

Edmund Quincy Sewall Jr.
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Concord, [Saturday] March 28th
1840

I came here last Monday afternoon in the stage. I left Father at Boston whither we had come in the chaise. I am to go to Messrs Thoreaus school for 3 months. There are three other boys who board here and go to the school – Charles Jesse & Joseph.² Charles came up with me in the stage.

I study in the morning Solid Geometry, Geography and grammar and in the afternoon read, spell or say definition³ from the reading lesson, say Latin & Algebra. I write every other morning. Saturday is given to writing composition.⁴ We boarders write home once a fort-night if we choose. I wrote to mother today.

This was a day of misfortunes. At noon Charles & I fired upon a party of boys going by in the road. A skirmish ensued and we being inferior in force although Joseph and Jesse had joined us were driven into the house except Charles who was chased away by the boys.

We boys in the house being desirous of seeing the marauders ran into the entry where there was an open window and (as we afterwards found) a pudding cooling to look out of the window. None of us saw the

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pudding till it was lying bottom upwards on the ground and each declared that he was not conscious of knocking it over. As for myself I did not know anything about there being any pudding till some body called out that the pudding was knocked over.

I had therefore to make a dinner on salt fish which I hate. After dinner we took a walk along the river and ~~stayed~~ eat some cranberries and checkerberries. When we got

¹ This transcription follows the original in spelling (including misspellings) and punctuation. Editorial additions and explanations are given in brackets [as in this example]. Words crossed out by Edmund are written with strikethrough as in this example and later insertions by Edmund are set off by carets as in ^this^ example.

² On EQS Jr.'s fellow boarders, see introduction.

³ Horace Hosmer, who was a student at the Concord Academy during the summer months of 1840, recalled that "We had one exercise called defining, but defiling would describe it better. Poetical gems were mangled and then rolled in the mud. It must have been awful to John but he was very patient." Horace Hosmer to S. A. Jones, May 2, 1892, quoted in *Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus: Letters of Horace Hosmer to Dr. S. A. Jones*, ed, George Hendrick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 74.

⁴ Pencil note by EQS Jr. in margin: "(specimen of composition attached)." See "Three Student Compositions by Edmund Quincy Sewall Jr" on this website.

back I carried my letter to the Post Office and solaced myself with two apples and two figs procured at the "Exchange." When I got home Mr. John gave me another fig so I did very well till supper time. Just before supper Joseph who was leaning the back of his chair against the wall slipped down hurt him self some and the chair more for one of the upright rods at the back was started. I believe nobody knows of this but us boys and I hope it will not be discovered before its time. In the evening a small bottle of blue ink was upset on the table cloth. P.S. I'm sorry the pudding was lost for it was a baked rice one such as I should have liked.

[Wednesday] April 1st. I had a nice sail on the river yesterday after school. Messrs John and Henry T. rowed and Jesse and I were passengers. We went up the river against the wind and then sailed down to the monument where we got out with the intention of

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all embarking again, but Mr. J and Jesse being near the monument and Mr H. and I near the boat we jumped in and went across to the abutment of the ^former^ bridge on the opposite side.⁵ I suppose that we should have come back for them if they had staid but they went off with the sail which we had left on the bank. Mr. H. rowed up the river a little way and got out. We had not the keys of the boat and should have been obliged to leave her without being securely fastened or have hauled her up on the shore if Joseph had not come down with the keys. He got two wet feet for his pains. Mr. T had sent for some clams and in the evening Mr. J. and I had a fire in our room to cook some clams for our private eating. We roasted a few and then he went down and got some in a nondescript vessel which they call a monkey to boil. We eat the clams and then he put a little butter into the broth to make it taste good and brought up two hunks of brown bread crust to eat. But alas! as we were sipping the broth out of clamshells (the monkey being put on two sticks of wood across our knees) Mr. John got something in his throat which made him cough and shake so that it upset all on to the floor. We wiped up what little went on the carpet and gave the rug a beat to make it dry.

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We soon went to bed after this and I dreamed of eating clams.

I received a "Hingham Patriot" from home today. I bought two oranges and gave Joseph Keyes one and Jesse half of another. Jesse gave me some raisons [sic]. In the evening we had a nice time.

Before supper Mr John had made a fire in our room and we boiled a "monkey" full of clams leaving them to cool while we eat supper.

After supper we went and eat them and they were delicious. Then we put some more clams into the broth to boil and Mr John went down and got the boys and they all came up into the room.

When they were done and cool we eat them broth and all and then put one [sic] another lot which we eat also. We had been rendered cautious by our last nights misfortune and had a box for a table when eating and a seat when waiting for them to be

⁵ The monument to the Battle of Concord dedicated in 1838. The span of the old North Bridge of Revolutionary fame had been demolished in 1793.

done. We also set the monkey into a tin pan so that if it did upset it might be saved if possible from going on the carpet. We met with not [sic] accident however saving that a single clam dropped out of the window where they were put to cool which was afterwards brought in and eaten by Charles.

We then went to the Lyceum expecting that a Phrenologist would lecture.⁶ His apparatus

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was there but the lecturer had not arrived. A man there set out his casts and several real skulls on the desk but immediately put them back again. One of the skulls was that of a British soldier who fell in the Battle of Concord. It was dug up in Lincoln. It was only the upper half of the head. There was the bullet hole through which the ball which killed him had passed.⁷ A Mr. Haskins lectured on Roger Williams the founder of Rhode Island – a description of his life.⁸ Bought 2 cents worth of burnt almonds going home. I forgot to say while speaking of the lecture that he said that the Pilgrims were so poor that when a man had invited his neighbor to a dish of clams (very apropos to our clam feast) he returned thanks that they were permitted “such of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sand.”⁹

When I got home I found a bundle from home with letters from Father Sister and dear little Georgy and Cornelius Nepos a Latin work.¹⁰ Mother held Georgy’s hand while he wrote. It seems that Father went to Uncle Charles’ the afternoon I left him and came back in the evening.¹¹ He staid at Uncles [sic] Thomas’s till one o'clock and then, seeing a storm coming up and fearful of being caught in the chaise by

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⁶ The series of lectures on phrenology, which actually began on April 3, was delivered by Walton Felch (1790-1872), author of *A Phrenological Chart* (Brookfield, Mass.: E. and L. Merriam, 1839). A notice of the lecture series appeared in the *Yeoman's Gazette*, April 18, 1840, p. 3.

⁷ “I visited a retired—now almost unused graveyard in Lincoln to-day where (5) British soldiers lie buried who fell on the 19th April '75. Edmund Wheeler—grandfather of William—who lived in the old house now pulled down near the present—went over the next day & carted them to this ground— A few years ago one Felch a Phrenologist by leave of the select men dug up—and took away two skulls. The skeletons were very large—probably those of grenadiers. Wm Wheeler who was present—told me this— He said that he had heard old Mr. Child, who lived opposite—say that when one soldier was shot he leaped right up his full length out of the ranks and fell dead. & he Wm Wheeler—saw a bullet hole through & through one of the skulls.” Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. John C. Broderick et al., vol. 3, 1848-1851 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 73, May 31, 1850.

⁸ David Greene Haskins, a Harvard classmate of Henry Thoreau’s, and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s first cousin.

⁹ “They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand” (Deut. 33:19).

¹⁰ Cornelius Nepos, *De Vita Excellentium Imperatorum*, published in Boston in 1826 and Philadelphia in 1833.

¹¹ Rev. Charles Chauncy Sewall.

the deep snow began to return home. He had not gone far when the storm came on rain hail and sleet right in his face. Poor Katy was so tired he had to let her walk slowly the last 5 miles.¹² His letter to Mr John was it seems safe in this pocket when he got home. Georgy wrote that father had brought him “a hymnbook and “Jonas’ stories”¹³ and some oranges and sugar plums and a drum of figs for us all.” Favorite is sitting and the rest of the things well. Mother set the chimney on fire in her anxiety to make a good fire for father to sit by and two of the neighbors came to see what the matter was and whether the house was on fire. Ellens school will probably begin in a fortnight. I never knew before how delightful it is to have letters from home when away from it.

[Thursday] April 2^d is fast-day. We had very unappropriately the best breakfast we have had since I came here consisting of flap-jacks. I went to meeting all day and to a Anti-Slavery lecture by Mr Woodbury in the evening.¹⁴ Dr Ripley was at meeting in the afternoon.¹⁵

[Friday] April 3^d Mr John had the colic so badly last night that he did not come into school in the morning.

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In the evening went to the phrenological lecture which was pretty interesting. (N.B. I made an erroneous statement about this lecturer a few days ago. I said he had not come up from Boston. He had been engaged on the supposition that Mr Haskins would not come but as Mr H. did come he had to give place).

[Saturday] April 4th. Wrote composition about birds.¹⁶ Mr Thoreau said that he should give me something to write about of which I did not know much about so I wrote on the Ostrich the Eagle and Falcon which every body knows some thing about. I suppose he thought I should write about Bobolinks and Chicadees of which I am wholly ignorant. I cunningly took half a sheet of paper to write on so on the whole I managed to fill out my pages. In the afternoon went to the jail with the boys.¹⁷ It has a high brick wall around it with stone laid along the top in which are stuck sharp spikes. The windows were secured with strong bars of iron. Saw a smokehouse in the jail yard for *manufacturing* bacon out of pork. Played about a good while there and then came home.

Sunday 5th Did on't know what sunday school lesson ~~wa~~-is is but believe it is in John 14.2 v. Aunt thinks I had better write my next letter home out of school and so write composition on Saturday. I don't know whether I shall do so or not. (Evening). The text in the morning

¹² Rev. Sewall's horse.

¹³ Jacob Abbott, *Jonas's Stories: Related to Rollo and Lucy* (Boston: Ticknor, 1839).

¹⁴ Rev. James Trask Woodbury (1803-61), pastor of the Congregational Church in Acton, Massachusetts.

¹⁵ Rev. Ezra Ripley. See introduction.

¹⁶ This composition is at AAS and is printed following this diary.

¹⁷ “The present jail was built of stone in 1788, and received its first tenants the April following. It is 65 feet long, 32 wide, 3 stories high, and has 18 apartments, 7 of which are for criminals. It cost £3,094.” Lemuel Shattuck, *A History of the Town of Concord* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne; Concord: John Stacy, 1835), 208.

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was from 1 Corinthians 13th chapter 8th verse. Some one preached for Mr Frost.¹⁸ In the afternoon Aunt and I went to Mr Means Meeting and he preached from 2d Cor 5th 10th. After meeting I wrote a little note to cousin Mary who is to take a long journey with her father and Mother.¹⁹ Dr Gallup²⁰ offered to take anything that Aunt would like to send so she wrote a letter to Uncle Dennis and Aunt Mary and Grandmother sent little Mary a very ^pretty^ bag.

Monday [6th] Went to a Phrenological lecture in the evening. The man is to deliver 4 more lectures on the same subject. He lectured ~~on the animal organs~~ ^on a part of the inferior impulses^ of man Amativeness, Philoprogenitiveness, Adhesiveness and Inhabitiveness.

Tuesday [7th]. Went to another lecture from the same man on the organs of Alimentiveness, Vitativeness, Combativeness, Destructiveness, Secretiveness, Constructiveness, Cautiousness, Love of Approbation, and Self Esteem. I think he said that the next lecture would be on the ~~human qualities~~ ^superior impulses^ of man and would be very interesting.

Wednesday [8th] Went to a lecture from Mr Emerson in the evening. It was on Literature.²¹ I was not at all interested. He is a tall man with piercing blue eyes. One of his ideas was that everyone should think for themselves. I forgot to say that the masters invited Albert Bacon²² and Joseph Keyes and we went to try to get some pine knots to go spear-

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ing with.²³ We got but few because we didn't go to the right place for them. What we did get we left there and when we came home we had some lemonade.

¹⁸ Rev. Barzillai Frost (1804-58), assistant pastor of the First Parish and Rev. Ezra Ripley's successor after the latter's death in 1841.

¹⁹ Mary Sewall Ward (1832-1904) was the daughter of Dennis Ward (1799-1878) and Mary (Watson) Ward (1804-89) of Spencer, Massachusetts.

²⁰ Dr. William Gallup (1805-83), a physician in Concord, Massachusetts.

²¹ This was "the second lecture of his course on 'The Present Age'" and had first been delivered at the New York Mercantile Library on March 17. Concord Lyceum minutes quoted in "Early Records of the Concord Lyceum," in Kenneth Walter Cameron, *Transcendental Climate: New Resources for the Study of Emerson, Thoreau and Their Contemporaries* (Hartford: Transcendental Books, [1963]), 3:694. See Robert E. Spiller and Wallace E. William, eds., *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1972), 3:202. The essay was published under the title "Thoughts on Modern Literature" in the October 1840 issue of the *Dial*.

²² Albert Thompson Bacon (1827-93), from Bedford, Massachusetts. See Thomas W. Baldwin, *Michael Bacon of Dedham, 1640 and His Descendants* (Cambridge: n.p., 1915), 94-95. Albert's first cousin Jerome Augustus Bacon was also attending Concord Academy in the summer of 1840 (*Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 73).

²³ On spear fishing, see introduction. Henry Thoreau described the process in detail in his 1842 essay, "The Natural History of Massachusetts." He also wrote, "Silas Hosmer tells me of his going a-spearfishing in Concord River up in Southboro once with some friends of his. It is a mere

Then we played 'I spy' till most suppertime when the two boys went home.

~~Thursday~~ Friday [10th]. I went to another lecture on phrenology. It was on the superior impulses of men viz. Firmness, Conscientiousness, Reverence, Hope, Benevolence, Mirthfulness and Ideality and I believe another of which I have forgotten the name.²⁴ The next lecture will be on the intellectual powers of man and the last on Education and the application of Phrenology.

Saturday [11th]. In the afternoon we went off into the woods with a parcel of the boys of the school where I played a while and drank out [sic] a jug of lemonade we had carried with us. We then ~~found~~ left the jug till we came back and started for Walden pond. As we were coming back we saw Aunt and Mr. Thoreau and I went and joined her while the rest of the boys kept on.

We went to Goose pond where we heard a tremendous chirping of frogs.²⁵ It has been disputed whether the noise was caused by frogs so we were very curious to know what it was. Mr Thoreau however caught 3 very small frogs two of them in the very act of chirping. While bringing them home one of them chirped in his hat. He carried them to Mr Emerson in a tumbler of water. They chirped there also.

On Sunday morning I believe he put them into a barrel with some rainwater in it. he threw in some sticks for

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them to rest on. They some times rested on these sticks. They sometimes crawled up the side of the barrel. I saw one of them chirping he had swelled out the loose skin of his chest like a little bladder.

Sunday [12th]. I went to meeting all day. Mr Frost preached in the morning from Matthew 6th 19th and 20th. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth' &c., and in the afternoon from Ecclesiastes 9th 2^d. "All things shall come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not, as is the good so is the sinner and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath." At night we heard the frogs peeping and on Monday morning they were nowhere to be seen. They had probably crawled out of some hole in the cover of the barrel and made for the river as Mrs Thoreau affirmed that when she heard them in the night their voices seemed to recede in that direction. Mr Thoreau intended to have preserved them in spirits.

brook there, and they went along the bank without any boat, one carrying a large basket of pine and another the crate and a third the spear. It was hard work. He afterward showed them how they did here, by going in *midsummer* with them and catching a great many." Thoreau, *Journal*, 7:447-48, entry for August 2, 1855.

²⁴ EQS Jr. omits two faculties discussed in Felch's 1839 *Phrenological Chart*: "Imitation" and "Marvelousness" (p. 14).

²⁵ Probably spring peepers, called *Hylodes Pickeringii* by Henry Thoreau *Journal* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin 1906) 9:301-02, entry for March 26, 1857) The modern name is *Pseudacris crucifer*. These small frogs can still be heard in the spring in New England.

Tuesday [14th]. Charles Joseph and I went to Mrs Hoar's to take tea and see Frisbee.²⁶ Jesse could not go on account of the an earache. We had a very pleasant time and came home at eight.

Wednesday [15th]. In the morning Aunt and I took a short walk before school in search of flowers to 'Hubbard's Grove'²⁷ where they are generally very early. We found nothing but some maple blossoms evergreen

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and swamp willow. Saw several turtles in little brooks.

In the afternoon the boys and I went down to see Messrs Thoreau tar the bottom of their boat with a mixture of resin and tallow 4 pounds of the former to half a pound of the latter. I got very angry with Jesse for rubbing my face with water while we were trying to spatter and wet each other. Acted as foolishly as naughtily – laid down on my face on the grass and cried. After a while I got up and we were all friends again. The expedition cost me however a pair of wet feet. Mr John went in the boat and got ^Thursday²⁸ some sweet briars when he had fixed it.

Charles Joseph & I went down with a wheelbarrow and got them out of the boat.

Thursday [16th] Mr Thoreau had his land ploughed. The boys are at work fixing their gardens. They have bought them some little hoes to work with. Mrs. Thoreau is also fixing her flower garden. After school Mrs. T, Aunt, Mr H.T. and I went to Mr Alcott's. His little girl comes to our school she is my second cousin.²⁹ I had the honor of carrying some yeast in a bottle for Mrs. A. Mr Alcott has plenty of seeds and tools as Mr Henry says.

Friday [17th]. In the evening we boys went to mr Hoars and played with Frisbee, Dr Slop (Joseph Brooks) and Jerome Richardson.³⁰ We came home about eight and found that Mrs. Thoreau had left orders that we should go to bed at half past eight in penalty of going at 7 the next evening. When I thought it was about the time I looked and found it was five minutes past it so I went off

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²⁶ George Frisbie Hoar (1826-1904), the future U.S. Senator, was the son of Samuel and Sarah Hoar and a student at the Concord Academy in this period.

²⁷ On the east side of the Sudbury River, a little less than two miles from the village center.

²⁸ EQS Jr. apparently originally ended this entry with the words "wet feet," began the next entry, and then decided to add the last sentence, "Mr John...."

²⁹ At this time Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) had just moved to Concord with his family. The "little girl" EQS Jr. mentions was probably Anna Alcott (Madelon Bedell, *The Alcotts: Biography of a Family* [New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1980], 152). Anna Alcott's grandfather Samuel Sewall was the brother of EQS Jr.'s grandmother Dorothy Sewall May (T. P. Wright, *Some Descendants of Samuel Sewall and Elizabeth Quincy* [n.p., 1958]).

³⁰ Joseph Brooks is described as "the janitor boy" at Concord Academy by Hosmer in *Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 75. Jerome A. Richardson (1830-87) was the son of Jackson Richardson (1808-35) and Sarah Dakin Richardson (1809-96) of Concord. See Albert H. Dakin, *Descendants of Thomas Dakin of Concord, Mass* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle Publishing, 1948), 90.

to bed very luckily as it happened for by so doing I escaped in all probability having a share in a certain unpleasant scrape which occurred shortly after. I received a paper from home. read it aloud.

~~read it aloud~~³¹ Saturday 18th. I wrote composition about berries. Mr. John read it aloud for which I was very sorry because it was not worth it. He also read the autobiographies of F. Hoar and Gorham Bartlett on account of Thanksgiving day.³² The substance of the latter was that the writer went to see one of his uncles with his whole family. They did not get there in time to go to meeting being an hour before dinner time. There were three tables set because one would not hold all. (I think there were 13 children) and 3 turkeys served, with pudding and tarts afterwards. When dinner was done the children took the remainder of the tarts out to play with them. They went into the barn where they ate the tarts which made many of the children sick. In the evening they set on a gallon of molasses for candy but it did not get done and when they tried to pull it, it all stuck to their fingers. The children in their play forgot to wash their hands so that when they went to bed it stuck to the pillows and their hair was all plastered up with it. The writer's family went home at half past ten and the next morning two of them were sick. So ended the joys of Thanksgiving day. To return to sober facts At noon Mr John and I went to the post office. He bought some oranges and gave me one. We got weighed in at Mr Shattuck's store³³ he weighed 117 lbs. He invited Alexander and Andrew Beath (from Cuba) to go to sail with him.³⁴ He also invited me. In the afternoon we went accordingly. Alexander came up and said

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that Andrew had gone to eat his dinner and would wait for us on a bridge. Accordingly we got in and sometimes rowed, sometimes sailed down the stream. We found the wind was not exactly fair to go to Bedford as we intended. Once when we were rounding a point we were right broadside to the wind and waves and Mr T and Alex could hardly keep the boat from driving right on shore. The waves beat in and splattered us all over. At last we got round. We went with very great speed sometimes when we were sailing. When we got to the bridge we hauled up the boat and tipped the water out of her. Andrew was there. We stayed there a little while. The boat soon dried. We got into her again and went under the bridge. The river being now high a great deal of meadow was overflowed.

³¹ EQS Jr. began writing a line above where he intended and then blotted the three words out.

³² Gorham Bartlett (b. 1826, son of Dr. Josiah Bartlett), a student at the Concord Academy. See *Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 73.

³³ Daniel Shattuck (1790-1867) operated a general store in Concord from 1821.

³⁴ The Beaths were students at Concord Academy. Rev. George Moore (1811-47) of Concord wrote in his diary on July 12, 1839, "I find that I am to have a charge also—my brother [Henry (1806-44), just returned from Cuba] is accompanied by two Cuba boys, to be placed under my care and sent to school. These are the sons of Mrs. Beath, with whom my brother has spent most of his time on the island of Cuba. She has been in fact a mother to him, and I know not what he would have done without her aid and care. And I am glad now that I can repay in some degree her kindness by attending to her sons' education." Moore Family Papers, AAS, quoted in Kenneth Walter Cameron, *Transcendental Epilogue*, (Hartford: Transcendental Books, c1965-c1982, 2:265. Cf. also *Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 73.

We got aground several times and sometimes took down the sail and Mr. T & A rowed. We could see the cranberries at the bottom. So we went on till we got below Ball's hill in Bedford. There we ~~fastened~~ hauled up the boat and got out. We looked round in a field for arrowheads but none were found except one which was broken and the point of another. Mr Thoreau found a young turtle no bigger than a cent. We determined to go to the top of a hill to see the prospect. Andrew went back to the boat. Mr Thoreau gave him the turtle to put in the water. We went in towards the hill. We passed near the house of Lee³⁵ one of the scholars and saw him and his father at work in a field. He was rolling in grass seed with a heavy roller drawn by oxen. He said that he had found a piece of an Indian implement that morning. Mr T. stood and talked so long with Mr L. that I became tired and went back to the

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boat where I found Andrew and cut me a stick and picked cranberries but the latter were a combinations of bad tastes and I threw them into the river. I tied my hand kerchief to a big pine stick and set it up occasionally for a flag. After a good while Mr T. and Alexander came back. They had not been to the hill after all. They had the piece of an Indian tool which Lee had given to Mr Thoreau and which Mr T has given to me. It seems to have been used for digging at least Mr John thinks. He says he has a whole one with a hole to put the thumb through and marks for the fingers. Mr Henry thinks it is not probable that the Indians would have used it and that they would be much more likely to use a piece of slate or some other flat stone. I do not know whether ~~they will~~ ^I shall^ preserve it or not. At length we set out to come back having eaten a small luncheon which Mr John produced from one of the cuddies of his boat. I sat in the cow to be pilot and Andrew in the stern the other two rowed. We got aground once or twice but had not much trouble in getting off again. We fastened the boat again near Mr Barrett's house and hid the oars. We then walked home. We found some housatonias³⁶ a little flower which Aunt has looked for unsuccessfully several times. We got home about 7 oclock and had ~~our~~ some supper. Aunt had an attack of the colic. I washed me of course and then went to bed.

Sunday 19th Mr Frost preached in the morning from Jonah 1st 1st & 2^d, "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Ammitai saying Arise go to Nineveh that great city and cry against it for their wickedness has come up before me," and in the af-

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ternoon from Jonah 3^d, 1st & 2^d verses. "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying Arise go unto Nineveh ~~that great city~~ and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." I got some Alcohol for Mr. J.

Monday [20th] In the morning early we heard the sound of bells and cannon and found that they were celebrating the 19th of April. I got up and went to see the fire. The cannon was opposite the gunhouse and they were firing it as fast as they could load. When they had done they put the cannon into the gunhouse again and I came back.

³⁵ Benjamin W. Lee, b. 1824, the son of [E]liab Lee of Concord, a farmer. Daniel W. Howe, *Howe Genealogies* (Haverhill, Mass.: Record Publishing, 1929), 108.

³⁶ Probably EQS Jr. misheard *houstonia*, the flower popularly called the bluet.

Some of the boys had been up ringing the Academy bell. ~~In the evening~~ At sundown they fired again in a field behind the school house. I went to see them and then went to a phrenological lecture the last of the course on Education &c. He had a representation of a ladder with 9 rounds, which were different states of man.

Tuesday 21st. Joseph was up in the tree just before tea time fixing his bluebird box and I was up there too when Aunt invited me to go to the Misses Thoreaus' So I got down and went. We came back to tea.

Wednesday [22nd] In the afternoon Mr J., Charles, Jesse and I went to Goose Pond. It began to rain before we got there and we had to get under trees. We went home after Mr John had ungratefully fired his gun into the tree we had just been resting under.

We stopped into a Mr Tuttle's barn on our return. A new kind of swallows had built their nests under the eaves last season but they were all gone now. It had nearly stopped raining when we set out from the barn and soon ceased entirely. Mr John stopped into a house where he expected to see his aunt. We went on and soon got home. He did not see her however.

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When I got home I ~~sent~~ printed a little letter to Georgy as Aunt expects to send a bundle soon. I sent him a picture drawn by one of the boys in a very patriotic spirit of an eagle standing on a rock with a flag in her bill and a cannon. I expect to write to father and mother.

Friday [24th] After school Mr John went out with his gun and the boys and I went with him. He shot a bay ringed finch to examine.

Saturday [25th] In the afternoon Mr J. Thoreau took Joseph and I out with him in his boat. He carried his gun. We went to Barnett's hill where Mr John and I got out leaving Joe in the boat. ~~H~~ Mr J. shot two birds on the same tree. He first shot a bay ringed finch which he had got the evening before and as soon as he had loaded again shot the other. He then came up ~~but~~ and gave me a string to tie the birds to. He then went back to the boat and Mr J. soon shot a bird on the ground which afterwards proved to be the Rush Sparrow. The other was the Chipping Sparrow. Then we went back to the boat and proceeded up the river. We saw great numbers of blackbirds, at one of which Mr. John fired when very near but with no effect except frightening him. We presently came back and lounged round on the hill a long time without seeing any birds that we wanted. We at last went home.

Sunday [26th] I went to church all day. Grandmother went in the forenoon. There was a report that Dr. Ripley was to preach part of the day but he did not. Mr. Frost did not preach at home.

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I cannot remember where the texts were. Miss More my sunday school teacher invited us scholars to go maying with her friday afternoon.

Monday [27th] After School Mr John went into the woods with J Keyes, Sam Burr,³⁷ ^Jesse^ and myself. He carried his gun and a rope to play with. We threw the rope over the top of a small pine that had been bent by the snow and swung. We also tried to wind each other up in it and tied it up on two trees to tumble over. We jumped over it too. Mr Thoreau shot a Hermit Thrush which is a rare bird and a black and white creeper. The former is a reddish brown bird. There is a strange difference in the accounts of this bird in one respect – Audubon and Wilson say that it is mute while Nuthall says it has powers nearly equal to those of the nightingale.³⁸ The latter I at once recognized as the little ^stuffed^ bird which Mrs. Simmons sent us.

Tuesday [28th] I received a letter from Ellen. (This reminds me that I did not put down that I had a letter from Father last week.) After school Mr John and I went ~~out~~ into the woods, but saw nothing. In the evening I went to the ^last^ concert of the “Euterpians.”³⁹ One of the pieces was the Schoolmaster’s song. Ellen said in her letter that she had 23 scholars and expected two or three more and that we are to have some more chickens. Betty began to set but speckleback drove her off and kept the nest herself.

Friday May 1st. School did not keep this day. It was cloudy and threatened to rain but this did not prevent out going with Mr John up the river in his boat. When a little way up the river we came

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to a small rocky island on which some wild columbines were growing. We went upon Barrett’s hill and saw there a wood tortoise. Soon after it began to rain and we went down under the shelter of some very tall high hemlock trees which formed a pretty good shelter from the rain with the assistance of our umbrellas. Here we stayed a long while. We saw a thorn bush by the side of the river some of the thorns of which were an inch and a half long.

Mr John went out in an interval of the rain and shot a chewink and brought in another wood tortoise larger than the other. After we had looked at the chewink he was thrown into the river. The last showers were accompanied with thunder and lightning though we did not see the latter. At last it stopped raining and we broke off some shadblossoms in great branches and carried them home. On our way we got the honeysuckle or wild columbine we had seen in going up. The boat was fastened at a little distance from the common anchorage.

³⁷ Samuel Cushing Burr (b. 1830) “committed suicide after a wild and dissipated life” and is buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. John S. Keyes, “Memoir of Samuel Burr,” *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*, second series (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1888), 213. Cf. Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 76; and *Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 73.

³⁸ John James Audubon, *Ornithological Biography; or, An Account of the Habits of the Birds of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1832-39); Alexander Wilson, *American Ornithology; or, The Natural History of the Birds of the United States* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1808-14); Thomas Nuttall, *A Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and of Canada* (Cambridge, 1832) and later editions.

³⁹ The Euterpian Vocalists, a quartet from Boston, gave concerts in Concord on April 21 and April 28 at Goodrich’s Hall [Tavern?] in Concord. Notices and advertisements for this second concert appeared in the *Freeman* for April 24 and in the *Yeoman’s Gazette* for April 25.

Saturday 2^d. After dinner Jesse and I went down to the boat to get the paddles and saw six turtles of different sorts going and coming. In the afternoon I went with Miss Sophia Thoreau Miss Prudence Ward and Miss Anna Alcott, Mr John Thoreau and Master Jesse Harding to the cliffs *via* the boiling springs. When at the springs Mr John invented a funnel shaped drinking vessel made of birch bark for the ladies to drink from. I went into the bushes a little way and hearing a rustling among the leaves I saw two rabbits running away. I got a wet foot in trying to get Aunt some water from the chief spring. I took of [sic] my stocking and having wrung it well stuck it on a stick to dry which I

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carried along with me. When I had got almost to the cliff I put it on again. We had to go through an orchard by the way in which we commonly go but the cartpath was ploughed up so we went round by a path in the woods and came out at a part of the cliffs where I had never been before. But in proceeding we soon came to a place where I had been and we went part way down the cliff and stayed there a long while. I had very good fun in swinging round in the tops of ^young^ trees. I cut me a walnut stick with Jesse's help but when he wanted to get him one too we could not find a suitable sapling. On our return we gathered plenty of wild columbines and some violets. We rested again at the boiling spring.

I saw the small Pox burying-ground which has but one stone in it which was erected in memory of Mrs. Sarah Potter who died of small pox taken in the natural way in 1792.⁴⁰

~~Saturday~~ Sunday 3^d. Dr Ripley preached in the afternoon an extemporaneous sermon which he declared his last. The paper says that he was 90 the Friday before.⁴¹

Saturday 9th. I wrote to Ellen. I took dinner at the Misses Thoreaus from whence I went to Mr Keyes' with the boys and then to Capt More's farm.⁴² They carried off a sow and ^six or^ eight little pigs in a cart. I carried one little piggy and put him in the cart. They were to carry off another pig and her 9 children the same afternoon. We came home then. In the evening I washed me in our room and locked the doors. I forgot to unlock them again though I am quite sure I attempted to ~~open~~ unfasten one which is held by a button over the

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latch but the button probably slipped down again and the other escaped my mind completely. Mr John came to bed very late when all the other folks were in bed except Aunt. He came to one door and ~~knocked~~ tried to open it but it was fastened. He then went to the other door and not being able to open that had to call to me so loud to wake me up

⁴⁰ The "Smallpox Cemetery" is near the intersection of Fairhaven Road and the present-day Route 2.

⁴¹ Ezra Ripley was born on May 1, 1751, and thus this was actually his eighty-ninth birthday.

⁴² "In 1843 Captain Abel Moore, the old jailer, resigned and moved from the county house to his farm on the Lexington Road." John S. Keyes, "Samuel Staples," *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*, fourth series (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1909), 136.

and make me comprehend that he waked all the other grown up folks although I do not think the boys heard him.

Sunday 10th A gentleman preached whose name I do not know. In the afternoon his text was “Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days.” He said that some thought this referred to sowing some grain that grew in wet spots upon the low country when overflowed so that it would be covered by the sediment of the water which when soon retiring the grain would spring up and produce a harvest.

But he said that Judea was a hilly country and not likely to have such a grain but that he now thought that it probably referred to the commerce carried on in corn in the reign of David & Solomon. The sermon in the morning was to prove that there was more good than evil in the universe, but I do not remember the text. Miss More was not at church so Mr Rockwood Hoar heard us recite.⁴³ ~~In the evening~~ After supper Mr John and I went to the red bridge.⁴⁴ The railing was all cut over with names many of which were effaced by time and weather. I saw Ellen’s ~~christened~~ ^{see ^initials^} name cut in the wood between those ^initials^ of Mr J. and Mr. H Thoreau which bore date 1830 and ‘35. Mr Henry’s ~~name~~ ^initials^ was cut very neatly and deep. We saw an old vane which had

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been placed on the first meetinghouse of any size in Concord. It bore date in 16—. When the old meetinghouse was pulled down to give place to the present church in 1712 the vane was placed on the old Court house and when the latter was pulled down someone put it in his barn where it now is.

Wednesday [13th] In the afternoon I went with Mr John and Martha Osmer⁴⁵ ~~and~~ Anna Alcott Charles and Joseph. We went in the boat to Anurnick that is as near the hill as we could get and then walked up. When we went up some one was generally on shore walking by the side of the river. I was out some of the time. We saw a turtle on a stick sunning himself. We went on shore on the island and staid a few minutes. As we were walking up through the fields to the hill we saw two wood tortoises. We drank some water at a spring of the hill and when we got to the top there was a very extensive prospect. We could look down on the tops of other hills so that they seemed almost level. We got some sassafras coming home. When we got into the boat we went quite fast with the stream and in an hour reached home. We boys ~~went~~ got out of the boat a little before Mr John and the girls did and he rowed them up to the landing.

(I forgot to say that I got a bundle from home on Tuesday. There was a letter from Georgy directed to

“E Q Sewall

⁴³ Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar (1816-95), George Frisbie Hoar’s older brother and future attorney general of the United States.

⁴⁴ Ellen had visited her Ward relatives in Concord the previous summer. See introduction. The red bridge was on the Lowell road between Concord and Carlisle. See *The Annual Report of the Officers of the Town of Concord Massachusetts from January 1, 1921 to December 31, 1921* (Concord: Thomas Todd), [97].

⁴⁵ Possibly Martha Hosmer (b. 1829), daughter of Cyrus and Lydia Parkman Wheeler Hosmer.

Watergruel”⁴⁶

which is the epithet given me by the boys, and one from Father. George says he gets along well ^pleasantly^ at school and I hope well.)

Thursday [14th]. After school I went with Mr John to practice with his gun at a mark five rods off. He fired 6 or 8 shots apiece

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only two of my balls hit the ~~wall~~ board and of those only one grazed the corner. The other was my last shot and went inside the ring. We brought home the targets. I loaded most of the guns which I fired.

Saturday [16th] I wrote composition. Mr John at first told me to write about “Yankee ingenuity and enterprise” but I did not see how I could possibly make anything of it so he gave me “the ~~history~~ biography of my uncle Ben” to write.⁴⁷ After dinner Mr John asked Charles, Jesse & I to go down to his boat haul it up, empty it out and run a hot iron over a particular spot where it leaked some to make the tar melt and run into the crack. So the iron was heated red-hot in the blacksmith’s fire and we went down and hauled up the boat and tipped her over. Then we tipped her up on one side and Charles was trying to run the iron over when Mr John came up with Gorham Bartlett and his sister and a Miss Pritchard whom he was going to take out in the boat.⁴⁸ So the boat having been fixed was hauled up again and tipped over again and launched. We saw them go off and then we went home and went with Aunt up the turnpike and past Mr Tuttle’s to a meadow. The new kind of swallows had got to Mr Tuttle’s barn for the first day this season. We rested under an apple tree and watched them bringing mud to build their nests. Mr T’s bees were busy in the blossoms overhead and made a very pleasant sound. When we got to the meadow we looked round for flowers. The owner had been attempting to make a cranberry meadow and had built an embankment across the meadow but a large place of it was washed away. We found a good many flowers. Charles found a ground bird’s nest and I found a flower composed of one petal [sic] with the edges lapped over each other and the top goes

off to a point and bends over. We soon went back and went out to fish at the turnpike brook as we had seen some pouts there. We ate some bread and butter that we might not be obliged to come back to supper. I lost my knife and tore my trousers and got nothing after all. Charles caught an eel and after that we had a bite all round from some fish or other but could not catch him. When we got home ~~we~~ Charles cleaned his eel. Charles

⁴⁶ “Who made that wit of water gruel, / A judge of Admiralty, Sewall?” in John Trumbull, *M’Fingal: A Modern Epic Poem; or, The Town Meeting* (Philadelphia: William and Thomas Bradford, 1775) and later editions.

⁴⁷ This fictional biography (in the Sewall Family Papers, AAS) is reproduced as part of this resource.

⁴⁸ Gorham Bartlett had two sisters at this time: Martha (b. 1824) and Elizabeth (b. 1830). Martha is listed as a student at Concord Academy by Harding (*Days of Henry Thoreau*, 76); Hosmer refers to “the Bartlett girls” attending the school in the summer of 1840 (*Remembrances of Concord and the Thoreaus*, 73).

lent me a hook cork and lead and Jesse a pole and line. We found that Mr John and his party had been up to Anursnick and had seen a rattlesnake or rather Gorham saw him and Mr John heard him rattle. They saw a kingfisher dive and supposed he brought up a fish.

This Saturday, May 16th, 1840,
the diary ends, apparently midway of
the three months I spent in Concord
EQS