemplate the printing of his Journals, either in selections, after Mr. Blake's pattern, or, as they now appear, complete—his method was to draw from them, as from a storehouse, in the making of his books, with careful revision and re-shaping of his original thought—yet it is interesting to note that in one particular passage (January 27th and 28th, 1852) he gives by implication a sanction to the plan that has been followed.

"I do not know," he says, "but thoughts written down thus in a journal might be printed in the same form with greater advantage than if the related ones were brought together into separate essays. They are now allied to life, and are seen by the reader not to be far-fetched. It is more simple, less artful. Mere facts and names and dates communicate more than we suspect. . . . Perhaps I can never find so good a setting for my thoughts as I shall thus have taken them out of."

A comparison of the more rugged beauties of the Journal with the finished felicities of *Walden* or *Cape Cod* hardly bears out this theory; but there is undoubtedly a native and unstudied charm in the first impressions which is all their own; and to those who recognize how great a writer Thoreau is, there is much interest in being able to watch his mind at work in every form and phase. In one of the many suggestive notes with which these volumes abound, it is truly pointed out that, by collating certain original passages in the Journal with the revised passages as they appear in *The Week* or in *Walden,* the reader will find it instructive "to see the conditions under which the matter was first written, and observe the alterations made in adapting the particular to the general and giving the substance a more perfect literary form."

Next to the inclusion of the Journals, the chief distinction of the "Walden" *Thoreau* is its illustrations. Now it is evident that in no case are illustrations so important as in the works of a writer whose life is closely associated with one particular district; and how deeply Thoreau's affections were interwoven with the woods and

streams and fields of his beloved Concord is known to all—indeed, it has been said that "the village of Concord is his monument, covered with suitable inscriptions by himself." For this reason it was especially to be desired that, before the face of the country was greatly changed, the scenes which Thoreau held so dear should be preserved in picture; and in this respect, no less than in the matter of his Journal, we have cause to be thankful, for in Mr. Herbert Gleason the ideal photographer for the purpose seems to have been found, who has made a careful study of Thoreau's writings and identified most of the places described by him not only in the neighborhood of Concord but in his more distant excursions to the Merrimack River, the Maine Woods, and Cape Cod. Of the hundred excellent illustrations reproduced from these photographs, the best, perhaps, are those of the Maine Woods, but all have necessarily a very real interest for the lover of Thoreau, who now at last finds his favorite author enshrined in a worthy form.[2]

In face of this fact, this solid fact, that Thoreau is now a classic in twenty volumes, one cannot but smile at the apprehension still expressed, on this side of the Atlantic, as to the permanence of his fame. Here is Mr. Arthur Rickett, for instance, in his recent book, *The Vagabond in Literature*, gravely reminding us that "there is no denying that the trend of modern criticism has been against him," and that the judgment of Lowell and Stevenson is "not to be lightly ignored." Well, not lightly perhaps; but that it *is* being ignored is beyond doubt. If the trend of modern criticism were against Thoreau (and this is not wholly the case), it would be the worse for modern criticism, for the gradual public recognition of a great writer pays but slight heed to such obstacles; but the truth is that in this country there has been little criticism of Thoreau worthy of the name, and still less serious study, on the critics' part, of the considerable mass of Thoreau literature. Our literary folk have been mostly content to view him through that one very distorted pane in *My Study Windows*, and are unaware of Lowell's earlier and far more appreciative essay, written before the two men had quarrelled, and Thoreau had wounded Lowell's "self-consciousness," as Emerson expressed it, beyond forgiveness;[3] still less have they knowledge of the more important article contributed by John Weiss, a class-mate of Thoreau, to the *Christian Examiner* in 1865, perhaps the very best and most illuminative of such reminiscences. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that with the exception of *Walden*, the *Week*, and a few of the shorter essays, Thoreau's works are unknown to English readers; witness the fact that to this day there is no English edition of his *Cape Cod*, a book which from every point of view is one of his masterpieces. Moreover, Thoreau has always been, and perhaps will always be, a cause of trouble to the "critics"—to those self-constituted advisers who, both in his lifetime and afterwards, have pointed out the errors of his ways. What else is the purport of that characteristic poem of his, "My Prayer," in which, after his first petition that he may not disappoint *himself*, he makes supplication as follows:—

[2] It should in fairness be mentioned that Mr. Alfred W. Hosmer, who died at Concord three years ago, was a worthy predecessor of Mr. Gleason as a photographer of Thoreau's haunts. Mr. Hosmer was a man who followed in Thoreau's footsteps both literally and metaphorically, and was himself the best possible proof of the nobility of Thoreau's influence. It was from his photographs that most of the illustrations were taken in the edition of "Walden" issued by Messrs. Houghton and Mifflin in two volumes in 1897. I may add that there is also a very charming edition of "Cape Cod" (1896), illustrated with marginal sketches in color by Amelia M. Watson. Altogether Thoreau has been fortunate to his artists.

[3] This essay, not reprinted among Lowell's collected writings, was published in the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* in 1849.

And next in value, which Thy kindness lends,
That I may greatly disappoint my friends;
Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,
They may not dream how Thou'st distinguished me.

Having regard to much that has been written about Thoreau's character and opinions, I think we may safely say that this portion of his Prayer has, as far as his literary censors are concerned, received very ample fulfilment. For the prevalent mistake which the critics have made concerning Thoreau has been the attempt to measure and classify and label him by some other standard than his own, "the complaint," as his friend Weiss expressed it, "that he was not somebody else." When, for example, Mr. Rickett, in his desire to portray Thoreau as one of his "Vagabonds in Literature," praises his intimacy with wild nature, but blames his tendency to "moralizing," he forgets that the author of *Walden*, whatever traits of vagabondage may be proved in him, was a good deal *more* than a "vagabond," unless, indeed, that word be used in a highly transcendental sense. Again, Mr. Watts-Dunton, in his Introduction to a recent edition of *Walden*, seems to be one of those friends who are disappointed in Thoreau; and certainly his own disquisition on "Thoreau and Children of the Open Air," must have caused some disappointment to all who believe that a preface to a good book should be as a setting to a gem, or as a frame to a picture—harmonious in tone, and subordinate to the subject of which it treats.[4] Mr. Watts-Dunton complains sadly that Thoreau was "self-conscious," that he talked of "experience," was "touched by the modern dry-rot of education," and was "guilty of the impertinence of symbolizing Nature." Was he then "a *veritable* Child of the Open Air"? The question is a rather futile one, since the answer must depend on how the terms are defined, and on that point there is no agreement. It is beyond question that Thoreau loved Nature as few men have done, else why did he spend the greater part of his life with her? It is equally certain that he was much more than a nature-lover pure and simple, such as George Borrow. Need we then repine that Thoreau was not Borrow, or that Borrow was not Thoreau? Is it not wiser to enjoy both of them for what they are worth? "A great deal of criticism," as Weiss remarked in his essay on Thoreau, "is inspired by inability to perceive the function and predestined quality of the man who passes in review. It only succeeds in explaining the difference between him and the critic. Such a decided fact as a man of genius is, ought to be gratefully accepted and interpreted." The sum of the matter is contained in Thoreau's own remark: "We are constantly invited to be what we are."

[4] *Per contra*, I would refer to Mr. Richard Whiteing's introduction to another of the now numerous "Waldens" as an almost perfect specimen of what a preface should be.

It was, of course, inevitable that so eccentric and uncompromising a nature as Thoreau's should be misunderstood by the majority of his kinsmen and acquaintances. What could the respectable folk of a New England village make of their strange townsman who described himself as follows?

I am a schoolmaster, a private tutor, a surveyor, a gardener, a farmer, a painter (I mean a house-painter), a carpenter, a mason, a day-laborer, a pencil-maker, a glass paper maker, a writer, and sometimes a poetaster. My present employment is to answer such orders as may be expected from so general an advertisement as the above. That is, if I think fit, which is not always the case, for I have found out a

way to live without what is commonly called employment or industry, attractive or otherwise. Indeed, my steadiest employment, if such it can be called, is to keep myself at the top of my condition, and ready for whatever may turn up in heaven or on earth.

As we know him now, we see in this statement an admirable description of Thoreau's genius; but to his contemporaries, with a very few exceptions, it must have seemed to be a mere wilful aberration. We recall, for example, an occasion, recorded in the Journal, when Thoreau's father, that practical, unobtrusive old man, made protest against his son's waste of time, as he considered it, in making sugar in a neighboring maple-wood, when he could have obtained it more cheaply in Concord, and received for answer that this occupation, far from "taking him from his studies," *was* his study—he felt, after it, "as if he had been to a university." In like manner even Emerson complained that Thoreau, lacking ambition, "instead of engineering for all America, was the captain of a huckleberry party"; while Lowell, less sympathetic and less scrupulous, misrepresented the Walden episode as an attempt at "an entire independency of mankind." But such misapprehensions, inevitable once, are less pardonable now, after an interval of fifty years, during which time the fuller publication of Thoreau's works has corrected the earlier impressions of him, and has shown him in a clearer light to those who desire to understand him. We can see now that, as an original thinker and idealist, he *did* "engineer for all America," in a sense other than that which Emerson intended—that he built for his countrymen, and for us, a priceless viaduct of thought, to lead us on from the sophisms and falsities of a too complex civilization to a simpler and happier mode of living.

The process of this recognition of Thoreau has been a slow but sure one. As in the case of every great writer who has had a message to deliver, it was as artist that he first won unwilling homage from those who detested his creed. "With every exception," said Lowell, the most hostile of his critics, "there is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind that is comparable with it in degree. 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 crystallized."

This may stand as an expression of the best literary judgment on Thoreau for the past quarter-century; and in the wake of this frank appreciation of the stylist there has been growing up the slower but not less certain appreciation of the man. It has taken fifty years to do it, but we are at last beginning to get rid of certain false notions concerning Thoreau by which the minds of his readers have been obsessed—notably the stubborn conviction that he was a mere disciple and imitator of Emerson, whereas in fact, though deeply indebted to Emerson in his youth, his mature intellect was wholly independent and self-centred. Again, what was from the first grasped by the few is now being recognized by the many, that a live book such as *Walden* cannot have been written by a "skulker" (such was Stevenson's term), or by a misanthrope, or a "stoico-epicurean adiaphorist," as a Scotch professor, who so far forgot himself as to attempt to analyze Thoreau, has learnedly described him.[5] The fiction of a selfish, indifferent, or even misanthropic Thoreau, so studiously cultivated by some of his critics, is shattered by a knowledge of the noble part which he played as an abolitionist—as *the* abolitionist who spoke the first pub-

[5] Professor John Nichol, in his "American Literature" (1882).

lic word on behalf of the imprisoned John Brown at that supreme crisis. ("Was it Thoreau or Lowell," asks Wentworth Higginson, "who found a voice, before the curtain fell, after the first act of that drama, upon the scaffold of John Brown?") Nor can the fiction of a hard, stoical Thoreau, for which Emerson himself is largely responsible, inasmuch as it was by his too partial editing of the *Letters* and *Poems* that the excessive idea of Thoreau's "stoicism" was generated and fostered, survive a reading of the delightful *Familiar Letters*, first edited by Mr. F. B. Sanborn in 1894, and now reprinted with enlargement in the *Walden* edition, or of many human glimpses in the Journal.

Why is it, then, that Thoreau the thinker is still knocking at the gate where Thoreau the writer has been admitted? Plainly, because the message brought by him was in some respects a disturbing one, and unwelcome to the majority of those who heard it; because his philosophy makes too severe a demand on the consciences of his readers. For Thoreau is not a naturalist only, like White or Waterton, nor a simple child of nature like Borrow; but he is, as his friend and biographer, Channing, so aptly named him, a "poet-naturalist," one who sees nature through the medium of human aspirations. "Nature," says Thoreau, "must be viewed humanly to be viewed at all; that is, her scenes must be associated with humane affections." Nor is this inconsistent, as might at first be thought, with the belief elsewhere expressed by him that man is not the sole object of concern to nature and the universe; for it has to be remembered that the "human" element was regarded by Thoreau as a property not of mankind alone, but also of the lower races and of nature which is the parent of all. "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth?" he asks. "Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" The foxes appeared to him as "rudimental burrowing men, still standing on their defence, awaiting their transformation," and it was the human traits of the dog, the horse, and even of the wild moose of the Maine forests, that led him to the belief that there is a civilization going on among animals as among men.

It is curious that while it is made a fault in Thoreau that he attempted thus to "humanize" nature, the contrary charge is also levelled at him, that in his pre-occupation with the wild, he overlooked the interests of his fellow-men. Had he, indeed, left his fellow-men out of his books, and written only of the woodchucks or the snapping-turtles, it is conceivable that he might have even known what it is to be "popular," which he declared (but on insufficient personal experience) is "to go down perpendicularly." How greatly it retards the reputation of a nature-writer to be suspected of having designs on the intelligence of his readers may be seen from the parallel case of Richard Jefferies, who in his earlier period was a naturalist, a poet-naturalist in his later. Why was it that so essentially second-rate a book as Jefferies' "Gamekeeper at Home" was popular and successful, while the wonderful "Story of my Heart" had to be sold off at sixpence a copy? Simply because the "Story" was weighted with subversive "ideas," while the "Gamekeeper" was pleasantly devoid of any such perilous cargo. It is safe to say that had all Jefferies' works been on the same lines as his "Story," his name would be far less known than it is to-day. It was Thoreau's misfortune, or good fortune, that he did not, like Jefferies, publish any successful *juvenilia*, with style enough to attract, and without brain enough to repel, the taste of the "general reader"; else we might have seen

him, as we see Jefferies, surviving by the fame of his inferior works, and almost damned by his masterpieces. As it is, we have had to accept or reject Thoreau on the ground chosen by himself, and after fifty years of hesitation it would seem that we are deciding to accept him.

What, then, are the "ideas" for which Thoreau stands in American literature? It is difficult to express them in a word, for if we say "simplicity"—the word which perhaps most nearly comprehends his views—there is a danger that it will be taken, as it often is, to imply a *mere* simplification of living. "To what end," he asks in one of his letters, "do I lead a simple life at all? That I may teach others to simplify their lives, and so all our lives be *simplified* merely, like an algebraic formula? Or not, rather, that I may make use of the ground I have cleared, to live more worthily and profitably?" The intention of "prescribing rules" was expressly disavowed by him; it was not his wish to induce the luxuriously-minded to abandon their luxuries, but rather to spur the sluggish minds to think for themselves, and so to follow their own personal tastes instead of the traditional prejudice. Individuality of judgment lies at the very root of his simplification. His intensely alert and thrifty nature, barbed with keenest insight into the sophistries of custom, led him to the simple life (if we may still use that much-maligned term) of which he was the chief modern exponent—a very different life, be it observed, from the fashionable easy-going "simplicity" which a popular writer has commended as "a state of mind," and as demanding "no external characteristics." [6] In Thoreau's creed, the natural life is to be *lived* as well as eulogized; and, as it is here that he comes to grips with conventional habit as no other writer has done, it is not surprising that on this point he has been most persistently misapprehended.

"It is a very shallow view," says Lowell, "that affirms trees and rocks to be healthy, and cannot see that men in communities are just as true to the laws of their organization." But what Thoreau condemned was not, of course, the mere congregating of men in communities, but the diseases, mental and physical, that result therefrom; his real object was to restore a just balance between the exaggerated claims of society and the neglected claims of nature. "Living much out of doors," he says, "will no doubt produce a certain roughness of character, as staying in the house, on the other hand, may produce a softness and smoothness, not to say thinness, of skin, accompanied by an increased sensibility to certain impressions. *No doubt it is a nice matter to proportion rightly the thick and thin skin.*" These are hardly the words of the bigoted advocate of savagery which Thoreau's critics would represent him.

To dwell upon the sincerity of Thoreau might be deemed an impertinence, for this quality, to those who sympathize with him, is written unmistakably on his every page; yet even so genial a writer as Mr. A. C. Benson has lately referred to him as the most conspicuous instance in literature of the desire "to stimulate the curiosity of others." As Lowell, regarding Thoreau through his *Study Windows*, saw but a misguided fanatic, so Mr. Benson, gazing westward from *A College Window*, sees in him "a rugged, sunbrowned, slovenly, solemn person," who was for ever looking at himself in the glass and describing to others what he saw there. The moral would seem to be: Let the critics cease to view Thoreau through study windows or college windows; but leaving their academic prejudices behind, let them go

[6] "The Simple Life," by Charles Wagner.

forth and read him in the open air where his own thoughts were ripened and recorded; and then, perhaps, they will find in him, as it is said that some of his contemporaries did, "the man they were in search of, the man of men, who could tell them all they should do." For, after all, the final test in Thoreau's case is that of character. When we remember the wonderful strength of the impression left by his personality on those who knew him most closely—on such friends as Emerson, Alcott, Channing, Ricketson, Blake, Higginson, and Sanborn—there is surely much significance in this entire agreement of many diverse witnesses, each of whom pays independent homage to his nobility. He had a rare magnetism which could influence not only those around him, but a later generation of readers, among whom a common love for Thoreau has often become a link of personal friendship (as the present writer has reason to remember with gratitude) between lives that were otherwise far apart. It was he who, more than any other modern thinker, realized in his own person the truth of Sir Henry Wotton's lines:

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all.

We are too apt, I think, in tracing an author's reputation, to look only at the literary landmarks, and to single out the chief criticisms, favorable or adverse, as having made or marred a career. In Thoreau's case, while it is true that the least friendly of his reviewers, having the ear of the public, were able to give fuller currency to the gross misunderstanding of him, and perhaps to make it seem even more widespread than it was, there have also been from the first a number of thoughtful quiet readers, often men of lowly rank and themselves workers with their hands, to whom the author of *Walden* has been a reality, not a mere subject of debate; and the sure instinct of such people is in the long run a truer guide and a more powerful influence than any critical verdict. In so far as genius can be aided from without, it is in the main by admirers such as these that Thoreau's fame has been secured. There are instances on record of working-men who have found in his books a revelation, and of humble students who have been affected by the story of his death as by a great personal grief; and, to my mind, it is in this power of getting at the hearts of his readers that the supreme proof of Thoreau's greatness is to be sought.

A few years ago, for example, there was printed in Detroit a little volume named *Pertaining to Thoreau*, a collection of some of the less accessible contemporary notices of his works, and the type of this little book was set up, after business hours, by a working printer, who had conceived the idea of thus rendering a service to Thoreau's memory. No fitter or more perfect tribute could have been devised; and who that understands Thoreau will doubt that he, above all men, would have treasured it? Such an incident reminds us of a passage in his Journal, in which, perhaps, more than elsewhere, the deep tenderness which underlay his rugged exterior is revealed. "My greatest skill," he wrote, "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.*"

To miss this undertone in Thoreau is to miss the chief clue to his subtle and elusive temperament; and many of his critics have missed it. I have been told that when his friend, Ellery Channing, who outlived him by forty years, was asked in his old age if he had read

some fretful criticism of Thoreau, he replied shortly: "I *knew* him." And such, in substance, must always be our answer to those who misinterpret the message, and belittle the genius of this great prophet of Simplicity. We know him.

Henry S. Salt.

The Fortnightly Review.

JOHN DELANE. *

If, in the middle days of the last century, you had seen the figure of a certain tall young man, ruddy of complexion and powerful of build, you might have foretold a dozen successful careers for him, as squire, lawyer, or man of business, but perhaps you would not have fitted him at once with his indubitable calling. That spark of genius, for surely it was not less, flashed in the brain of John Walter, proprietor of the "Times," when he saw the second son of a neighbor of his in the country riding to hounds or conducting a successful election on his behalf. John Thadeus Delane went to Oxford and distinguished himself there rather as a bold rider—"Mr. Delane is part and parcel of his horse," wrote his tutor—a tennis-player, or a boxer (for the hot Irish blood in him would rise) than as a nice scholar or a mathematician. His letters to his friend George Dasent show him something of a Philistine, with a command of vigorous and wholesome English, lending itself happily to such casual remarks as those he had to make about his studies and his sports. He did not know, for instance, "how I am to cram a sufficient store of divinity into my head. As the premises will only be occupied a short time with the last-named commodity, the trouble of storing it should be slight. [I must] try to secure a patent safety vehicle. . : . This is a most glorious country—capital people, excellent horses, prime feeding, and very fair shooting." Such is the slang of the 'forties, which, with its comfortable lapse from the dignity of contemporary prose, reveals a young man lazily conscious of his power, with a capacity for shooting words straight if need be, and for distorting them at will, which is the despair of lady novelists who seek to reproduce it.

Directly he had taken his degree, in 1840, he went to Printing-house Square, and was occupied with various duties about the paper. Little is said of their nature, or of the way in which he discharged them, for he had now entered that unnamed world which is crowded but unchecked; there are duties which belong to no profession, nor are the limits of work bounded so long as the brain urges on. He made himself familiar with the House of Commons, we are told, "summarizing the remarks of the principal speakers." We must imagine how swiftly he took the measure of the world around him, gauging silently the capacity of his machine for reporting and perhaps for directing the turmoil. A year later, at any rate, when Mr. Barnes, the editor, died, Mr. Walter had no hesitation in choosing "the youngest member of all the staff," whose age was then twenty-three, to succeed him. Sense and industry and ability were his, but the easy margin of strength, as of a loosely fitting coat, which may be detected in his Oxford letters, marked him, to a discriminating eye, as the man who would put forth greater power than he had yet shown, with a competent tool in his hand, or would so weld himself to his instrument that their joint stroke would be

* "The Life and Letters of John Thadeus Delane." By Arthur Irwin Dasent.