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HENRY DAVID THOREAU*

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THOUGH thirty years have passed away since Henry Thoreau died, his books are still largely read. New editions are constantly called for, and since his death we have been favored with four posthumous volumes, in the shape of extracts from his journals. The last of the series, entitled "Autumn," has only recently appeared, and, like its predecessors, "Spring," "Summer" and "Winter," it contains much of the author's personality, and is, in a word, autobiographical. In 1877, I published a tract on the writings of Emerson, in which, by the way, there were some allusions to Thoreau, which the Seer of Concord felt were not altogether just. He wrote me that the estimate which I had formed of his friend pained him, and he added :

"Thoreau was a superior genius. I read his books and manuscripts always with new surprise at the range of his topics, and the novelty and depth of his thought. A man of

large reading, of quick perception, of great practical courage and ability,—who grew greater every day, and, had his short life been prolonged, would have found few equals to the power and wealth of his mind. By the death recently, in Bangor, Maine, of his sister, Miss Sophia Thoreau, his manuscripts (which fill a large trunk), have been bequeathed to H. G. O. Blake, Esq., of Worcester, Mass., one of his best friends, and who, I doubt not, will devote himself to the care and publication of some of these treasures."

Four years after this, Mr. Blake began the publication of these manuscripts, the first volume being concerned with Early Spring in Massachusetts. The book at once made its way, and the editor felt encouraged to add the other seasons to the list.

Thoreau was descended from an ancient French family. His father, a maker of lead pencils, emigrated to America, from the Island of Guernsey, early in the present century. Henry was born in Concord, Mass., on the 12th of July, 1817. He went to Harvard University, was graduated there, but failed to take a degree, or earn any especial distinction as a scholar. After leaving college, in company with his brother, he taught school.

*1. Thoreau's Works, including Extracts from his Journals.

2. Excursions by H. D. Thoreau, with biographical sketch by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

3. Thoreau : His Life and Aims ; by H. A. Page. (Dr. A. H. Japp.)

4. Henry D. Thoreau ; by F. B. Sanborn.

5. Thoreau : A Glimpse ; a paper read before the Unity Club, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

6. Thoreau ; by James Russell Lowell.

7. A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson ; by James Elliott Cabot.

8. Transcendentalism in New England ; by Octavius Brooks Frothingham.