

and bullying ruffian—none whom you more than feel inclined to soundly kick at parting—are there to mar and intrude on the placid merriment of the hour.—And ye who do look back occasionally on the ‘*Nights*’ of your past lives—say whether moments like these have not been as white spots in the monotonous gloom of existence! And now, on quitting the romanceful truths of reality for the realities of romance, *We* will sink the authoritative plural, sportively assumed without design in fact or circumstance, in humble imitation of those mighty potentates among men and over the march of mind—Crowned heads and Newspaper Editors, and speak to the point in *our* own proper person.

From early boyhood up to the present hour—partly from necessity, but more from choice—I have been an inveterate night-wanderer. Night to me has ever brought that portion of existence I have most deeply appreciated, and to which I never cease to look back but with a strange and peculiar satisfaction. Solitude and independence of action I have ever courted and toiled for; and they have been mine, but rarely till the noisy tumult of day, and its thousand and fettering obligations have faded with the setting sun. And in the night season, when animal creation seemed to have vanished from the earth—and all has been silent around—I have indeed felt as though the lovely world in which I breathed was all mine own.

I remember well, while yet a boy, how I have solitarily paddled a canoe a whole night together, without any definite purpose beyond the mere propensity, over and around a small lake in the vicinity of my childhood’s home;—and how many delightful—to me—moonlit, frosty winter’s nights I have rapturously skated for hours and till morning