

Sometimes, on Sundays?

I heard the bells, the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and, as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound:

- Acquires a certain vibratory hum? (As if the pine needles in the horizon were strings of a harp which it swept?)
- All sound heard at the greatest possible distance? Produces one? Vibration? Atmosphere?
- As the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes?
- There came to me in this case a melody which the air had strained?

The echo is, to some extent, an original sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice.

At evening, the distant lowing of some cow in the horizon beyond the woods sounded sweet and melodious, and at first I would mistake it for the voices:

- I do not mean to be satirical, but to express my appreciation of those youths' singing, when I state that I perceived clearly that it was akin to the music of the cow, and they were at length one articulation of Nature. Regularly at half past seven, in one part of the summer, after the evening train had gone by.
- They would begin to sing almost with as much precision as a clock, within five minutes of a particular time, referred to the setting of the sun, every evening. I had a rare opportunity to become acquainted with their habits.
- Sometimes I heard four or five at once in different parts of the wood, by accident one a bar behind another, and so near me that works well.
- When other birds are still the screech owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. Yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the wood-side, reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds.
- They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls. (Souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth.)