4 1853-1854: paragraphs 4b to 11

Version F (Late 1853 to Early 1854)

XML:IDs

[hm924v6n1012](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1012)

[hm924v6n1013](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1013)

A second, more complete version of the passage appears later in F:

[hm924v6n1211](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1211)

[hm924v6n1212](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1212)

[hm924v6n1213](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1213)

[hm924v6n1214](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1214)

[hm924v6n1215](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1215)

[hm924v6n1216](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1216)

[hm924v6n1217](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1217)

[hm924v6n1218](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1218)

[hm924v6n1219](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1219)

[hm924v6n1220](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1220)

[hm924v6n1221](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1221)

Transcribed by Beth Witherell, 2020

Black text is in ink in the manuscript; gray text is in pencil. Originally-written material is in 14 point type; material added later is in 11 point type. Marginal notes and notes in square brackets have been supplied by the transcriber. Curly brackets indicate that the text is illegible or that a reading is uncertain.

Abbreviations: c = cancelled, p = pencil

[[hm924v6n1012](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1012) (verso)]

Here you may see how blood vessels are

observe

formed. If you look closely you will ~~see~~

that first there pushes forward from

the thawing mass a stream of softened

clay or sand with a droplike point

like the ball of your finger–feeling its way

slowly and blindly downward–until at last

with more heat and moisture the water which

or in other words those parts which are most inclined to flow–whose particles perchance are the soundest

in their efforts to obey the law to which the most solid and inert also yield

is the blood in this member^–^~~separates itself~~ ~~themselves~~

&

separate {it} form for themselves

from the latter

~~from the solid parts and forms for itself~~ a channel

~~the {farther}~~ P. 474 *in gray pencil by Sanborn*

or artery within ~~it~~– But as the sun dries the *above* or

them artery

upper surface of this ^ it falls in ~~here and there~~

here & there

and reveals ^ a little silvery stream glancing like

lightning from mass to mass–& ever and anon

swallowed up in the sand.– From this an{alony} *Thoreau may have meant*

analogy

we ~~might infer that river~~ So ~~perhaps~~ we might

perchance {~~open~~}

say ^ that ^ river channels are the remains of ^ hollow

arteries

~~cylinders~~ whose upper halves have fallen in,

on being exposed to the sun.–for what are these

~~true~~ actual true *c in p* actual *written over*

veins but rivulets–& the ^ sources of all rivers– *pencilled* real

And ~~when the sun~~ in the winter season

when the sun shines obliquely & nature

~~all~~

to some extent ~~retakes~~ ^ her progeny into

~~recalls~~ recalls *c in p*

her womb–is not the mightiest river bridged

over as at first ~~and~~ flowing concealed as in

an artery under the surface.

the water

In the silicious matter which ~~is~~ deposits you may deposits *altered from* deposited

also

see ^ the lung system & in the still finer sand or earth–

the fleshy fibre & cellular tissue.

What then is a man but a mass of thawing

clay?

Each rounded lobe of these earth-leaves

&

perchance of all leaves, is a thick (now) loitering

drop, larger or smaller.– ~~The~~

in fact

The lobes are ^ the fingers of the leaf

[[hm924v6n1012](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1012) (recto)]

[NB: Thoreau wrote the ink text on this page over an early pencilled version of his poem “To the Comet.” A transcript of the poem follows the transcript of the ink text]

P 475 *in gray p by Sanborn in upper left corner*

as many lobes as it has, in so many di-

rections it inclines to flow–more genial

heat or other influence in its spring

would yet

(~~might~~) have caused it to flow ^ further. might *c in p*

The material flowing downward,

it of course runs together and forms masses and

conglomerations, but if it flowed upward as

2 in trees, it would disperse itself more

finely, & grow more freely and unimpeded

P. 473 *in gray p by Sanborn in*

open and airy. *left margin between* open *and* In

will

In the morning these resting streams ^ start

again and branch and branch again into a my-

riad others. So perchance the ball of the

human but

^finger is ^ a drop congealed The fingers The *altered from* the

1 and toes flow to their extent from the

thawing mass of the body, and then

are congealed for a night. Who knows

what the human body would expand and

flow out to under a more genial heaven.

How short & feeble are our roots, how uncongenial is our sky. Man

extends his arms & legs in vain.

too,

~~So we may ask~~–what is a river, So . . . ask *c in p*

with all its branches but a leaf di-

vested of its pulp, unless its pulp is

intervening earth, forests and fields and

towns and cities–what is the river but

a tree an oak or pine. and its leaves

perchance are ponds and lakes and meadows

innumerable as the springs which feed it.

P. 475 *in gray p by Sanborn in left*

Thus it seemed as if this one *margin preceding* Thus

hill side contained an epitome of

of

all the operations ~~in~~ nature. in *c in p*

Show me how to make a leaf and I will make you a

world–and beings like you to inhabit it

{But} not almost

[Added in pencil in right margin, written from bottom of page up:]

In the spring of the year Nature is lusty & full of sap & from ex-

But

cess of energy scatters leaves of clay & sand– ^Why these forms {Madam}–

learned thyself

why these particular forms? Hast thou ~~{taken}~~ but one lesson–^or is thy

pupil not ready for another? What Champollion shall decypher

this hieroglyphic for us that we may turn over a new leaf at last.

[What follows is a transcript of the first layer of writing on this page, a pencilled draft of “To the Comet.” Readings in braces are supplied from the only other version of the poem, which is at the John Hay Library at Brown (<https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:206599/>)]

The streams of light which center in our sun

And those which from some other system run

Distinguished stranger, system ranger

Plenipotentiary to our sphere.

Dost thou know of any danger

{War or} famine near?

Special Envoy {foreign minister},

{From} the empire {of the} sky

{Dost} thou threaten aught that{‘s} sinister

By thy course on high?

Runner of the firmament

On what errand wast thou sent

Art thou some great general’s scout

weakness

{Come to} spy our {} out

Sculling thy {way} without a sail

Mid the stars and constellations

The pioneer { } or a tail

Through the starry nations

Thou celestial Privateer

We entreat thee come not near

[[hm924v6n1211](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1211) (verso of single leaf)]

island to a considerable height,

before it came to a stand-still.

v end of sand foliage At length the sun’s rays &c The sand foliage

When the ground P. 477 *in blue p in left margin by Sanborn*

was

~~is~~ partially bare of snow & a is *c in p*

d already

few warm days ha~~ve~~ ~~par-~~ ve *c in p* par- *c in p then ink*

somewhat somewhat *written in ink over p*

~~tially~~ dried its surface ^ here & tially *c in p then ink* *caret written in ink over p*

was

there, it ~~is~~ pleasant to com- is *c in p*

pare the first tender signs

of the infant year just peep-

ing forth, with the stately beau- *4 pinholes in left margin*

ty of the withered vegetation which

Life everlasting Life everlasting *written in ink over p*

has withstood the winter,–^asters has *altered to* had *in p caret written in ink*

*over p*

~~and~~ golden rods and grace- and *c in p*

ful wild grasses whose winter

is more stately than their

summer even, as if ~~not till~~ not till then *c in ink over p*

not till then not *and* till then *written in ink over pl*

~~then~~ their beauty was ^ ripe–, ^ the *carets written in ink over p*

various sedges & other strong-

stemmed plants, which have have *altered to* had *in ink*

not ~~ever~~ yet sown all their ever *c in ink over p*

seeds–even cotton grass–cat

tails–mulleins–hardhack–

meadow-sweet &c &c, those

unexhausted granaries of winter

which entertain the earliest

birds. I never tire of admiring

the drooping sheaf-like top

of the wool grass; it brings

[[hm924v6n1212](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1212) (recto of single leaf)]

P 478 *in blue p by Sanborn above* the

back the summer to our winter back . . . of summer *outlined and c in p*

memories, and is among the

of man copy

forms which art loves to ~~perpetuate~~.

& which in the vegetable kingdom have the same relation to types already

existing in the mind ^ that astronomy has

It is an antique style older than

the Greek or Egyptian, a lighter a lighter . . . Composite *outlined and c in p, then*

*marked* retain

and more graceful Ionic, a

retain simpler Doric, a richer Corinthian,

a more various Composite All

How many of

the phenomena of winter are

suggestive of an inexpressible ten- *4 to 6 pinholes in left margin*

derness and fragile delicacy! We

are accustomed to hear this

king described as a rude and

boysterous tyrant, but with the

gentleness of a lover he adorns

¶ At the approach of

the tresses of summer spring the red

squirels got

under my house 2 at

At length the sun’s rays have P. 469 *in blue p by Sanborn in left margin*

at a time &c

attained the right angle, and

warm winds blow up mist &

rain, and melt the snow banks,

and the sun dispersing the mist

smiles on a checquered landscape

of russet & white smoking with

incense, through which the traveller

picks his way from islet to islet

cheered by the music of a myriad

tinkling rills & rivulets whose

veins are filled with the blood

[[hm924v6n1213](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1213) (verso of single leaf)]

P 469 *in blue p by Sanborn above* winter

of winter which they are bearing

off.

Few phenomena gave me

more delight than to observe the

forms which thawing claw & sand claw & sand *transposed in p*

assumed (~~in the spring~~) in flowing d *added in p to* assume in the spring *c in p*

down the sides of a deep cut

on the rail-road through which

I passed on my way to the village.

a P 470 *in blue p by Sanborn above* This

~~This~~ phenomenon ~~is~~ not very com- This *c in p* is *c in p*

*4 to 6 pinholes in right margin*

mon on so large ~~and perfect~~ and perfect *c in p*

though

a scale ~~as there~~, ~~but~~ the number here *altered to* there *in p then c in p*  but *c in p*

of freshly exposed banks of the

right material must have been

greatly multiplied since railroads

invented

were ~~built~~. (This part of the This . . . occurs. *c in p*

cut is about ¼ of a mile

long, running north & south,

from 2 to

and ~~3~~0 ~~or~~ 40 feet deep, and

in several places an impure

clare occurs.) When the frost clare *altered to* clay *in pencil*

comes out ~~of the ground~~ in the of the ground *c in p*

spring, and even in a warm

thawing day in the winter, the

2 sand ~~and clay~~ begins to flow and clay *c in p* s *added in p to* begin

down the slopes like lava, some- the *altered to* these *in p* s *added to* slope *in p*

times bursting out through the

snow & overflowing it, where

[[hm924v6n1214](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1214) (recto of single leaf)]

before P 470 *in blue p by Sanborn above* no

no sand was to be seen^. Innu-

merable little streams & ripples

lap

over ^ ~~flow~~ & interlace one with flow *c in p*

another, exhibiting a sort of hy-

brid product which obeys half

2 way the law of currents, and

half way that of vegetation,–

~~resulting in~~) ~~a grotesque or my~~- resulting in . . . but oftenest *c in p, in*

*both straight and wavy lines*

~~thological vegetation, whose forms~~

imitated

~~we see ^ in bronze, as if the work-~~ *4 to 6 pinholes in left margin*

~~ers in bronze had got their pat-~~

~~terns here.~~ ~~Sometimes the ma~~- the *altered in p to* The

~~terial is~~ (~~bluish clay, sometimes~~

~~clay mixed with reddish sand, but~~

~~commonly~~ (Though there was clay in the cut the material was commonly

~~oftenest~~ ^ sand, of every degree

rich

of fineness & of various ^ colors

1

without any apparent mix-

For

ture of clay. As it flows it

takes the forms of vines & sappy

~~pulpy~~ leaves–of coral–of pulpy *c in p* of coral . . . kinds *outlined and c in p*

birds

leopards paws and ~~the~~ feet the *c in p*

~~of antedeluvian birds~~, of brains of antediluvian birds *c in p*

or lungs or bowels, and excre-

ments of all kinds, making

heaps of pulpy sprays overlying

each other a foot or more

in depth–and resembling as

you look down on them

[[hm924v6n1215](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1215) (verso of single leaf)]

P 470 *in blue p by Sanborn above* lacin

the laciniated lobed & imbricated

or you are reminded of coral or of leopards paws or birds feet, of brains or lungs or

bowels & excrements of all kinds– It is a grotesque or mythological

thalluses of some lichens^–destined

is it not

vegetation ^ whose forms we see imitated in bronze

perhaps under some circumstances P 471 *in blue p by Sanborn in right margin*

to become a puzzle to future geol-

whole used to used to *may be erased*

ogists. The ^ cut ^ impressed me as if ed *c in p*

it were a cave with its stalactites

laid open to the light–these forms

being in ~~the~~ cavernous & cyclopean the *c in p*

style (~~of the inside of the earth~~. of . . . earth *c in p*

When the flowing mass reaches the *4 to 6 pinholes in right margin*

drain at the foot of the bank

it spreads out flatter into sands

or strands–(~~vasa-vagues–or~~

~~sandbars, like those formed~~

~~at the mouths of rivers~~), the

separate streams losing their

semicylindrical form and gradually

~~growin~~ becoming more & more

flat & broad, running together

as they are more moist till

they form an almost flat

sand variously and beautifully

shaded, but in which you can

still trace the original forms

of vegetation; till at length in

are

the water itself they are &^ lost in the

2 ripple marks on the bottom–

1 ~~and~~ converted into vasa, vagues, or sandbars.

[[hm924v6n1216](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1216) (recto of page [1] of bifolio)]

P. 471 *in blue p by Sanborn in left margin*

1 like those formed at the

mouths of rivers.

which is from 20 to 40 feet high

The whole bank ^ is sometimes over-

laid with a mass of this kind

of foliage–or sandy rupture–

for a quarter of a mile on

one or both sides, the produce

of one spring day. Sometimes

it is slightly excited to produc-

tiveness by a rain in mid sum- *4 to 6 pinholes in left margin*

What makes this foliage

mer. ^This sand~~y~~ ~~vegetation~~ y *c in p* vegetation . . . so *c in p*

~~so~~ ~~is~~ th{at} is *c in ink* th{at} *may be erased*

~~would not be so~~ ^ remarka-

~~because~~ it its because *c in ink* it *in ink written over p*

~~ble if it did not~~ springing into ble . . . not *c in p*

existence thus suddenly, as if by

magic, while to the eye it has

all the perfection of the most

slowly formed works of nature

we

and art. Just as ~~I~~ should think I *c in p*

that God was more alive and pre-

we

sent if ~~I~~ should see the trees grow I *c in p*

~~apace~~; so when I see on the apace *c in p*

for the sun acts on one side first

one side the inert bank, ^ and P. 472 *in blue p by Sanborn in left margin*

on the other this luxuriant fo-

liage, the creation of an hour I

am affected as if in a peculiar

sense I stood in the laboratory

the Who

of ~~an~~ artist. (~~That Power that~~) an *c in p* P *altered from* p

made the world & me ~~is~~ still is *c in p*

(had come to where he was)

[[hm924v6n1217](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1217) (verso of page [1] of bifolio]

at work, sporting on this bank

and with excess of energy strewing

his fresh designs about.

When the sun withdraws P. 473 *in blue p by Sanborn in left margin*

the sand ceases to flow, but

in the morning the streams will

start once more and branch &

branch again into a myriad

by this

others. You may ~~here~~ see, ^ per- here *c in p*

chance, how blood vessels are

*6 or 7 pinholes in right margin*

formed. If you look closely you

~~will~~ observe that first there will *c in p*

pushes forward from the thaw-

ing mass a stream of softened

sand with a drop like point

like the ball of the finger, feel-

ing its way slowly and blindly

downward, until at last with

more heat and moisture, as

the sun gets higher, the most

fluid portion, in its effort to

obey the law to which the most

inert also yields, separates from

the latter and forms for it-

self a channel or artery with-

in that. But when the sun

dries the upper surface of this

artery, it falls in and reveals

[[hm924v6n1218](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1218) (recto of page [2] of bifolio]

P 474 *in blue p by Sanborn above* a

a little silvery stream glancing

like lightning from mass to mass,

from one stage of pulpy leaves

or branches to another, and is

ever and anon swallowed

such are the sources of all rivers

up in the sand.^ So perhaps So . . . streams *outlined and c in p with a single*

*vertical line*

the river channels are the re-

mains of hollow arteries, whose

upper halves have fallen in,

being exposed to the sun–& what *6 or 7 pinholes in left margin*

indeed are these very veins but

rivulets, the natural sources

of all rivers? In the winter,

when the sun shines more o-

bliquely, and nature to some

extent retakes her progeny into

her womb, is not the mightiest omitted *in blue p by Sanborn written vertically*

*in left margin from bottom to top*

river bridged over as at first,

flowing concealed as in an

artery under the surface, until

the sun destroys its upper side?

And even in summer is there

not an effort partially to bridge

over again this exposed and

naked vein with a thin pellicle

of pads? The home of waters

is within the earth and

rivers are but the streams b *written over scraped off letter*

[[hm924v6n1219](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1219) (verso of page [2] of bifolio)]

of perspiration. of perspiration *c in p*

P. 474 *in blue p by Sanborn in left margin*

~~What is a river with all its~~

~~branches but a~~ In the si-

licious matter which the water

deposits is perhaps the bony system

and in the still finer soil and soil *altered from* sand

organic matter the fleshy fibre

or cellular tissue. What is man

but a mass of thawing clay? The

ball of the human finger is but

a drop congealed. The fingers *6 or 7 pinholes in right margin*

& toes flow to their extent from

the thawing mass of the body.

How short and feeble are How . . . itself *c in p with a single vertical line*

our roots; how uncongenial

is our sky! We extend our

arms and legs in vain.

Who knows what the hu-

man body would expand &

flow out to under a more

genial heaven–stretched on

a bank in paradise. Have

we not unsatisfied instincts?

The sand flowing downward

runs together & forms masses

and conglomerations, but in

trees a different material

flowing upward disperses itself

[[hm924v6n1220](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1220) (recto of single leaf)]

more finely, and grows more more . . . airy *c in p with a single vertical line*

freely and unimpeded, open &

airy. Each rounded lobe of the P. 475 *in blue p by Sanborn following* airy.

vegetable leaf is a thick and now loiter-

ing drop, larger or smaller;

the lobes are in fact the fingers

of the leaf, and as many

2 lobes as it has in so many

tends

directions it ~~inclines~~ to flow, inclines *c in p*

and more genial heat or

*6 or 7 pinholes in left margin*

other influences would have

caused it to flow yet further.

Is not The hand ~~is but~~ a spreading is but *circled and c in p*

The hand . . . the head *c in p then*

1 palm leaf with its lobes and *cancellation line erased*

The ear may be regarded as a lichen (umbili-

veins.? caria) on the side of the head.

What is a river with all What . . . it. *c in p with a single vertical line*

its branches but a leaf dives-

ted of its pulp, unless its pulp

is intervening earth, forests &

fields, and the towns & cities

are the nests or ova of insects

in the axils of its veins– What

is the river but a tree,–for

~~the~~ a leaf contains the tree–an

oak or pine, and its leaves per-

chance are lakes and meadows

innumerable, and the springs

which feed it.

[[hm924v6n1221](https://cdm16003.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16003coll16/id/1221) (verso of single leaf)]

P. 475 *in blue p by Sanborn preceding* Thus

Thus it seemed that this one hill-

side contained an epitome of all

the operations of nature. The maker

of this earth but patented a leaf; that that . . . form? *outlined and c in p*

may be the cypher upon our shields. But

why this particular form? What Cham-

will

pollion ~~shall~~ decypher this hieroglyphic shall *c in p*

for us?, that we may turn over a

new leaf at last? The globe is a The *altered in p to* this

The . . . awakens *outlined and c in p*

worthier place to live on for this ~~slum-~~

~~bering life that may awake, that~~

*6 or 7 pinholes in right margin*

~~already partially awakens~~. This phe-

nomenon is more cheering to me

than the fertility and luxuriance

of vineyards. To be sure it is somewhat

excrementitious is its character, and there

is no end to the heaps of liver lights & bow-

els, as if the globe were turned wrong

side outwards, but this proves at least

that nature has some bowels, and there  *comma after* bowels *added in p*

P. 477 *in blue p by Sanborn in right margin*

again is mother of humanity. I know

of nothing so purgative of winter fumes

2 VS It convinces this is the frost coming out of the ground

& indigestions. This is spring– It preceeds the green & flowery spring

as mythology preceeds regular poetry

~~Thus~~ the frost comes out of the Thus *c in p*

1 But ere long not only on these banks–but ~~on every side~~–on every hill & plain & in every hollow

ground like a dormant quadruped from

its burrow–& seeks the sea with music

migrates to

like the birds–or ~~visits~~ ^ other climes

This is the earliest spring. It preceeds the green & flowery spring {as my-}

in clouds. Thaw with his gentle per-

thology does regular poetry

suasion is more powerful than Thor

with his hammer. The one melts, the

other but breaks in pieces.

v back When the {ground} V back When the ground *first* v back *probably erased*