

for a talk. Yet, cold as he was to people, he contrived to be happy. "I love my fate to the core," he used to say. Even when he lay dying of that dread disease, consumption, he feebly murmured to one at his bedside: "You ask particularly after my health. I *suppose* I have not many months to live, but, of course, know nothing about it. I may say that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing."

As a writer of books, Thoreau must always occupy an acknowledged place in American letters. He wrote a dozen medium-sized volumes. They show a wealth of observation, some satire, a certain dry humor, much force of character, and a clear insight into human affairs and nature. He wrote pretty much as he talked, thought often while on his feet, and some of the acutest things in his works were composed during the long walks which he took in the country. "The length of his walks uniformly made the length of his writing," as was once said. Some of his writings are rather extravagant in tone, and he measured everything by a rule of his own which recognized Concord as the centre of the universe. A pleasant book of his is *The Week*, which is really a record of a journey along the banks of the Concord and Merrimack rivers, which was taken by the author and his brother in the month of August, 1839. They sailed about in a boat which was built by themselves after a model of their own design, and at night they camped out on the shore. The book is full of their adventures, by land and water, and contains many excellent bits of descriptive writing, strengthened by philosophical dissertations and interesting studies in botany and in literature. *Walden*, which treats of life in the woods in an enjoyable and reflective way, ranks next. It tells the story of Thoreau's own career in the woods, and on that account, as well

as from its value as an authority on certain aspects of New England civilization, it is likely to be oftener read and quoted than any of his other books. *A Yankee in Canada* is worth dipping into, though it does not exhibit Thoreau at his best. He failed to get much of himself into it. Still, it has humor. The author visited Canada in 1850, and the greater part of the journey was made on foot. His luggage consisted of a small parcel, containing a few articles which were indispensable to his comfort on the way. *Excursions*, *The Maine Woods*, *Letters*, *Cape Cod*, and the four volumes of *Journals*, complete the list of Thoreau's writings. He had the feeling and the imagination of the poet, and was familiar with the English singers from Elizabeth's time to the Victorian age. Milton he read with great affection, and, as we have said, a pleasure of his was to translate gems from Simonides, Pindar and Æschylus. One poem of his own, on "Smoke," Emerson said, suggested Simonides, though it was better than any poem of Simonides. Sanborn, Thoreau's biographer, lets us into the secret of his hero's manner as a poet. "It was his habit to compose a couplet or a quatrain, or other short metrical expression, copy it in his journal, and afterward, when these verses had grown to a considerable number, to arrange them in the form of a single piece. This gives to his poems the epigrammatic air which most of them have." But few of his poems remain, most of them having, at Emerson's request, been destroyed.

Since St. Francis of Assisi's time, the animals and fish have had no warmer friend than Thoreau. The fish swam to him at a sign, allowed him to take them from the water, and often they lay in the palm of his hand, as if asleep. Snakes coiled about his legs, and caressed his arms, all the while showing evidence of their affection and friendliness. The woodchucks permitted him to pull them out of