THE MASTHEADS

READER

THE MASTHEADS

READER

Edited with an Introduction by
Jeffrey Lawrence

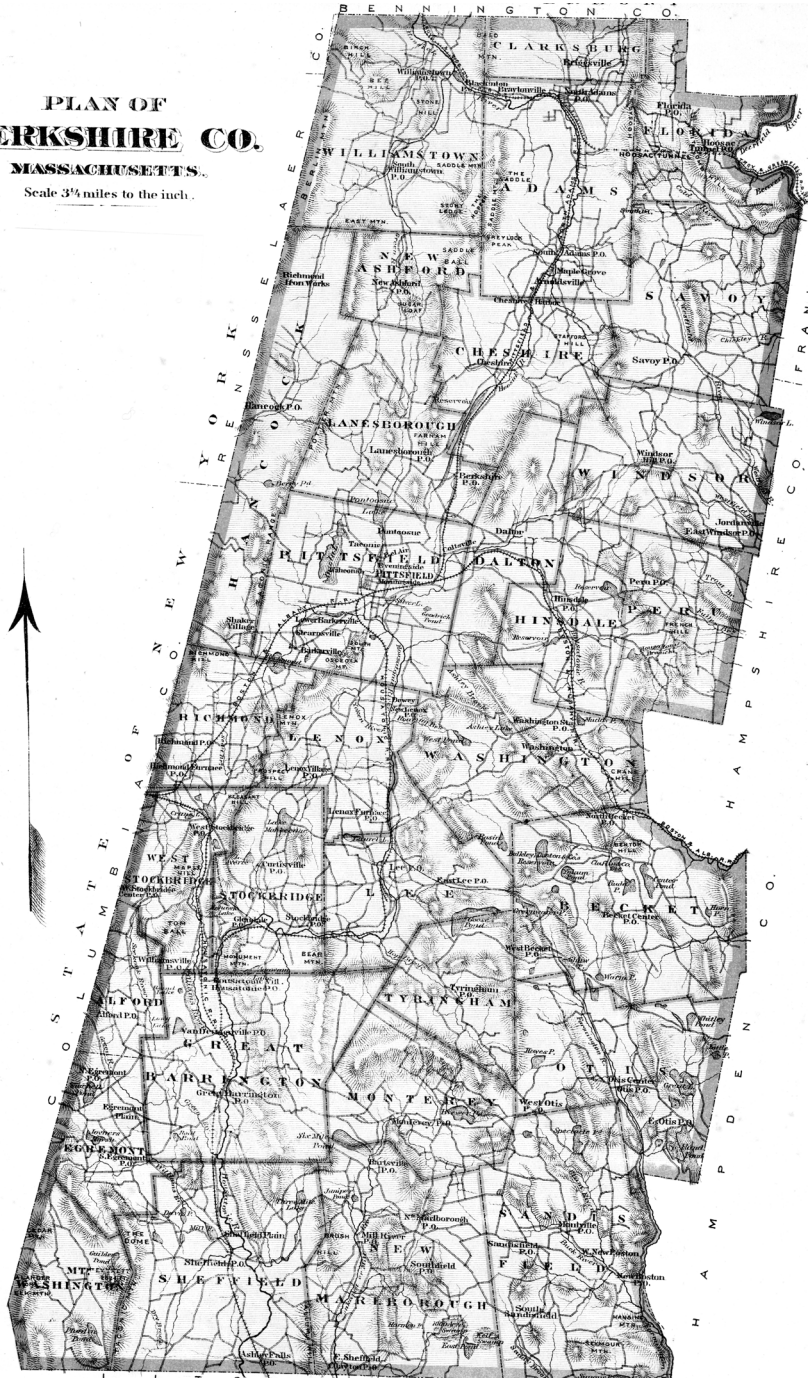
Annotations by
Peter Bergman

Texts by
Herman Melville
Nathaniel Hawthorne
Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Henry David Thoreau

Artwork by
Abraham Lampert

PLAN OF
BERKSHIRE CO.
MASSACHUSETTS.

Scale 3¼ miles to the inch.



TEAM

The City of Pittsfield
Berkshire Historical Society
Berkshire Athenaeum
Mass Audubon Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary
Hotel On North
The Berkshire Eagle
Shakespeare and Co.
Tessa Kelly
Chris Parkinson
Sarah Trudgeon
Jeffrey Lawrence
Aaron Thier
Jordan Brower

PROJECT

The Mastheads is a literary and architectural project in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, inspired by the history of American Renaissance authors who produced work in the city in the mid-19th century. Beginning in July 2017, the Mastheads will pair five contemporary writers with a private studio for a month-long residency, and will host citywide public programming and events.

The mission of The Mastheads is to use Pittsfield's history as a platform to support the imagination and production of new creative work. The physical studio spaces that comprise The Mastheads are architectural interpretations of the original structures in which Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Henry David Thoreau, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. wrote while in Pittsfield.

CONTENTS

The Past in the Present:
Pittsfield's 19th Century Literary Legacy

Jeffrey Lawrence

One of the enduring ironies of our cultural history is that the most important event of nineteenth-century American literature was the twentieth-century recovery of Herman Melville's 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*. You may have heard some version of the story, as it has long since passed into popular lore. When Melville died in 1891, most of his books were out of print. Having initially found success as the author of South Seas travel narratives, he gave up writing novels after the disastrous public reception of *Moby-Dick, Pierre, Israel Potter*, and *The Confidence Man*, all composed in Pittsfield in the 1850s. In a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, his Berkshire neighbor during the time he was finishing *Moby-Dick*, Melville famously complained, "What I feel most moved to write, that is banned [...]. Yet, altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches" (Melville, *Correspondence*, 191). As if fate itself wished to seal the terms of this failure, Melville's publisher's warehouse burned down in 1853, destroying the remaining copies of the novel and the possibility that it might reach new readers during the author's lifetime. By the turn of the twentieth century, *Moby-Dick* was largely dismissed as a historical curiosity, when even read at all. In 1907, Joseph Conrad, the other great modern storyteller of the sea, disparaged it "as a rather strained rhapsody with whaling for a subject and not a single sincere line in the 3 vols of it" (408). Yet somehow, over the course of the next thirty years, writers, critics, and scholars came to

regard this tale of an elusive white whale and the maniac who pursues it as an indisputable American classic.

How did such a sea change in cultural sensibility occur? It's tempting to attribute the "Melville Revival" of the early twentieth century to the sheer genius of *Moby-Dick*, to imagine that the book simply rose from the depths of literary obscurity like the great whale itself, unbidden and unexpected. Yet the truth is that it took the critical and creative work of several generations for *Moby-Dick* to resurface. The early twentieth-century scholars and writers who restored Melville to popular esteem—among them literary critic Carl Van Doren, biographer Raymond Weaver, literary executor Elizabeth Melville Metcalf, and English novelist D.H. Lawrence—were part of a decades-long endeavor to sound the depths of U.S. literary history in search of a "usable past." They turned to *Moby-Dick* not only because they considered it great, but also because they considered it *useful*. It was useful because it offered evidence that an American author had achieved a work of the same scope and magnitude as the sprawling European novels of the nineteenth century. And it was useful because it could motivate twentieth-century American authors to attempt something similar.

Each subsequent generation of readers has refashioned Melville and his book to fulfill the needs of the present. After World War I, the standard assessment of *Moby-Dick* as a "failed" novel gave way to an interpretation of the book as an allegory of the failings—and the promises—of a United States verging on the status of world power. Lawrence in particular stressed the symbolic weight of Ahab's whaler the *Pequod*, which he dubbed the "ship of the American soul" (137). In the early 1940s, F.O. Matthiessen inaugurated a tradition of reading Ahab as a kind of proto-fascist, whose "ungodly god-like" characteristics bore a striking resemblance to those of Hitler and Mussolini (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 78). And as Melville biographer Andrew Delbanco has observed, since the end of World War II "there has been a steady stream of new Melvilles, all of whom seem somehow able to keep up with the preoccupations of

the moment: myth-and-symbol Melville, countercultural Melville, anti-war Melville, environmentalist Melville, gay or bisexual Melville, multi-cultural Melville, global Melville" (12-13).

This story of how the United States "lost" and then "found" the works of Herman Melville bears directly on the aims of The Mastheads. The goal of the project is to contribute to the Pittsfield of today by critically and creatively engaging with its nineteenth-century literary legacy. The Mastheads motto, "We must add to our heritage or lose it" (borrowed from George Orwell), serves as both a present injunction and a thesis about the past. As the Melville saga suggests, the construction of cultural traditions is always provisional, incomplete, and ongoing. It is less a question of *whether* this inheritance will change than *how* and *what* this change will be. We hope that The Mastheads reader will encourage Berkshire residents and visitors alike to revisit—and yes, reinvent—the writings of mid-nineteenth century Pittsfield authors. To this end, we have included one text produced in and about Pittsfield by each of the project's historical authors: Melville, Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and Henry David Thoreau. We have also reproduced several letters from Melville to Hawthorne that shed light on their friendship and the composition of *Moby-Dick*. Melville looms largest in this reader because he lived in Pittsfield longer than any of the other writers—he spent most of the period from 1850 to 1863 in the "Arrowhead" farmhouse that still stands today—and because he produced the most evocative literary representations of the area. Yet the inclusion of texts by the city's other occasional inhabitants underscores another dimension of The Mastheads project: the desire to reintegrate the Berkshires in general—and Pittsfield in particular—into a broader narrative about the development of American literature before the Civil War. Putting Pittsfield at the center of the project's literary map helps us to better perceive the city's place in the rapidly expanding cultural network of the antebellum United States.

Let's take the legendary encounter between Melville and Haw-

thorne as a starting point for tracing that network. The two men met on August 5th, 1850 during a group hike up Monument Mountain in the company of Evert Duyckinck, Cornelius Mathews, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and James T. Fields. Literary scholars typically mark the day as the beginning of Melville and Hawthorne's intense intellectual bond. Shortly after the outing, Melville moved from New York City to Pittsfield partly to be close to Hawthorne, who had relocated to Lenox from his native Salem a few months before. They visited each other often over the next two years, and Melville ended up dedicating *Moby-Dick* to Hawthorne "in token of my admiration for his genius" (he would dedicate his next novel to his favorite neighbor to the north, Mt. Greylock). But the gathering was also significant for the other metropolitan cultural figures it brought into contact. Duyckinck was the editor of the upstart *The Literary World* and a major player in the New York Democratic Party. Along with Mathews, he helped to inaugurate the Young America movement that drew Hawthorne, Melville, and Walt Whitman into its orbit. Holmes, the Boston poet and essayist who had established his summer residence in Pittsfield two years before, also made the trip. They were joined by Hawthorne and the Boston-based Fields, who had recently brought out *The Scarlet Letter* and was to become the most prominent U.S. publisher of his day. When this extraordinary group reached the summit in the late afternoon, they recited William Cullen Bryant's eponymous poem about Monument Mountain, composed when he lived in Great Barrington from 1817 to 1823.

All of this is to say that although Melville apparently moved to Pittsfield with the idea of becoming a sort of gentleman farmer ("more gentleman than farmer," in the words of Melville biographer Hershel Parker), he was in fact putting down roots in a region rich in literary associations and increasingly connected to the nation's cosmopolitan channels. The cultural historian Richard Birdsall has referred to mid-nineteenth-century Berkshire as the "American Lake District," drawing a parallel between the mountainous county of Western Massachusetts and

the iconic English rural environment that fostered the two greatest British Romantic poets, William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. Birdsall's phrase has the virtue of correcting the still dominant view that Concord was the furthest outpost of antebellum New England literature. But it also suggests a placidity and isolation to Berkshire life belied by the county's growing immersion in the national (and international) intellectual currents of the mid-nineteenth century.

Melville had a special talent for envisioning the vast expanses of the globe from the confines of his Pittsfield home. By the time he settled into his mansion on the outskirts of the city at the age of thirty-one, he had already seen more of the world than most nineteenth-century Americans witnessed in a lifetime. For much of his childhood, Melville shuttled between New York City, upstate New York, and the Berkshires, where Melville's extended family owned an estate just a mile from his eventual home at Arrowhead. *In Power of Place: Herman Melville in the Berkshires*, Marianna Poutasse reveals how his summertime escapes to Pittsfield as a child instilled a lifelong affection for the area. In 1841, following a brief stint as a schoolteacher in Pittsfield, he set sail from New Bedford on the whaling ship *Acushnet*. Over the next two years, Melville chased whales off the coast of Brazil and in the South Pacific, jumped ship in the Marquesas Islands, and stopped at a series of ports from Lima and Valparaiso in South America to the Hawaiian island of Tahini. These voyages provided the raw material for the highly embellished tales of his early novels *Typee, Omoo, Mardi,* and *White Jacket*, as well as the background for the whaling descriptions in *Moby-Dick*. Even as Melville began to incorporate more domestic themes into his Pittsfield works of the 1850s ("I and My Chimney" is literally about home improvements), he imbued the local landscape with images of the distant locales he had visited. Hawthorne famously suggested that it was Melville's recombinative powers that spawned Moby Dick itself: "On the hither side of Pittsfield sits Herman Melville, shaping out the gigantic conception of his 'White Whale,' while the gigantic shape of Graylock looms upon him

from his study-window" (MR 48).[1] In Hawthorne's telling, Melville's view of Greylock provided him with both a physical model for the South Seas whale (with its "hump like a snow hill") and symbolic inspiration for the "conception" of his gargantuan novel (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 22).

Melville's penchant for divining the far in the near—the global in the local—is central to "The Piazza," the short story included here. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the first-time reader of the story is to make sense of its myriad allusions to other places, peoples, and times. At the level of plot, "The Piazza" is relatively simple. After building a porch (or "piazza") for his farmhouse, the narrator, a Pittsfield man modeled on Melville himself, becomes obsessed by a "golden sparkle" on Mount Greylock that he takes as evidence of a human abode. Riding out to the mountain to investigate, he finds a young woman living in a dilapidated cottage; ironically, she looks back at the man's farmhouse with the same fascination with which he initially eyed the mysterious sparkle. "Oh, if I could but once get to yonder house," the woman laments, "and but look upon whoever the happy being is that lives there!" (MR 44). The story is often taken to be a meditation on relativism, and indeed, the ending does suggest that both the narrator and the Greylock woman idealize the life of the other because of the limits of their particular—and particularly distorted—viewpoints. But the story's Melvillean flavor is also established by the narrator's insistence on filtering his impressions through everything else he has ever seen and read (recall that *Moby-Dick* begins with a list of all of the literary references to the whale from antiquity to the nineteenth century). He likens the Greylock woman to a Tahiti girl, Arrowhead to Mecca, and a rainbow to the Bolivian mines of Potosí. In the Berkshire summer, he remarks, "one is often reminded of the sea [...] the vastness and the lonesomeness are so oceanic, and the silence and the sameness, too, that the first peep of a strange house, rising beyond the trees, is for

---

[1] NB: All subsequent quotations from the Mastheads Reader will be marked with MR followed by the page number.

all the world like spying, on the Barbary coast, an unknown sail" (MR 30-31). His eyes migrate from the scene before him to the vast ocean of his recollection to the classical volumes on his bookshelf. He catches glimpses of Shakespeare all around him ("two sportsmen, crossing a red stubble buck-wheat field, seemed guilty Macbeth and foreboding Banquo") and gleans insights from Spenser and Cervantes (MR 32). The very name of the woman in the cottage (Marianna) invokes a character from *Measure for Measure*, as well as Lord Tennyson's well-known 1830 poem. Indeed, by the last paragraphs of the story, we begin to suspect that the entire Greylock encounter may be a flight of fancy emanating from the narrator's overheated brain. Like so much of Melville's fiction, "The Piazza" evinces the style of a man who had traveled widely, read deeply, and imagined even more.

Before his arrival in Lenox in early 1850, Hawthorne, too, led an itinerant lifestyle, though his journeys had been largely confined to New England. Born in the coastal seaport of Salem to a family whose Puritan roots stretched back far into the colonial era, Hawthorne spent most of his adult life moving from place to place. In the early 1840s, he was one of the original stockholders in the utopian community Brook Farm, and later rented a parsonage in Concord that belonged to the family of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1849, after briefly moving back into his childhood home in Salem, he wrote the historical romance that cemented his reputation, *The Scarlet Letter*. In 1850, still struggling financially, Hawthorne accepted an offer from his friends the Tappans to move with his family into a small red house on their estate on the border between Lenox and Stockbridge. During the eighteen months he lived in the red house, a period in which he made several visits to Arrowhead (spending the night in the barn next to Melville's farmhouse), he wrote the Gothic romance *The House of the Seven Gables* and the children's book *A Wonder-Book For Boys and Girls*.

The House of the Seven Gables takes place in a seaport city that resembles Salem rather than Lenox, but the novel's contrast between

New England's past and present also reflects the rapid changes that Western Massachusetts was undergoing at the time. Like all of the other Mastheads authors, Hawthorne traveled to and from the Berkshires on the Western Railroad, which (as Birdsall notes) began making regular trips across the Berkshire Barrier in 1842. In the most dramatic scene of *The House of Seven Gables*, Hepzibah and Clifford, desperate to escape the deathly airs of their ancestral house, board a locomotive that speeds them "onward like the wind" (571). Midway through their voyage, Clifford begins to wax poetic about the new mode of transportation to a fellow passenger: "These railroads [...] are positively the greatest blessing that the ages have wrought out for us. They give us wings; they annihilate the toil and dust of pilgrimage; they spiritualize travel! Transition being so facile, what can be any man's inducement to tarry in one spot" (575). Of course, those who have read the novel know that Clifford has reasons other than wanderlust to get on the train, and there are hints of irony in his tone. But the broader purpose of the scene is to underscore that the mid-nineteenth-century expansion of the railroad effected an upheaval of worldview as well as a narrowing of distances. In the words of the novel's narrator, who could just as easily be talking of the Berkshires as of Salem, "The spires of meeting-houses seemed set adrift from their foundations; the broad-based hills glided away. Everything was unfixed from its age-long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed in a direction opposite to their own" (572). Adrift from his own foundations while composing *The House of Seven Gables* in Lenox, Hawthorne here dramatizes the lives of those who literally see their social universe being whisked away.

Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book* has a more obviously Berkshire setting, though even in this work regional elements mix freely with borrowed literary sources and far-off worlds. The book's premise is that a young Williams student, the aptly named Eustace Bright, recounts a series of classical myths to a group of children while roving the area around the Tappan estate. Like Melville in "The Piazza," Hawthorne uses *A Wonder-Book* as an occasion to explore how local conditions

stimulate the literary imagination. For instance, Eustace introduces "The Gold Touch" (the story of King Midas) by observing that, within a Lenox dell, the "touch of Autumn had transmuted every one of its green leaves into what resembled the purest gold" (33). The changing natural environment of the Berkshires becomes an allegory of the power of the American imagination to transmute classic stories into contemporary national tales. Like King Midas, who turns everything he touches into gold, the American author possesses the alchemical power to create a new national currency out of the myths of the past. When accused by the professorial Mr. Pringle of "meddling" with the ancients, Eustace indignantly replies, "an old Greek had no more exclusive right to [these myths] than a modern Yankee has. They are the common property of the world, and of all time. The ancient poets remodeled them at pleasure, and held them plastic in their hands; and why should they not be plastic in my hands as well" (91). In Hawthorne, too, we encounter the moral of The Mastheads, that creation necessarily entails recreation.

"Bald-Summit: After the Story," the excerpt from *A Wonder-Book* we have included here, provides contemporary evidence that Berkshire authors recognized themselves as part of a strong, identifiable literary community. From the summit of Bald Mountain, Eustace draws a virtual map of the Berkshire's writers and intellectuals; in addition to The Mastheads authors Melville, Longfellow, and Holmes, he also refers to the historical romancer George P.R. James, the Unitarian clergyman Orville Dewey, and the unnamed Lenox writer Catharine Maria Sedgwick, "our most truthful novelist." The chapter also includes a playful self-portrait of Hawthorne himself: "that silent man, who lives in the old red house, near Tanglewood Avenue" (MR 48). The fraternal metaphor that Hawthorne employs to designate this community—they are all Eustace's "brother-authors"—seeks to recruit these writers of different provenances and persuasions into a common intellectual pursuit. Hawthorne was notoriously shy, and he eventually tired of the Berkshires, as he had of Brook Farm and Concord (both of which received similar literary treat-

ment). But the final chapter of *A Wonder-Book* remains a testament to his effort to create literary community, even if it achieved its fullest form only on the page.

Far more famous in their time than in ours, Pittsfield's two summer residents, the poets Longfellow and Holmes, were a major draw for the city's summer literary colony. Born into an illustrious Massachusetts family, Longfellow was by almost all accounts the most popular American poet of the nineteenth century, exemplifying the measured verse of the Boston area literary group known as the Fireside Poets. An epic poet, esteemed translator, and professor of modern languages (first at Bowdoin, then at Harvard), he first came to Pittsfield during his honeymoon in 1843. His wife's family owned the Elm Knoll home in the city center, and over the next decade he visited the home several times. According to local accounts, the clock that sat in the foyer of Elm Knoll inspired Longfellow's best-known Pittsfield poem, "The Old Clock on the Stairs," and his periodic stays in Pittsfield influenced the writing of his 1849 novel, *Kavanagh, A Tale*, set in the small New England town of Fairmeadow.

Unlike Melville's and Hawthorne's texts, which revel in the specificities of Berkshire topography, Longfellow's Pittsfield works draw a more universal message from country life. In *Kavanagh*, Longfellow enlists one of his characters, Mr. Churchill, to expound his view that "universality" of thought and language should take precedence over national or regional literary aims (Longfellow, *Kavanagh* 84). In response to the novel's Duyckinck-like editor, who advocates "a national literature commensurate with our mountains and our rivers," Churchill insists, "Literature is rather an image of the spiritual world, not the physical... of the internal, rather than the external. Mountains, lakes, and rivers are, after all, only its scenery and decorations, not its substance and its essence." In "The Old Clock on the Stairs," Longfellow uses a traditional rhyme scheme and regular meter to distill an essential truth about time. Although "The Old Clock on the Stairs" alludes to its rural setting—"Somewhat back from the village street/Stands the old-fashioned country-

seat"—the ticking of the "ancient timepiece" prompts a reflection on the basic frailty of human existence. The speaker reminds us that change is inevitable for mortal beings ("All are scattered now and fled/Some are married, some are dead") and that only Time itself ("The horologe of Eternity" embodied by "the old clock on the stair") is immune to this change (MR 55). That the historical Berkshire clock continues to exist—currently housed in the visitor's room of Arrowhead—would seem to confirm Longfellow's insight.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. is perhaps best known today as the father of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the founder of legal realism and the most influential Supreme Court justice of the early twentieth century. Yet he was both a key institution builder and celebrated author in his day, one of the founding sponsors of *The Atlantic Monthly Magazine* in 1857 and the author of the popular book of essays *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. Like Melville, his family had owned property in Pittsfield, and he too visited frequently as a child. In 1843, Holmes inherited the 280-acre property Canoe Meadows, and five years later, he began construction on a summer villa he called "Holmesdale." From 1848 to 1856, he spent "seven blessed summers" of his life at Canoe Meadows, where he produced a variety of essays, speeches, and occasional poems (286).

Holmes's Pittsfield poem included here, "Dedication of The Pittsfield Cemetery," is an extended meditation on death, nature, religion, and the importance of place. It resembles Longfellow's "An Old Clock on the Stairs" not only in its themes but also in its conventional form, the heroic couplets (paired lines of rhyming iambic pentameter) that had long been a staple of English poetry. It also belongs to a venerated New England tradition of the topographical poem, which Lawrence Buell defines as a description of the prospect of a specific regional locale (a mountain, an estate, a town, etc.) "embellished with historical, legendary, moralistic, and sometimes also personal reflections" (285). Holmes's "Dedication" shares with the other poems in this tradition both its power-

ful emphasis on the continuities between the region's past and present ("Here spread the fields that heaped their ripened store/Till the brown arms of Labor held no more" and its stereotypical nostalgia for the displaced Native American population ("The dark-haired maiden loved its grassy dells,/The feathered warrior claimed its wooded swells" (MR 57). One feature that distinguishes it from the more straightforward examples of the genre is the precision with which it captures the vicissitudes of rural life. For instance, a line that begins with a celebration of the munificence of the natural environment, "Here sprang the healing herbs," reverses course midway, leading to the sobering reminder that they "could not save/The hand that reared them from the neighboring grave" (MR 58). The poem ultimately ends on a pious note, with a religious image of God gathering the burial ground's inhabitants into his celestial fold. It's a fitting homage to the city's dead.

The passage from *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* included here, a narrative of Henry David Thoreau's 1844 hike to the top of Mount Greylock, documents the Berkshire impressions of New England's most talented nineteenth-century naturalist. A lifelong resident of Concord, Thoreau is primarily known today for his iconic 1854 individualist manifesto *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. The excerpt detailing the night he spent on Williams College's mountaintop observatory suggests that he may have had this Berkshire trip in mind when he embarked on his famous experiment in solitary living on the edge of Walden Pond. Indeed, the makeshift solutions he finds on top of Greylock for warmth ("as it grew colder towards midnight, I at length encased myself completely in boards" (MR 69) and company ("My only companions were the mice, which came to pick up the crumbs that had been left in those scraps of paper" (MR 69) anticipate similar moments in *Walden*. Thoreau's return trip through the Berkshires also led him to many of the county's most iconic destinations. In *Literary Luminaries of the Berkshires*, Bernard Drew uses Thoreau's diaries along with contemporary accounts to show how the renowned essayist incorporated the

Berkshires into his literary perspective, from his glimpse of a lake near the peak of Bald mountain (the scene of Eustace Bright's mapping of Berkshire's literary community) to his walk by Monument Mountain (the scene of Hawthorne's and Melville's later meeting).

In focusing The Mastheads on this portion of Pittsfield's literary history, we do not claim to offer a comprehensive view of the Berkshire's cultural heritage. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in several other figures that influenced Berkshire's mid-century life, most notably the novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick and the African American preacher and abolitionist Samuel Harrison. As the center of the Lenox-Stockbridge literary circle from the 1820s forward, Sedgwick was in many ways a precursor to The Mastheads authors of the 1850s. In novels such as *A New-England Tale*, *Hope Leslie,* and *The Linwoods*, she explored the area's historical, religious, and cultural development from the colonial period to the early republic. Her work had a particularly strong effect on Hawthorne, who wrote in *A Wonder-Book* that she had "made the scenery and life of Berkshire all her own" (MR 48). Indeed, scholar Lucinda Damon-Bach has argued that Sedgwick's historical fiction about seventeenth-century Puritanism anticipated Hawthorne's own turn to his Puritan past two decades later. The recent reedition of several of Sedgwick's novels have made her work readily available for the first time since the late nineteenth century, and she has emerged as a central author in the contemporary study of American literature of the early republic.

The story of Samuel Harrison, the pastor of Pittsfield's Second Congregational Church for nearly 50 years, offers a very different example of how a Berkshire intellectual entered onto the national stage. After leaving Pittsfield to join the Union army as a chaplain for the famed all-black 54th Regiment in 1863, he issued a formal complaint when he found that the paymaster "refused to pay the men of the regiment the same amount paid to white troops because they were of African descent" (29). This gesture eventually compelled Abraham Lincoln to retroactively grant equal pay to all U.S. soldiers regardless of color. A committed abo-

litionist before the war, Harrison remained a staunch advocate for racial equality after returning to Pittsfield's Second Congregational in 1872. Although Harrison did not produce specifically literary works, his 1874 sermon "Pittsfield Twenty-Five Years Ago" is notable for its accounts of Pittsfield's mid-century African American community and the city's religious and civic institutions. The creation of the Samuel Harrison Society in 2004 and the release of Michael Kirk's 2005 documentary *A Trumpet at the Walls of Jericho: The Untold Story of Samuel Harrison* are two instances of how cultural initiatives of the present are changing our view of the Pittsfield of the past.

Melville's departure from Pittsfield in the early 1860s marked the end of an illustrious period in Berkshire's literary history. But the county, so fertile for the American literary imagination, continued to attract writers and intellectuals over the next century and a half. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Edith Wharton lived in Lenox for several years, and her 1911 novella *Ethan Frome* takes place in a fictional town in the Berkshires (Wharton's actual home, "The Mount," remains a popular tourist destination). The historian, novelist, and social theorist W.E.B. Du Bois grew up in Great Barrington in the late-nineteenth century, and James Weldon Johnson wrote his famed poetry collection *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* in the same town in 1927. Sinclair Lewis, Grace Metalious, Patricia Highsmith, and Norman Mailer are among the many celebrated American novelists who spent time in the Berkshires. The county has also made several cameos in major works of American fiction, including Thomas Pynchon's masterpiece *Gravity's Rainbow*, whose protagonist Tyrone Slothrop comes from a long line of Berkshire Slothrops that made their home in the (fictional) town of Mingeborough. In developing Slothrop's biography, America's most renowned postmodern author rendered sly homage to Hawthorne, who wrote in *The House of the Seven Gables* about Pynchon's real-life ancestors (the "Pyncheon family" from Salem). In a dizzying meeting of fiction and history, a mid-twentieth-century character recalls his family's

Berkshire lineage to allude to a nineteenth-century Berkshire author who fictionalized that character's creator's own New England line. Here's hoping that The Mastheads reader leads you onto a similarly adventurous path into Pittsfield: its history, its literature, and its present—which is to say, what all of us make of it today.

■

Works Cited

Birdsall, Richard. *Berkshire County: A Cultural History*. Yale UP, 1959.

Buell, Lawrence. *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance*. Cambridge UP, 1986.

Conrad, Joseph. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 3, 1903-1907*. Edited by Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, Cambridge UP, 1988.

Damon-Bach, Lucinda. "Inspiration or Competition? Catharine Sedgwick's Influence on Nathaniel Hawthorne." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-32.

Delbanco, Andrew. *Melville: His World and Work*. Vintage Books, 2006.

Drew, Bernard. *Literary Luminaries of the Berkshires: From Herman Melville to Patricia Highsmith*. The History Press, 2015.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*. Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1898.

—*Novels*. The Library of America, 1983.

Harrison, Samuel. *Rev. Samuel Harrison, His Life Story, As Told By Himself*. Privately printed, 1899.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell Sr. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. Phillips, Samson, and Company, 1858.

Lawrence, D.H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Edited by Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen. Cambridge UP, 2003.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *Kavanagh, A Tale*. Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1849.

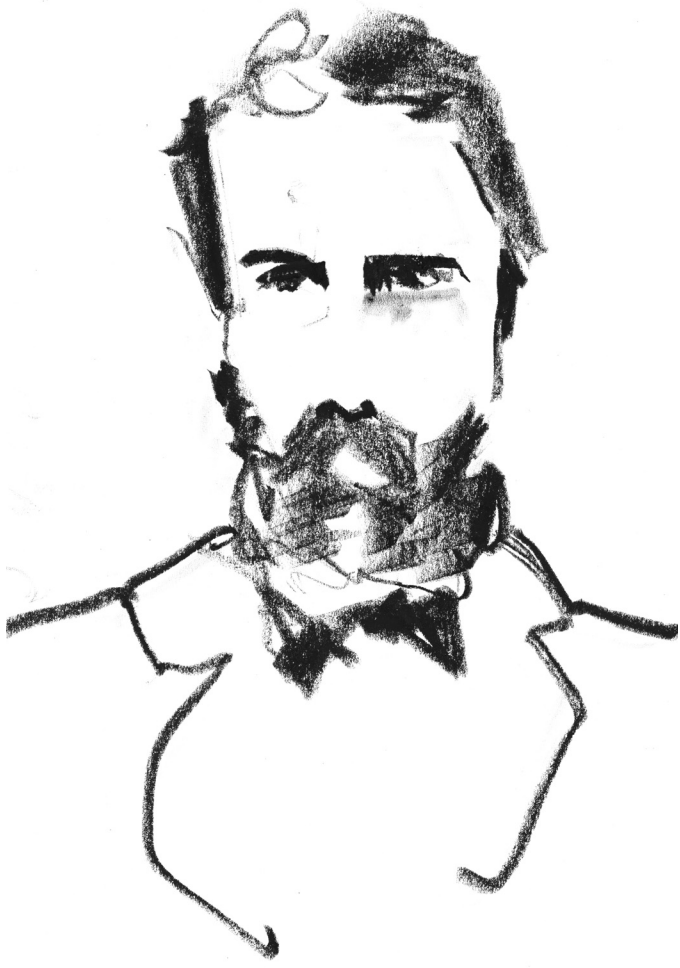
Melville, Herman. *Correspondence*. Edited by Lynn Horth, Northwestern UP and Newberry Library, 1993.

—*Moby-Dick*. Edited by Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford. Norton, 2002.

Parker, Hershel. *Herman Melville: A Biography, Volume 1, 1819-1851*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Poutasse, Marianna. P*ower of Place: Herman Melville in the Berkshires*. Berkshire Historical Society, 2014.

Sedgwick, Catherine Maria. *A New-England Tale*. Penguin Books, 2003.



The Piazza

Herman Melville

"With fairest flowers,
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele --"

When I removed into the country, it was to occupy an old-fashioned farm-house, which had no piazza — a deficiency the more regretted because not only did I like piazzas, as somehow combining the coziness of indoors with the freedom of out-doors, and it is so pleasant to inspect your thermometer there, but the country round about was such a picture, that in berry time no boy climbs hill or crosses vale without coming upon easels planted in every nook, and sun-burnt painters painting there. A very paradise of painters. The circle of the stars cut by the circle of the mountains. At least, so looks it from the house; though, once upon the mountains, no circle of them can you see. Had the site been chosen five rods off, this charmed ring would not have been.

Melville built his piazza on the north side of his house, causing many of his neighbors to regard him as a "crazy" man. The piazza could be used only in warm and sunny weather, they felt, and with this one on the shady side of the house, it seemed a senseless waste to them.

The house is old. Seventy years since, from the heart of the Hearth Stone Hills, they quarried the Kaaba, or Holy Stone, to which, each Thanksgiving, the social pilgrims used to come. So long ago, that, in digging for the foundation, the workmen used both spade and ax, fighting the Troglodytes of those subterranean parts — sturdy roots of a sturdy wood, encamped upon what is now a long land-slide of sleeping meadow, sloping away off from my poppy-bed. Of that knit wood but one survi-

vor stands — an elm, lonely through steadfastness.

Whoever built the house, he builded better than he knew: or else Orion in the zenith flashed down his Damocles' sword to him some starry night and said, "Build there." For how, otherwise, could it have entered the builder's mind, that, upon the clearing being made, such a purple prospect would be his? — nothing less than Greylock, with all his hills about him, like Charlemagne among his peers.

Melville could sit and look at the farm he created in the north field and feel the pride of accomplishment at being personally responsible for feeding his family and his animals. He could also see Mt. Greylock, which had always been a regional treasure to him since his boyhood days at his uncle's farm.

Now, for a house, so situated in such a country, to have no piazza for the convenience of those who might desire to feast upon a view, and take their time and ease about it, seemed as much of an omission as if a picture-gallery should have no bench; for what but picture-galleries are the marble halls of these same limestone hills? — galleries hung, month after month anew, with pictures ever fading into pictures ever fresh. And beauty is like piety — you cannot run and read it; tranquillity and constancy, with, nowadays, an easy chair, are needed. For though, of old, when reverence was in vogue, and indolence was not, the devotees of Nature doubtless, used to stand and adore — just as, in the cathedrals of those ages, the worshipers of a higher Power did — yet, in these times of failing faith and feeble knees, we have the piazza and the pew.

In his novel Pierre, or The Ambiguities Melville dedicates the book to this mountain, which he calls "my own more immediate sovereign lord and king..."

During the first year of my residence, the more leisurely to witness the coronation of Charlemagne (weather permitting, they crown him every sunrise and sunset), I chose me, on the hillside bank near by, a royal lounge of turf — a green velvet lounge, with long, moss-padded back; while at the head, strangely enough, there grew (but, I suppose, for heraldry) three tufts of blue vio-

lets in a field-argent of wild strawberries; and a trellis, with honeysuckle, I set for canopy. Very majestical lounge, indeed. So much so, that here, as with the reclining majesty of Denmark in his orchard, a sly ear-ache invaded me. But, if damps abound at times in Westminster Abbey, because it is so old, why not within this monastery of mountains, which is older?

A piazza must be had.

The house was wide — my fortune narrow: so that, to build a panoramic piazza, one round and round, it could not be — although, indeed, considering the matter by rule and square, the carpenters, in the kindest way, were anxious to gratify my furthest wishes, at I've forgotten how much a foot.

Upon but one of the four sides would prudence grant me what I wanted. Now, which side?

To the east, that long camp of the Hearth Stone Hills, fading far away towards Quito; and every fall, a small white flake of something peering suddenly, of a coolish morning, from the topmost cliff — the season's new-dropped lamb, its earliest fleece; and then the Christmas dawn, draping those dun highlands with red-barred plaids and tartans — goodly sight from your piazza, that. Goodly sight; but, to the north is Charlemagne — can't have the Hearth Stone Hills with Charlemagne.

Well, the south side. Apple-trees are there. Pleasant, of a balmy morning in the month of May, to sit and see that orchard, white-budded, as for a bridal; and, in October, one green arsenal yard; such piles of ruddy shot. Very fine, I grant; but, to the north is Charlemagne.

The west side, look. An upland pasture, alleying away into a maple wood at top. Sweet, in opening spring,

to trace upon the hillside, otherwise gray and bare — to trace, I say, the oldest paths by their streaks of earliest green. Sweet, indeed, I can't deny; but, to the north is Charlemagne.

So Charlemagne, he carried it. It was not long after 1848; and, somehow, about that time, all round the world, these kings, they had the casting vote, and voted for themselves.

No sooner was ground broken, than all the neighborhood, neighbor Dives, in particular, broke, too — into a laugh. Piazza to the north! Winter piazza! Wants, of winter midnights, to watch the Aurora Borealis, I suppose; hope he's laid in good store of Polar muffs and mittens.

That was in the lion month of March. Not forgotten are the blue noses of the carpenters, and how they scouted at the greenness of the cit, who would build his sole piazza to the north. But March don't last forever; patience, and August comes. And then, in the cool elysium of my northern bower, I, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, cast down the hill a pitying glance on poor old Dives, tormented in the purgatory of his piazza to the south.

But, even in December, this northern piazza does not repel — nipping cold and gusty though it be, and the north wind, like any miller, bolting by the snow in finest flour — for then, once more, with frosted beard, I pace the sleety deck, weathering Cape Horn.

In summer, too, Canute-like, sitting here, one is often reminded of the sea. For not only do long ground-swells roll the slanting grain, and little wavelets of the grass ripple over upon the low piazza, as their beach, and the blown down of dandelions is wafted like the spray,

and the purple of the mountains is just the purple of the billows, and a still August noon broods upon the deep meadows, as a calm upon the Line; but the vastness and the lonesomeness are so oceanic, and the silence and the sameness, too, that the first peep of a strange house, rising beyond the trees, is for all the world like spying, on the Barbary coast, an unknown sail.

And this recalls my inland voyage to fairyland. A true voyage; but, take it all in all, interesting as if invented.

From the piazza, some uncertain object I had caught, mysteriously snugged away, to all appearance, in a sort of purpled breast-pocket, high up in a hopper-like hollow or sunken angle, among the northwestern mountains — yet, whether, really, it was on a mountain-side or a mountain-top could not be determined; because, though, viewed from favorable points, a blue summit, peering up away behind the rest, will, as it were, talk to you over their heads, and plainly tell you, that, though he (the blue summit) seems among them, he is not of them (God forbid!), and, indeed, would have you know that he considers himself -- as, to say truth, he has good right -- by several cubits their superior, nevertheless, certain ranges, here and there double-filed, as in platoons, so shoulder and follow up upon one another, with their irregular shapes and heights, that, from the piazza, a nigher and lower mountain will, in most states of the atmosphere, effacingly shade itself away into a higher and further one; that an object, bleak on the former's crest, will, for all that, appear nested in the latter's flank. These mountains, somehow, they play at hide-and-seek, and all before one's eyes.

But, be that as it may, the spot in question was,

at all events, so situated as to be only visible, and then but vaguely, under certain witching conditions of light and shadow.

Indeed, for a year or more, I knew not there was such a spot, and might, perhaps, have never known, had it not been for a wizard afternoon; in autumn — late in autumn — a mad poet's afternoon, when the turned maple woods in the broad basin below me, having lost their first vermilion tint, dully smoked, like smouldering towns, when flames expire upon their prey; and rumor had it that this smokiness in the general air was not all Indian summer -- which was not used to be so sick a thing, however mild — but, in great part, was blown from far-off forests, for weeks on fire, in Vermont; so that no wonder the sky was ominous as Hecate's cauldron — and two sportsmen, crossing a red stubble buck-wheat field, seemed guilty Macbeth and foreboding Banquo; and the hermit-sun, hutted in an Adullum cave, well towards the south, according to his season, did little else but, by indirect reflection of narrow rays shot down a Simplon pass among the clouds, just steadily paint one small, round, strawberry mole upon the wan cheek of northwestern hills. Signal as a candle. One spot of radiance, where all else was shade.

Fairies there, thought I; some haunted ring where fairies dance.

Time passed; and the following May, after a gentle shower upon the mountains — a little shower islanded in misty seas of sunshine; such a distant shower – and sometimes two, and three, and four of them, all visible together in different parts — as I love to watch from the piazza, instead of thunder storms as I used to, which wrap

old Greylock like a Sinai, till one thinks swart Moses must be climbing among scathed hemlocks there; after, I say, that gentle shower, I saw a rainbow, resting its further end just where, in autumn, I had marked the mole. Fairies there, thought I; remembering that rainbows bring out the blooms, and that, if one can but get to the rainbow's end, his fortune is made in a bag of gold. Yon rainbow's end, would I were there, thought I. And none the less I wished it, for now first noticing what seemed some sort of glen, or grotto, in the mountain side; at least, whatever it was, viewed through the rainbow's medium it glowed like the Potosi mine. But a work-a-day neighbor said no doubt it was but some old barn — an abandoned one, its broadside beaten in, the acclivity its background. But I, though I had never been there, I knew better.

A few days after, a cheery sunrise kindled a golden sparkle in the same spot as before. The sparkle was of that vividness, it seemed as if it could only come from glass. The building, then — if building, after all, it was — could, at least, not be a barn, much less an abandoned one; stale hay ten years musting in it. No; if aught built by mortal, it must be a cottage; perhaps long vacant and dismantled, but this very spring magically fitted up and glazed.

Again, one noon, in the same direction, I marked, over dimmed tops of terraced foliage, a broader gleam, as of a silver buckler, held sunwards over some croucher's head; which gleam, experience in like cases taught, must come from a roof newly shingled. This, to me, made pretty sure the recent occupancy of that far cot in fairy land.

Day after day, now, full of interest in my discov-

ery, what time I could spare from reading the Midsummer Night's Dream, and all about Titania, wishfully I gazed off towards the hills; but in vain. Either troops of shadows, an imperial guard, with slow pace and solemn, defiled along the steeps; or, routed by pursuing light, fled broadcast from east to west — old wars of Lucifer and Michael; or the mountains, though unvexed by these mirrored sham fights in the sky, had an atmosphere otherwise unfavorable for fairy views. I was sorry; the more so, because I had to keep my chamber for some time after — which chamber did not face those hills.

At length, when pretty well again, and sitting out, in the September morning, upon the piazza, and thinking to myself, when, just after a little flock of sheep, the farmer's banded children passed, a-nutting, and said, "How sweet a day" — it was, after all, but what their fathers call a weather-breeder — and, indeed, was become so sensitive through my illness, as that I could not bear to look upon a Chinese creeper of my adoption, and which, to my delight, climbing a post of the piazza, had burst out in starry bloom, but now, if you removed the leaves a little, showed millions of strange, cankerous worms, which, feeding upon those blossoms, so shared their blessed hue as to make it unblessed evermore — worms, whose germs had doubtless lurked in the very bulb which, so hopefully, I had planted: in this ingrate peevishness of my weary convalescence, was I sitting there; when, suddenly looking off, I saw the golden mountain window, dazzling like a deep-sea dolphin. Fairies there, thought I, once more; the queen of fairies at her fairy-window, at any rate, some glad mountain girl; it will do me good, it will cure this weariness, to look on her. No more; I'll launch my

yawl — ho, cheerly, heart! — and push away for fairy-land, for rainbow's end, in fairy-land.

How to get to fairy-land, by what road, I did not know; nor could any one inform me; not even one Edmund Spenser, who had been there — so he wrote me — further than that to reach fairy-land it must be voyaged to, and with faith. I took the fairy-mountain's bearings, and the first fine day, when strength permitted, got into my yawl — high-pommeled, leather one — cast off the fast, and away I sailed, free voyager as an autumn leaf. Early dawn; and, sallying westward, I sowed the morning before me.

Some miles brought me nigh the hills; but out of present sight of them. I was not lost, for roadside goldenrods, as guideposts, pointed, I doubted not, the way to the golden window. Following them, I came to a lone and languid region, where the grass-grown ways were traveled but by drowsy cattle, that, less waked than stirred by day, seemed to walk in sleep. Browse, they did not — the enchanted never eat. At least, so says Don Quixote, that sagest sage that ever lived.

On I went, and gained at least the fairy mountain's base, but saw yet no fairy ring. A pasture rose before me. Letting down five mouldering bars — so moistly green, they seemed fished up from some sunken wreck — a wigged old Aries, long-visaged, and with crumpled horn, came snuffing up; and then, retreating, decorously led on along a milky-way of white-weed, past dim-clustering Pleiades and Hyades, of small forget-me-nots; and would have led me further still his astral path, but for golden flights of yellow-birds — pilots, surely, to the golden window, to one side flying before me, from bush to bush,

toward deep woods — which woods themselves were luring — and, somehow, lured, too, by their fence, banning a dark road, which, however dark, led up. I pushed through; when Aries, renouncing me now for some lost soul, wheeled, and went his wiser way. Forbidding and forbidden ground — to him.

A winter wood road, matted all along with winter-green. By the side of pebbly waters — waters the cheerier for their solitude; beneath swaying fir boughs, petted by no season but still green in all, on I journeyed -- my horse and I; on, by an old sawmill bound down and hushed with vines that his grating voice no more was heard; on, by a deep flume clove through snowy marble, vernal-tinted, where freshet eddies had, on each side, spun out empty chapels in the living rock; on, where Jacks-in-the-pulpit, like their Baptist namesake, preached but to the wilderness; on, where a huge cross-grain block, fern-bedded, showed where, in forgotten times, man after man had tried to split it, but lost his wedges for his pains — which wedges yet rusted in their holes; on, where, ages past, in step-like ledges of a cascade, skull-hollow pots had been churned out by ceaseless whirling of a flint-stone — ever wearing, but itself unworn; on, by wild rapids pouring into a secret pool, but, soothed by circling there awhile, issued forth serenely; on, to less broken ground, and by a little ring, where, truly, fairies must have danced, or else some wheel-tire been heated -- for all was bare; still on, and up, and out into a hanging orchard, where maidenly looked down upon me a crescent moon, from morning.

My horse hitched low his head. Red apples rolled before him — Eve's apples; seek-no-furthers. He

tasted one, I another; it tasted of the ground. Fairy land not yet, thought I, flinging my bridle to a humped old tree, that crooked out an arm to catch it. For the way now lay where path was none, and none might go but by himself, and only go by daring. Through blackberry brakes that tried to pluck me back, though I but strained toward fruitless growths of mountain-laurel; up slippery steeps to barren heights, where stood none to welcome. Fairy land not yet, thought I, though the morning is here before me.

Foot-sore enough and weary, I gained not then my journey's end, but came ere long to a craggy pass, dipping towards growing regions still beyond. A zigzag road, half overgrown with blueberry bushes, here turned among the cliffs. A rent was in their ragged sides; through it a little track branched off, which, upwards threading that short defile, came breezily out above, to where the mountaintop, part sheltered northward by a taller brother, sloped gently off a space, ere darkly plunging; and here, among fantastic rocks, reposing in a herd, the foot-track wound, half beaten, up to a little, low-storied, grayish cottage, capped, nun-like, with a peaked roof.

On one slope, the roof was deeply weather-stained, and, nigh the turfy eaves-trough, all velvet-napped; no doubt the snail-monks founded mossy priories there. The other slope was newly shingled. On the north side, doorless and windowless, the clapboards, innocent of paint, were yet green as the north side of lichened pines, or copperless hulls of Japanese junks, becalmed. The whole base, like those of the neighboring rocks, was rimmed about with shaded streaks of richest sod; for, with hearth-stones in fairy land, the natural rock, though housed, preserves to the last, just as in open fields,

Melville refers here to Shakespeare's fairies in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

its fertilizing charm; only, by necessity, working now at a remove, to the sward without. So, at least, says Oberon, grave authority in fairy lore. Though, setting Oberon aside, certain it is that, even in the common world, the soil close up to farm-houses, as close up to pasture rocks, is, even though untended, ever richer than it is a few rods off — such gentle, nurturing heat is radiated there.

But with this cottage, the shaded streaks were richest in its front and about its entrance, where the ground-sill, and especially the door-sill had, through long eld, quietly settled down.

No fence was seen, no inclosure. Near by — ferns, ferns, ferns; further — woods, woods, woods; beyond — mountains, mountains, mountains; then — sky, sky, sky. Turned out in aerial commons, pasture for the mountain moon. Nature, and but nature, house and all; even a low cross-pile of silver birch, piled openly, to season; up among whose silvery sticks, as through the fencing of some sequestered grave, sprang vagrant raspberry bushes — willful assertors of their right of way.

The foot-track, so dainty narrow, just like a sheep-track, led through long ferns that lodged. Fairy land at last, thought I; Una and her lamb dwell here. Truly, a small abode — mere palanquin, set down on the summit, in a pass between two worlds, participant of neither.

A sultry hour, and I wore a light hat, of yellow sinnet, with white duck trowsers — both relics of my tropic seagoing. Clogged in the muffling ferns, I softly stumbled, staining the knees a sea-green.

Pausing at the threshold, or rather where threshold once had been, I saw, through the open door-way, a lonely girl, sewing at a lonely window. A pale-cheeked

girl, and fly-specked window, with wasps about the mended upper panes. I spoke. She shyly started, like some Tahiti girl, secreted for a sacrifice, first catching sight, through palms, of Captain Cook. Recovering, she bade me enter; with her apron brushed off a stool; then silently resumed her own. With thanks I took the stool; but now, for a space, I, too, was mute. This, then, is the fairy-mountain house, and here, the fairy queen sitting at her fairy window.

I went up to it. Downwards, directed by the tunneled pass, as through a leveled telescope, I caught sight of afar-off, soft, azure world. I hardly knew it, though I came from it.

"You must find this view very pleasant," said I, at last.

"Oh, sir," tears starting in her eyes, "the first time I looked out of this window, I said 'never, never shall I weary of this.'"

"And what wearies you of it now?"

"I don't know," while a tear fell; "but it is not the view, it is Marianna."

Some months back, her brother, only seventeen, had come hither, a long way from the other side, to cut wood and burn coal, and she, elder sister, had accompanied him. Long had they been orphans, and now, sole inhabitants of the sole house upon the mountain. No guest came, no traveler passed. The zigzag, perilous road was only used at seasons by the coal wagons. The brother was absent the entire day, sometimes the entire night. When, at evening, fagged out, he did come home, he soon left his bench, poor fellow, for his bed; just as one, at last, wearily quits that, too, for still deeper rest. The bench,

the bed, the grave.

Silent I stood by the fairy window, while these things were being told.

"Do you know," said she at last, as stealing from her story, "do you know who lives yonder? — I have never been down into that country — away off there, I mean; that house, that marble one," pointing far across the lower landscape; "have you not caught it? there, on the long hillside: the field before, the woods behind; the white shines out against their blue; don't you mark it? the only house in sight."

I looked; and after a time, to my surprise, recognized, more by its position than its aspect or Marianna's description, my own abode, glimmering much like this mountain one from the piazza. The mirage haze made it appear less a farmhouse than King Charming's palace.

"I have often wondered who lives there; but it must be some happy one; again this morning was I thinking so."

"Some happy one," returned I, starting; "and why do you think that? You judge some rich one lives there?"

"Rich or not, I never thought, but it looks so happy, I can't tell how; and it is so far away. Sometimes I think I do but dream it is there. You should see it in a sunset."

"No doubt the sunset gilds it finely; but not more than the sunrise does this house, perhaps."

This house? The sun is a good sun, but it never gilds this house. Why should it? This old house is rotting. That makes it so mossy. In the morning, the sun comes in at this old window, to be sure — boarded up, when first we came; a window I can't keep clean, do what I

may — and half burns, and nearly blinds me at my sewing, besides setting the flies and wasps astir — such flies and wasps as only lone mountain houses know. See, here is the curtain — this apron – I try to shut it out with then. It fades it, you see. Sun gild this house? not that ever Marianna saw."

"Because when this roof is gilded most, then you stay here within."

"The hottest, weariest hour of day, you mean? Sir, the sun gilds not this roof. It leaked so, brother newly shingled all one side. Did you not see it? The north side, where the sun strikes most on what the rain has wetted. The sun is a good sun; but this roof, it first scorches, and then rots. An old house. They went West, and are long dead, they say, who built it. A mountain house. In winter no fox could den in it. That chimney-place has been blocked up with snow, just like a hollow stump."

"Yours are strange fancies, Marianna."

"They but reflect the things."

"Then I should have said, 'These are strange things,' rather than, 'Yours are strange fancies.'"

"As you will;" and took up her sewing.

Something in those quiet words, or in that quiet act, it made me mute again; while, noting, through the fairy window a broad shadow stealing on, as cast by some gigantic condor, floating at brooding poise on outstretched wings, I marked how, by its deeper and inclusive dusk, it wiped away into itself all lesser shades of rock or fern.

"You watch the cloud," said Marianna.

"No, a shadow; a cloud's, no doubt — though that I cannot see. How did you know it? Your eyes are on

your work."

"It dusked my work. There, now the cloud is gone, tray Comes back."

"How?"

"The dog, the shaggy dog. At noon, he steals off, of himself, to change his shape — returns, and lies down awhile, nigh the door. Don't you see him? His head is turned round at you; though when you came he looked before him."

"Your eyes rest but on your work; what do you speak of?"

"By the window, crossing."

"You mean this shaggy shadow — the nigh one? And, yes, now that I mark it, it is not unlike a large, black Newfoundland dog. The invading shadow gone, the invaded one returns. But I do not see what casts it."

"For that, you must go without."

"One of those grassy rocks, no doubt."

"You see his head, his face?"

"The shadow's? You speak as if you *saw* it, and all the time your eyes are on your work."

"Tray looks at you," still without glancing up; "this is his house; I see him."

"Have you, then, so long sat at this mountain-window, where but clouds and vapors pass, that, to you, shadows are as things, though you speak of them as of phantoms; that, by familiar knowledge working like a second sight, you can, without looking for them, tell just where they are, though, as having mice-like feet, they creep about, and come and go; that, to you, these lifeless shadows are as living friends, who, though out of sight, are not out of mind, even in their faces — is it so?"

"That way I never thought of it. But the friendliest one, that used to soothe my weariness so much, coolly quivering on the ferns, it was taken from me, never to return, as Tray did just now. The shadow of a birch. The tree was struck by lightning, and brother cut it up. You saw the cross-pile out-doors — the buried root lies under it; but not the shadow. That is flown, and never will come back, nor ever anywhere stir again."

Another cloud here stole along, once more blotting out the dog, and blackening all the mountain; while the stillness was so still, deafness might have forgot itself, or else believed that noiseless shadow spoke.

"Birds, Marianna, singing-birds, I hear none; I hear nothing. Boys and bob-o-links, do they never come a-berrying up here?"

"Birds I seldom hear; boys, never. The berries mostly ripe and fall — few, but me, the wiser."

"But yellow-birds showed me the way — part way, at least."

"And then flew back. I guess they play about the mountain-side but don't make the top their home. And no doubt you think that, living so lonesome here, knowing nothing, hearing nothing — little, at least, but sound of thunder and the fall of trees — never reading, seldom speaking, yet ever wakeful, this is what gives me my strange thoughts — for so you call them — this weariness and wakefulness together. Brother, who stands and works in open air, would I could rest like him; but mine is mostly but dull woman's work — sitting, sitting, restless sitting."

"But do you not go walk at times? These woods are wide."

"And lonesome; lonesome, because so wide. Sometimes, 'tis true, of afternoons, I go a little way; but soon come back again. Better feel lone by hearth, than rock. The shadows hereabouts I know — those in the woods are strangers."

"But the night?"

"Just like the day. Thinking, thinking — a wheel I cannot stop; pure want of sleep it is that turns it."

"I have heard that, for this wakeful weariness, to say one's prayers, and then lay one's head upon a fresh hop pillow ——"

"Look!"

Through the fairy window, she pointed down the steep to a small garden patch near by — mere pot of rifled loam, half rounded in by sheltering rocks — where, side by side, some feet apart, nipped and puny, two hop-vines climbed two poles, and, gaining their tip-ends, would have then joined over in an upward clasp, but the baffled shoots, groping awhile in empty air, trailed back whence they sprung.

"You have tried the pillow, then?"

"Yes."

"And prayer?"

"Prayer and pillow."

"Is there no other cure, or charm?"

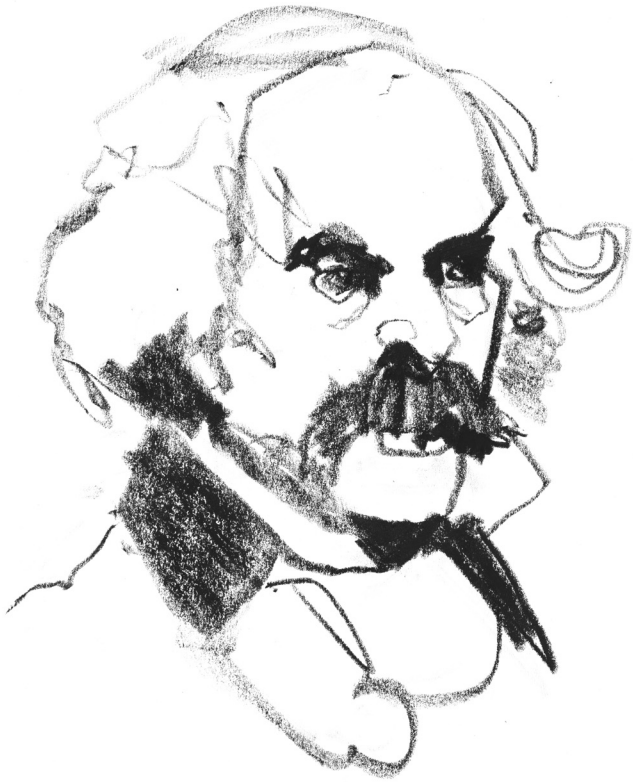
"Oh, if I could but once get to yonder house, and but look upon whoever the happy being is that lives there! A foolish thought: why do I think it? Is it that I live so lonesome, and know nothing?"

"I, too, know nothing; and therefore cannot answer; but for your sake, Marianna, well could wish that I were that happy one of the happy house you dream you

see; for then you would behold him now, and, as you say, this weariness might leave you."

—Enough. Launching my yawl no more for fairy-land, I stick to the piazza. It is my box-royal; and this amphitheater, my theater of San Carlo. Yes, the scenery is magical — the illusion so complete. And Madam Meadow Lark, my prima donna, plays her grand engagement here; and, drinking in her sunrise note, which, Memnon-like, seems struck from the golden window, how far from me the weary face behind it.

But, every night, when the curtain falls, truth comes in with darkness. No light shows from the mountain. To and fro I walk the piazza deck, haunted by Marianna's face, and many as real a story.



Bald-Summit: After the Story

From *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Eustace Bright told the legend of Bellerophon with as much fervor and animation as if he had really been taking a gallop on the winged horse. At the conclusion, he was gratified to discern, by the glowing countenances of his auditors, how greatly they had been interested. All their eyes were dancing in their heads, except those of Primrose. In her eyes there were positively tears; for she was conscious of something in the legend which the rest of them were not yet old enough to feel. Child's story as it was, the student had contrived to breathe through it the ardor, the generous hope, and the imaginative enterprise of youth.

"I forgive you, now, Primrose," said he, "for all your ridicule of myself and my stories. One tear pays for a great deal of laughter."

"Well, Mr. Bright," answered Primrose, wiping her eyes, and giving him another of her mischievous smiles, "it certainly does elevate your ideas, to get your head above the clouds. I advise you never to tell another story, unless it be, as at present, from the top of a mountain."

"Or from the back of Pegasus," replied Eustace, laughing. "Don't you think that I succeeded pretty well in catching that wonderful pony?"

"It was so like one of your madcap pranks!" cried Primrose, clapping her hands. "I think I see you now on his back, two miles high, and with your head downward! It is well that you have not really an opportunity of trying your horsemanship on any wilder steed than our sober Davy, or Old Hundred."

"For my part, I wish I had Pegasus here, at this moment," said the student. "I would mount him forthwith, and gallop about the country, within a circumference of a few miles, making literary calls on my brother-authors. Dr. Dewey would be within my reach, at the foot of Taconic. In Stockbridge, yonder, is Mr. James, conspicuous to all the world on his mountain-pile of history and romance. Longfellow, I believe, is not yet at the Ox-bow, else the winged horse would neigh at the sight of him. But, here in Lenox, I should find our most truthful novelist, who has made the scenery and life of Berkshire all her own. On the hither side of Pittsfield sits Herman Melville, shaping out the gigantic conception of his 'White Whale,' while the gigantic shape of Graylock looms upon him from his study-window. Another bound of my flying steed would bring me to the door of Holmes, whom I mention last, because Pegasus would certainly unseat me, the next minute, and claim the poet as his rider."

Hawthorne cites most of the Mastheads Project authors in this section of his story. In the next moment he brings himself into the tale.

"Have we not an author for our next neighbor?" asked Primrose. "That silent man, who lives in the old red house, near Tanglewood Avenue, and whom we sometimes meet, with two children at his side, in the woods or at the lake. I think I have heard of his having written a poem, or a romance, or an arithmetic, or a school-history, or some other kind of a book."

"Hush, Primrose, hush!" exclaimed Eustace, in a thrilling whisper, and putting his finger on his lip. "Not a word about that man, even on a hill-top! If our babble were to reach his ears, and happen not to please him, he has but to fling a quire or two of paper into the stove, and you, Primrose, and I, and Periwinkle, Sweet Fern, Squash-Blossom, Blue Eye, Huckleberry, Clover, Cowslip, Plantain, Milkweed, Dandelion, and Buttercup,--yes, and wise Mr. Pringle, with his unfavorable criticisms on my legends, and poor Mrs. Pringle, too,--would all turn to smoke, and go whisking up the funnel! Our neighbor in the red house is a harmless sort of person enough, for aught I know, as concerns the rest of the world; but something whispers to me that he has a terrible power over ourselves, extending to nothing short of annihilation."

All of these are classic names for literary fairies, including those in Melville's story and Shakespeare's play.

"And would Tanglewood turn to smoke, as well as *we?*" asked Periwinkle, quite appalled at the threatened destruction. "And what would become of Ben and Bruin?"

"Tanglewood would remain," replied the student, "looking just as it does now, but occupied by an entirely different family. And Ben and Bruin would be still alive, and would make themselves very comfortable with the bones from the dinner-table, without ever thinking of the good times which they and we have had together!"

"What nonsense you are talking!" exclaimed Primrose.

With idle chat of this kind, the party had already begun to descend the hill, and were now within the shadow of the woods. Primrose gathered some mountain-laurel, the leaf of which, though of last year's growth, was still as verdant and elastic as if the frost and thaw had

not alternately tried their force upon its texture. Of these twigs of laurel she twined a wreath, and took off the student's cap, in order to place it on his brow.

"Nobody else is likely to crown you for your stories," observed saucy Primrose, "so take this from me."

"Do not be too sure," answered Eustace, looking really like a youthful poet, with the laurel among his glossy curls, "that I shall not win other wreaths by these wonderful and admirable stories. I mean to spend all my leisure, during the rest of the vacation, and throughout the summer term at college, in writing them out for the press. Mr. J. T. Fields (with whom I became acquainted when he was in Berkshire, last summer, and who is a poet, as well as a publisher) will see their uncommon merit at a glance. He will get them illustrated, I hope, by Billings, and will bring them before the world under the very best of auspices, through the eminent house of TICKNOR & CO. In about five months from this moment, I make no doubt of being reckoned among the lights of this age!"

"Poor boy!" said Primrose, half aside. "What a disappointment awaits him!"

Descending a little lower, Bruin began to bark, and was answered by the graver bow-wow of the respectable Ben. They soon saw the good old dog, keeping careful watch over Dandelion, Sweet Fern, Cowslip, and Squash-Blossom. These little people, quite recovered from their fatigue, had set about gathering checkerberries, and now came clambering to meet their playfellows. Thus reunited, the whole party went down through Luther Butler's orchard, and made the best of their way home to Tanglewood.

The Old Clock on the Stairs

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Somewhat back from the village street
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat.
Across its antique portico
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw;
And from its station in the hall
An ancient timepiece says to all, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

The front hallway of Elm Knoll, the Appleton House—later the Pomeroy House—was wide, with its grand staircase framing it and the clock on the turn in the stairs.

Half-way up the stairs it stands,
And points and beckons with its hands
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk, who, under his cloak,
Crosses himself, and sighs, alas!
With sorrowful voice to all who pass, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

By day its voice is low and light;
But in the silent dead of night,
Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,
It echoes along the vacant hall,
Along the ceiling, along the floor,
And seems to say, at each chamber-door, —

"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

Through days of sorrow and of mirth,
Through days of death and days of birth,
Through every swift vicissitude
Of changeful time, unchanged it has stood,
And as if, like God, it all things saw,
It calmly repeats those words of awe, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires up the chimney roared;
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like the skeleton at the feast,
That warning timepiece never ceased, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
Those hours the ancient timepiece told, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding night;

There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;
And in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
"Ah! when shall they all meet again?"
As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

Never here, forever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time shall disappear, —
Forever there, but never here!
The horologe of Eternity
Sayeth this incessantly, —
"Forever — never!
Never — forever!"

This vignette is presumably a memory of Fanny Appleton descending the stairs to greet her about-to-be husband on her wedding day.


AL17

A Poem

Dedication to the Pittsfield Cemetery, September 9, 1850

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

ANGEL of Death! extend thy silent reign!
Stretch thy dark sceptre o'er this new domain
No sable car along the winding road
Has borne to earth its unresisting load;
No sudden mound has risen yet to show
Where the pale slumberer folds his arms below;
No marble gleams to bid his memory live
In the brief lines that hurrying Time can give;
Yet, O Destroyer! from thy shrouded throne
Look on our gift; this realm is all thine own!

Fair is the scene; its sweetness oft beguiled
From their dim paths the children of the wild;
The dark-haired maiden loved its grassy dells,
The feathered warrior claimed its wooded swells,
Still on its slopes the ploughman's ridges show
The pointed flints that left his fatal bow,
Chipped with rough art and slow barbarian toil,—
Last of his wrecks that strews the alien soil!
Here spread the fields that heaped their ripened store
Till the brown arms of Labor held no more;
The scythe's broad meadow with its dusky blush;
The sickle's harvest with its velvet flush;

The green-haired maize, her silken tresses laid,
In soft luxuriance, on her harsh brocade;
The gourd that swells beneath her tossing plume;
The coarser wheat that rolls in lakes of bloom,—
Its coral stems and milk-white flowers alive
With the wide murmurs of the scattered hive;
Here glowed the apple with the pencilled streak
Of morning painted on its southern cheek;
The pear's long necklace strung with golden drops,
Arched, like the banian, o'er its pillared props;
Here crept the growths that paid the laborer's care
With the cheap luxuries wealth consents to spare;
Here sprang the healing herbs which could not save
The hand that reared them from the neighboring grave.

Yet all its varied charms, forever free
From task and tribute, Labor yields to thee:
No more, when April sheds her fitful rain,
The sower's hand shall cast its flying grain;
No more, when Autumn strews the flaming leaves,
The reaper's band shall gird its yellow sheaves;
For thee alike the circling seasons flow
Till the first blossoms heave the latest snow.
In the stiff clod below the whirling drifts,
In the loose soil the springing herbage lifts,
In the hot dust beneath the parching weeds,
Life's withering flower shall drop its shrivelled seeds;
Its germ entranced in thy unbreathing sleep
Till what thou sowest mightier angels reap!

Spirit of Beauty! let thy graces blend
With loveliest Nature all that Art can lend.

Come from the bowers where Summer's life-blood flows
Through the red lips of June's half-open rose,
Dressed in bright hues, the loving sunshine's dower;
For tranquil Nature owns no mourning flower.
Come from the forest where the beech's screen
Bars the fierce moonbeam with its flakes of green;
Stay the rude axe that bares the shadowy plains,
Stanch the deep wound That dries the maple's veins.
Come with the stream whose silver-braided rills
Fling their unclasping bracelets from the hills,
Till in one gleam, beneath the forest's wings,
Melts the white glitter of a hundred springs.
Come from the steeps where look majestic forth
From their twin thrones the Giants of the North
On the huge shapes, that, crouching at their knees,
Stretch their broad shoulders, rough with shaggy trees.
Through the wide waste of ether, not in vain,
Their softened gaze shall reach our distant plain;
There, while the mourner turns his aching eyes
On the blue mounds that print the bluer skies,
Nature shall whisper that the fading view
Of mightiest grief may wear a heavenly hue.
Cherub of Wisdom! let thy marble page
Leave its sad lesson, new to every age;
Teach us to live, not grudging every breath
To the chill winds that waft us on to death,
But ruling calmly every pulse it warms,
And tempering gently every word it forms.
Seraph of Love! in heaven's adoring zone,
Nearest of all around the central throne,
While with soft hands the pillowed turf we spread
That soon shall hold us in its dreamless bed,

Holmes retreats from the somber aspects of a cemetery to contemplate its extraordinary setting. With hilly views and a tranquil and calming aspect, it is a perfect picture of the Berkshires and its effect on visitors.

With the low whisper, “Who shall first be laid
In the dark chamber’s yet unbroken shade?”—
Let thy sweet radiance shine rekindled here,
And all we cherish grow more truly dear.
Here in the gates of Death’s o’erhanging vault,
Oh, teach us kindness for our brother’s fault:
Lay all our wrongs beneath this peaceful sod,
And lead our hearts to Mercy and its God.

FATHER of all! in Death’s relentless claim
We read thy mercy by its sterner name;
In the bright flower that decks the solemn bier,
We see thy glory in its narrowed sphere;
In the deep lessons that affliction draws,
We trace the curves of thy encircling laws;
In the long sigh that sets our spirits free,
We own the love that calls us back to Thee!

Through the hushed street, along the silent plain,
The spectral future leads its mourning train,
Dark with the shadows of uncounted bands,
Where man’s white lips and woman’s wringing hands
Track the still burden, rolling slow before,
That love and kindness can protect no more;
The smiling babe that, called to mortal strife,
Shuts its meek eyes and drops its little life;
The drooping child who prays in vain to live,
And pleads for help its parent cannot give;
The pride of beauty stricken in its flower;
The strength of manhood broken in an hour;
Age in its weakness, bowed by toil and care,
Traced in sad lines beneath its silvered hair.

The sun shall set, and heaven's resplendent spheres
Gild the smooth turf unhallowed yet by tears,
But ah! how soon the evening stars will shed
Their sleepless light around the slumbering dead!

Take them, O Father, in immortal trust!
Ashes to ashes, dust to kindred dust,
Till the last angel rolls the stone away,
And a new morning brings eternal day!

An Excerpt from:

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

Henry David Thoreau

[...]

I once saw the day break from the top of Saddle-back Mountain in Massachusetts, above the clouds. As we cannot distinguish objects through this dense fog, let me tell this story more at length.

Saddle-back Mountain and Mt. Greylock interlock and can be seen as a single entity, though they are not. It is actually Saddle-back, which, when snow-covered, bring the image of a white whale emerging from the ocean to Melville's study window.

I had come over the hills on foot and alone in serene summer days, plucking the raspberries by the wayside, and occasionally buying a loaf of bread at a farmer's house, with a knapsack on my back which held a few traveller's books and a change of clothing, and a staff in my hand. I had that morning looked down from the Hoosack Mountain, where the road crosses it, on the village of North Adams in the valley three miles away under my feet, showing how uneven the earth may sometimes be, and making it seem an accident that it should ever be level and convenient for the feet of man. Putting a little rice and sugar and a tin cup into my knapsack at this village, I began in the afternoon to ascend the mountain, whose summit is three thousand six hundred feet above the level of the sea, and was seven or eight miles distant by the path. My route lay up a long and spacious valley called the Bellows, because the winds rush up or down it with violence in storms, sloping up to the very clouds

between the principal range and a lower mountain. There were a few farms scattered along at different elevations, each commanding a fine prospect of the mountains to the north, and a stream ran down the middle of the valley on which near the head there was a mill. It seemed a road for the pilgrim to enter upon who would climb to the gates of heaven. Now I crossed a hay-field, and now over the brook on a slight bridge, still gradually ascending all the while with a sort of awe, and filled with indefinite expectations as to what kind of inhabitants and what kind of nature I should come to at last. It now seemed some advantage that the earth was uneven, for one could not imagine a more noble position for a farm-house than this vale afforded, farther from or nearer to its head, from a glen-like seclusion overlooking the country at a great elevation between these two mountain walls.

[...]

But to return to the mountain. It seemed as if he must be the most singular and heavenly minded man whose dwelling stood highest up the valley. The thunder had rumbled at my heels all the way, but the shower passed off in another direction, though if it had not, I half believed that I should get above it. I at length reached the last house but one, where the path to the summit diverged to the right, while the summit itself rose directly in front. But I determined to follow up the valley to its head, and then find my own route up the steep as the shorter and more adventurous way. I had thoughts of returning to this house, which was well kept and so nobly placed, the next day, and perhaps remaining a week there, if I could have

entertainment. Its mistress was a frank and hospitable young woman, who stood before me in a dishabille, busily and unconcernedly combing her long black hair while she talked, giving her head the necessary toss with each sweep of the comb, with lively, sparkling eyes, and full of interest in that lower world from which I had come, talking all the while as familiarly as if she had known me for years, and reminding me of a cousin of mine. She at first had taken me for a student from Williamstown, for they went by in parties, she said, either riding or walking, almost every pleasant day, and were a pretty wild set of fellows; but they never went by the way I was going. As I passed the last house, a man called out to know what I had to sell, for seeing my knapsack, he thought that I might be a pedler who was taking this unusual route over the ridge of the valley into South Adams. He told me that it was still four or five miles to the summit by the path which I had left, though not more than two in a straight line from where I was, but that nobody ever went this way; there was no path, and I should find it as steep as the roof of a house. But I knew that I was more used to woods and mountains than he, and went along through his cow-yard, while he, looking at the sun, shouted after me that I should not get to the top that night. I soon reached the head of the valley, but as I could not see the summit from this point, I ascended a low mountain on the opposite side, and took its bearing with my compass. I at once entered the woods, and began to climb the steep side of the mountain in a diagonal direction, taking the bearing of a tree every dozen rods. The ascent was by no means difficult or unpleasant, and occupied much less time than it would have taken to follow the path. Even

country people, I have observed, magnify the difficulty of travelling in the forest, and especially among mountains. They seem to lack their usual common sense in this. I have climbed several higher mountains without guide or path, and have found, as might be expected, that it takes only more time and patience commonly than to travel the smoothest highway. It is very rare that you meet with obstacles in this world which the humblest man has not faculties to surmount. It is true we may come to a perpendicular precipice, but we need not jump off nor run our heads against it. A man may jump down his own cellar stairs or dash his brains out against his chimney, if he is mad. So far as my experience goes, travellers generally exaggerate the difficulties of the way. Like most evil, the difficulty is imaginary; for what's the hurry? If a person lost would conclude that after all he is not lost, he is not beside himself, but standing in his own old shoes on the very spot where he is, and that for the time being he will live there; but the places that have known him, *they* are lost,--how much anxiety and danger would vanish. I am not alone if I stand by myself. Who knows where in space this globe is rolling? Yet we will not give ourselves up for lost, let it go where it will.

I made my way steadily upward in a straight line through a dense undergrowth of mountain laurel, until the trees began to have a scraggy and infernal look, as if contending with frost goblins, and at length I reached the summit, just as the sun was setting. Several acres here had been cleared, and were covered with rocks and stumps, and there was a rude observatory in the middle which overlooked the woods. I had one fair view of the country

before the sun went down, but I was too thirsty to waste any light in viewing the prospect, and set out directly to find water. First, going down a well-beaten path for half a mile through the low scrubby wood, till I came to where the water stood in the tracks of the horses which had carried travellers up, I lay down flat, and drank these dry, one after another, a pure, cold, spring-like water, but yet I could not fill my dipper, though I contrived little siphons of grass-stems, and ingenious aqueducts on a small scale; it was too slow a process. Then remembering that I had passed a moist place near the top, on my way up, I returned to find it again, and here, with sharp stones and my hands, in the twilight, I made a well about two feet deep, which was soon filled with pure cold water, and the birds too came and drank at it. So I filled my dipper, and, making my way back to the observatory, collected some dry sticks, and made a fire on some flat stones which had been placed on the floor for that purpose, and so I soon cooked my supper of rice, having already whittled a wooden spoon to eat it with.

I sat up during the evening, reading by the light of the fire the scraps of newspapers in which some party had wrapped their luncheon; the prices current in New York and Boston, the advertisements, and the singular editorials which some had seen fit to publish, not foreseeing under what critical circumstances they would be read. I read these things at a vast advantage there, and it seemed to me that the advertisements, or what is called the business part of a paper, were greatly the best, the most useful, natural, and respectable. Almost all the opinions and sentiments expressed were so little considered, so shallow

and flimsy, that I thought the very texture of the paper must be weaker in that part and tear the more easily. The advertisements and the prices current were more closely allied to nature, and were respectable in some measure as tide and meteorological tables are; but the reading-matter, which I remembered was most prized down below, unless it was some humble record of science, or an extract from some old classic, struck me as strangely whimsical, and crude, and one-idea'd, like a school-boy's theme, such as youths write and after burn. The opinions were of that kind that are doomed to wear a different aspect to-morrow, like last year's fashions; as if mankind were very green indeed, and would be ashamed of themselves in a few years, when they had outgrown this verdant period. There was, moreover, a singular disposition to wit and humor, but rarely the slightest real success; and the apparent success was a terrible satire on the attempt; the Evil Genius of man laughed the loudest at his best jokes. The advertisements, as I have said, such as were serious, and not of the modern quack kind, suggested pleasing and poetic thoughts; for commerce is really as interesting as nature. The very names of the commodities were poetic, and as suggestive as if they had been inserted in a pleasing poem,—Lumber, Cotton, Sugar, Hides, Guano, Logwood. Some sober, private, and original thought would have been grateful to read there, and as much in harmony with the circumstances as if it had been written on a mountain-top; for it is of a fashion which never changes, and as respectable as hides and logwood, or any natural product. What an inestimable companion such a scrap of paper would have been, containing some fruit of a mature life. What a relic! What a recipe! It seemed

a divine invention, by which not mere shining coin, but shining and current thoughts, could be brought up and left there.

As it was cold, I collected quite a pile of wood and lay down on a board against the side of the building, not having any blanket to cover me, with my head to the fire, that I might look after it, which is not the Indian rule. But as it grew colder towards midnight, I at length encased myself completely in boards, managing even to put a board on top of me, with a large stone on it, to keep it down, and so slept comfortably. I was reminded, it is true, of the Irish children, who inquired what their neighbors did who had no door to put over them in winter nights as they had; but I am convinced that there was nothing very strange in the inquiry. Those who have never tried it can have no idea how far a door, which keeps the single blanket down, may go toward making one comfortable. We are constituted a good deal like chickens, which taken from the hen, and put in a basket of cotton in the chimney-corner, will often peep till they die, nevertheless, but if you put in a book, or anything heavy, which will press down the cotton, and feel like the hen, they go to sleep directly. My only companions were the mice, which came to pick up the crumbs that had been left in those scraps of paper; still, as everywhere, pensioners on man, and not unwisely improving this elevated tract for their habitation. They nibbled what was for them; I nibbled what was for me. Once or twice in the night, when I looked up, I saw a white cloud drifting through the windows, and filling the whole upper story.

This observatory was a building of considerable size, erected by the students of Williamstown College, whose buildings might be seen by daylight gleaming far down in the valley. It would be no small advantage if every college were thus located at the base of a mountain, as good at least as one well-endowed professorship. It were as well to be educated in the shadow of a mountain as in more classical shades. Some will remember, no doubt, not only that they went to the college, but that they went to the mountain. Every visit to its summit would, as it were, generalize the particular information gained below, and subject it to more catholic tests.

I was up early and perched upon the top of this tower to see the daybreak, for some time reading the names that had been engraved there, before I could distinguish more distant objects. An "untamable fly" buzzed at my elbow with the same nonchalance as on a molasses hogshead at the end of Long Wharf. Even there I must attend to his stale humdrum. But now I come to the pith of this long digression.—As the light increased I discovered around me an ocean of mist, which by chance reached up exactly to the base of the tower, and shut out every vestige of the earth, while I was left floating on this fragment of the wreck of a world, on my carved plank, in cloudland; a situation which required no aid from the imagination to render it impressive. As the light in the east steadily increased, it revealed to me more clearly the new world into which I had risen in the night, the new *terra firma* perchance of my future life. There was not a crevice left through which the trivial places we name Massachusetts or Vermont or New York could be seen, while I still

inhaled the clear atmosphere of a July morning,—if it were July there. All around beneath me was spread for a hundred miles on every side, as far as the eye could reach, an undulating country of clouds, answering in the varied swell of its surface to the terrestrial world it veiled. It was such a country as we might see in dreams, with all the delights of paradise. There were immense snowy pastures, apparently smooth-shaven and firm, and shady vales between the vaporous mountains; and far in the horizon I could see where some luxurious misty timber jutted into the prairie, and trace the windings of a water-course, some unimagined Amazon or Orinoko, by the misty trees on its brink. As there was wanting the symbol, so there was not the substance of impurity, no spot nor stain. It was a favor for which to be forever silent to be shown this vision. The earth beneath had become such a flitting thing of lights and shadows as the clouds had been before. It was not merely veiled to me, but it had passed away like the phantom of a shadow, σκιάς ὄναρ and this new platform was gained. As I had climbed above storm and cloud, so by successive days' journeys I might reach the region of eternal day, beyond the tapering shadow of the earth; ay,

"Heaven itself shall slide,
And roll away, like melting stars that glide
Along their oily threads."

Here, Thoreau cites "'To Whom Else Can We Fly?'" by English Renaissance poet Giles Fletcher (1586? - 1623).

But when its own sun began to rise on this pure world, I found myself a dweller in the dazzling halls of Aurora, into which poets have had but a partial glance over the eastern hills, drifting amid the saffron-colored clouds,

and playing with the rosy fingers of the Dawn, in the very path of the Sun's chariot, and sprinkled with its dewy dust, enjoying the benignant smile, and near at hand the far-darting glances of the god. The inhabitants of earth behold commonly but the dark and shadowy under-side of heaven's pavement; it is only when seen at a favorable angle in the horizon, morning or evening, that some faint streaks of the rich lining of the clouds are revealed. But my muse would fail to convey an impression of the gorgeous tapestry by which I was surrounded, such as men see faintly reflected afar off in the chambers of the east. Here, as on earth, I saw the gracious god

These lines are from Shakespeare's Sonnet 33.

"Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,

. . . . . .

Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy."

But never here did "Heaven's sun" stain himself.

But, alas, owing, as I think, to some unworthiness in myself, my private sun did stain himself, and

These lines are also from Sonnet 33.

"Anon permit the basest clouds to ride

With ugly wrack on his celestial face,"—

for before the god had reached the zenith the heavenly pavement rose and embraced my wavering virtue, or rather I sank down again into that "forlorn world," from which the celestial sun had hid his visage,—

Again, Thoreau quotes Fletcher, this time from "Christ's Victory and Triumph."

"How may a worm that crawls along the dust,
Clamber the azure mountains, thrown so high,
And fetch from thence thy fair idea just,
That in those sunny courts doth hidden lie,
Clothed with such light as blinds the angel's eye?
How may weak mortal ever hope to file
His unsmooth tongue, and his deprostrate style?
O, raise thou from his corse thy now entombed exile!"

In the preceding evening I had seen the summits of new and yet higher mountains, the Catskills, by which I might hope to climb to heaven again, and had set my compass for a fair lake in the southwest, which lay in my way, for which I now steered, descending the mountain by my own route, on the side opposite to that by which I had ascended, and soon found myself in the region of cloud and drizzling rain, and the inhabitants affirmed that it had been a cloudy and drizzling day wholly.

SOURCES

Map: Beers 1876 Atlas— Berkshire County.

Melville, Herman. *The Piazza Tales*, Dix & Edwards, 1856, pp. 1-29.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *A Wonder-Book, Tanglewood Tales, Grandfather's Chair.* Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883, pp. 195-198.

Longfellow, Henry W. *Poems*. Bogue, 1856, pp. 243-245.

Holmes, Oliver W. *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Edited by Horace E. Scudder, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895, pp. 87-89.

Thoreau, Henry D. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. James R. Osgood and Co., 1873, pp. 192-193; 194-202.

MADE POSSIBLE BY

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
THE FEIGENBAUM FOUNDATION
THE FITZPATRICK TRUST
MASSDEVELOPMENT
JOAN & JAMES M. HUNTER
MASS HUMANITIES
BERKSHIRE BANK FOUNDATION
THE JOHN C. & KATHERINE M. MORRIS FOUNDATION
PITTSFIELD WALMART
DAVID L. & MARITA O'DEA GLODT
KAREN & JAMES PARKINSON
ANDREW & SUSAN KELLY
MARY TING HYATT & WILBUR HYATT
MARY ANN & BRUNO A. QUINSON
ELLEN K. MASTERS
JOE & KATHRYN GASKA
REBA H. EVENCHIK
ROBERT A. & KAREN S. YOUDELMAN
CAROL C. & SHERWOOD GUERNSEY II
ELLEN KENNEDY
JENNIE KASSANOFF
METHUSELAH BAR & LOUNGE
ALLEN HARRIS
PETER BERGMAN
JANE & PETER SMITH
MARY TYER KELLY
MICHAEL ZACCARO
KAREN RICH THURSTON
SUSAN CURTIN
WILLIAM J. & SHEILA B. IRVIN
CATHERINE & MATTHEW CHESTER
HALLIE DAVISON
MICK CALLAHAN
SEAN HAYES
ROSEMARY STARACE
MARK BRODEUR

MIKE BLOOMBERG
HENRY SMITH
WATERFALL PERRY
ROBERT KELLY
NICK JANDL
AUDREY THIER
AMANDA BELL
SUE WELLS
REGINA BURGIO
CHRIS PARKINSON
JANE SHIYAH
AL MAIORINO
JOANIE PALANO CIOLFI
AUDREY RICH
ANONYMOUS
MALCOLM WYER
LINDA & STEVE CROWE
ELLEN AND TOM ENNIS
FRANCINE WEINBERG
ELIE HAMMERLING
GABI INGERSOLL
MEGAN WHILDEN
AL & KATHLEEN JAFFE
MAGGIE ROTH
CORTNEY TUNIS
ELIZA VALK
ANDREW BENNER
MICHELLE KOMIE
CAROL BROWER
HALEY ALLEN
ANONYMOUS
OLIVIA GEORGIA
JOHN CAPIZZI & GLENN RIDDELL
NICHOLAS RUSSO
JEFFREY TURNER
VIVIAN HSU
SARAH TRUDGEON