

Where led of Heaven, the strong tides come and go,
And storm clouds, rent by thunderbolt and wind,
Leave, free of mist, the permanent stars behind.

“Εἶν δὲ.”

With one strong end in view,
Your daily tasks pursue,—
Let all your actions aim at one fixed goal;
Stern duty ever heed,
Go where her footsteps lead,
And you shall find, as years upon you roll,
That life is made more sweet than words can tell
By choosing pleasures that from duty well.

Chatham, N.B.

THOMAS G. MARQUIS.

“WHAT SHALL WE EAT AND WHEREWITHAL SHALL WE BE CLOTHED?” *

“Rye and Indian meal without yeast, potatoes, rice, very little salt pork, molasses, and salt, and my drink-water,”—these, with beans and green corn of his own raising, answered the first question for a college-bred man who lived in Concord, Massachusetts, some years ago. For covering he had plain home-woven cloth, a straw hat and stout shoes, with how little paraphernalia of white shirt and collar may be inferred from the rest: and for overmost coat a tight house, 10 x 15, built by his own hands for less than \$30. Such in food and raiment was Henry David Thoreau, whose “Walden” describes his two years’ life in the woods near Concord, where he cultivated a plot of ground.

To some the book will be the crazy scribbling of a “crank”—such, dear reader, is our pet name for all men of an earnestness we are not accustomed to. To others it will be a curiosity only because people have talked about it; and of them it will be duly understood in the fashion to be expected. But there are yet others, who will see in it the strivings of a man to get to the heart of things—to his own heart above all, and keep it clean, and they will love him the more they understand him. To an honest student it will be encouragement, and may be a light in the place he most needs it, not simply because it proves how few physical needs a man has, if he has resources within; but, furthermore, because it must help him to see that the only properly wise life is that in which wants, and especially corporeal wants, are contracted by a steady approximation to the limits of the absolutely indispensable. We are far less in danger of Asceticism than of Voluptuousness. Our civilization has more of the Sybarite in it than of the Anchorite; and in these days of pauperism and starvation, of eight-hour movements and strikes, we need a few examples to show how a man may live on 27 cents a day plus what he produces on less than an acre of ordinary soil. There is then really no absolute need of so much as the “three acres and a cow.”

And there have been a few men in the world who have kindly demonstrated the thing to us in one way or another;—a certain Diogenes, and one Socrates too will be counted among them, if history may be trusted. In our own day no one has preached it louder or longer than Ruskin, who, in this matter at least, knows whereof he affirms, and even has founded a guild to help practice it.

“Walden” is no new book. It was written by a man who died in 1862 at forty-five, but it can scarcely be called well-known. An English edition, with a preface by W. H. Dircks, can now be had for a shilling in “Camelot Classics,” the most beautiful of all the cheap series so far. One may hope for some help in taking up this little story of the plainest living and the highest thinking.

* “Thoreau,” London: Walter Scott, Toronto; Williamson & Co.

SIGNS AND SEASONS. (1)

“To him who, in the love of Nature, holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language.”

Bryant’s “Thanatopsis” embodies the scholar’s admiration for nature in chaste intellectual language directed towards the expression of the poet’s idyllic conception of her beauty and meaning. Burroughs’ “Signs and Seasons” speaks out the rough-hewn language of nature, and breathes her inherent grace and tenderness, with a fidelity that discovers her true disciple, and with an unstudied charm that is peculiarly her own. Bryant looked at nature as if to discover what was poetical in her; he read delicious and divine poetry into nature. Burroughs, turning up the fragrant sod, as it were, reveals unconsciously this ever-present characteristic. He walks the fields and meadows, and speaks with the knowledge and sympathy of an intimate friend. Herein lies the difference between the two.

Perhaps a sentence or two from Burroughs may serve to indicate the difference between him and Bryant. In his chapter on “A Salt Breeze,” speaking of the poet’s treatment of the sea, he says:

“Bryant’s hymn to the sea is noble and stately, but it is only his forest hymn shifted to the shore. . . . It has no marine quality or atmosphere. . . . The poet wings his lofty flight above sea and shore alike.”

The last sentence expresses the difference exactly,—“The poet wings his lofty flight above sea and shore alike.” He treats nature ideally, whereas Burroughs takes nature as it is, and reads her secrets for us, catching that indescribable something which imparts such a tonic to her sea breezes and such a raciness to her soil.

“Signs and Seasons” is the seventh of Mr. Burroughs’ delightful little out-door books. It is a series of sketches of Nature in her various moods; a happy combination of poetry, romance and truth. It is filled with a genuine love of fields and meadows, and birds and flowers. In these days, when a premium seems to be placed on artificiality and conventionality, it is a veritable revelation. To the dweller in the heat and noise of the modern city, the book comes as a refreshing April shower, and is like the shadow of a rock in a weary land. It breathes the air of the primeval forest, it sparkles with the cool crystal of the mountain streamlet, and seems to bathe one in the glorious sunlight that brings life and refreshment to the weary and expectant earth.

ORION AND OTHER POEMS. (2)

It is announced that Messrs. Dawson, of Montreal, will shortly issue a volume of nature sketches in prose and verse by Mr. Charles G. D. Roberts. They will open with the fresh and graphic poem “Birch and Paddle,” which appeared a few months since in our columns, and from this poem the book will take its title. Those who read Mr. Roberts’ entertaining sketches on “Old Acadia,” in the *Current*, will look forward with interest to the appearance of the new volume.

This seems to us a fitting time to refer to Mr. Roberts’ earlier writings. “Orion and Other Poems” has gained for its author a reputation much beyond the provincial. The pure imagination, the delicacy and scholarly grace which he displays there have won for him in certain literary circles of Boston the designation of the American Keats. But Mr. Roberts is a Canadian, born in this country and living here, and we do not propose to surrender him to his American admirers. The poetic power and skill of versifica-

(1) “Signs and Seasons.” By John Burroughs. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Toronto: Williamson & Co.

(2) “Orion and Other Poems,” by Charles G. D. Roberts. Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co.