

friend, much against Thoreau's will, paid the tax-bill, and the prisoner was turned out of jail. The friendly act caused much annoyance to the naturalist, and he did not scruple to say so. But there was no help for it. He had spent one day and one night in durance. The experience, we find recorded in his book. He writes:

"As I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use to put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in any way. I saw that if there was a stone wall between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone, of all my townsmen, had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat, and in every compliment, there was a blunder, for they thought that my chief desire was to stand on the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at any person at whom they have a grudge, will abuse his dog."

When he entered the prison, he found his fellow-prisoners enjoying a social chat. Salutations were exchanged between the new-comer and the jail-birds, and soon after this, the turnkey said pleasantly: "Come, boys, it is time to lock up." The men and half-grown lads filed off to their cells, and Thoreau was introduced to his room-mate—"a first-rate fellow and a clever man," as the jailor called him. He appeared to be at home in the place, and kindly pointed out to the hermit the peg on which he might hang his hat. After a while, the two became very friendly with each other, and the man told Thoreau he had been put in the "lock-up" on the charge of burning a barn, but that he was innocent of the deed. "I pumped my fellow-prisoner as dry as I could," says our author, "for fear I should never see him again, but at length he showed

me which was my bed, and left me to blow out the light."

His further impressions are thus detailed:

"It was like travelling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I had never heard the town clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village, for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was to see my native village in the light of the Middle Ages; and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of the old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent village inn—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly inside it. I had never seen its institutions before. * * * * In the morning our breakfasts were put through the hole in the door, in small, oblong, square tin pans, made to fit, and holding a pint of chocolate, with brown bread, and an iron spoon. When they called for the vessels again, I was green enough to return what bread I had left, but my comrade seized it, and said that I should lay that up for a lunch or dinner."

In this light and airy fashion, he goes on, and tells the whole story of his incarceration, and explains, by the way, that there was no particular item in his tax-bill which he had refused to pay. He had never declined to pay the highway tax, because he was as desirous of excelling as a good neighbor, as he was of appearing before the authorities as a bad subject. Next year, the question came up again. Thoreau firmly declined to pay the tax, and the good offices of a friend were called into requisition. The same performance was enacted for some years after this, when, finally, Thoreau, who probably saw that his spirit of independence did not quite harmonize with the line of conduct he was pursuing in the matter, and fearing lest he was becoming in earnest a burden to his friends, ceased to offer resistance to the law, and paid the tax.

If he had lived in England in Hampden's and in Wilkes' time, he would probably have sided with those men in their views. He was an extreme radical, and an uncompromising opponent of every form of government.

He had as much fight in him as Wendell Phillips had in his young and