

The Diary of Thomas Alva Edison

Thomas Edison kept a diary while on vacation during the summer of 1885. This webpage presents the complete text of the diary transcribed from a facsimile of the original.

Edison was 38 at the time and the vacation was his first sustained break from work in 26 years. The diary is almost completely unscientific, much of it whimsical or describing the mundane in purposely grandiloquent language. At this time in his life he is a widower with three children, and looking for a wife. He has already invented the phonograph (though not yet developed it commercially) and his light and power distribution system.

The vacation is mostly at Ezra Gilliland's rented summer seashore retreat called Woodside Villa, near Winthrop, Massachusetts, on Boston Harbor. Ezra Gilliland is a friend of Edison's from his youthful telegraph operator days, when they were known respectively as Damon and Pythias (as in the Roman legend) because of their close friendship. Damon now, that is, at the time of the Diary, works for the Bell Telephone Company, which had purchased Edison's patents on improvements to the telephone.

Some months earlier Edison had asked Gilliland's wife to introduce him to marriageable girls. Mrs. Gilliland, or "Mamma G" as he calls her in the Diary, introduced him to Mina Miller sometime before the vacation. He mentions Mina frequently. He also mentions Louise Igoe, another marriageable option though apparently she is more interested in Mina's brother.

Editing has been confined to correcting a few misspelled words, separating text into paragraphs when a new subject is introduced and adding punctuation where necessary. An underline or dash in place of letters is Edison's. Letters in brackets are ours. Each page number links to a

photograph of that page in the original diary. Pagination follows the original book, though its pages were unnumbered.

Per above the text follows the original. It is superior to the version in *The Diary and Sundry Observations of Thomas Edison*, edited by Dagobert Runes. For example, where Edison writes “down down to the uttermost depths” (clearly the repetition is intentional) Mr. Runes has but one “down.”

[1]

Menlo Park N.J.
Sunday July 12 1885

Awakened at 5:15 AM. My eyes were embarrassed by the sunbeams. Turned my back to them and tried to take another dip into oblivion. Succeeded. Awakened at 7 AM. Thought of Mina, Daisy, and Mamma G. [*] Put all 3 in my mental kaleidoscope to obtain a new combination a la Galton. [**] Took Mina as a basis, tried to improve her beauty by discarding and adding certain features borrowed from Daisy and Mamma G. A sort of Raphaelized beauty, got into it too deep, mind flew away and I went to sleep again.

Awakened at 8:15 AM. Powerful itching of my head, lots of white dry dandruff. What is this d—mnable material? Perhaps it's the dust from the dry literary matter I've crowded into my noddle lately. It's nomadic, gets all over my coat, must read about it in the Encyclopedia.

Smoking too much makes me nervous. Must lasso my natural tendency to acquire such habits. Holding heavy cigar constantly in my mouth has deformed my upper lip, it has a sort of Havana curl.

Arose at 9 o'clock, came down stairs expecting twas too late for breakfast. Twasn't. Couldn't eat much, nerves of stomach too nicotinny. The roots of

tobacco plants must go clear through to hell. Satan's principal agent
Dyspepsia

* Mina is Miss Mina Miller, age 20. Daisy is Miss Daisy Gaston from Indianapolis, visiting the Gillilands. Mamma G is Lillian Gilliland.

** A reference to Francis Galton, who among other things studied composite portraiture. He wrote "Combined Portraits, and the Combination of Sense Impressions Generally" published in 1879.

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must have charge of this branch of the vegetable kingdom.

It has just occurred to me that the brain may digest certain portions of food, say the ethereal part, as well as the stomach. Perhaps dandruff is the excreta of the mind — the quantity of this material being directly proportional to the amount of reading one indulges in. A book on German metaphysics would thus easily ruin a dress suit.

After breakfast start reading Hawthorne's English Notebook. [*] Don't think much of it. Perhaps I'm a literary barbarian and am not yet educated up to the point of appreciating fine writing. 90 per cent of his book is descriptive of old churches and graveyards and coroners. He and Geo Selwyn [**] ought to have been appointed perpetual coroners of London. Two fine things in the book were these. Hawthorne shewing to little Rose Hawthorne a big live lobster told her it was a very ugly thing and would bite everybody, whereupon she asked "if the first one God made bit him." Again: "Ghostland is beyond the jurisdiction of veracity."

I think freckles on the skin are due to some salt of Iron, sunlight brings them out by reducing them from high to low state of oxidation. Perhaps with a powerful magnet applied for some time, and then with proper chemicals, these mudholes of beauty might be removed.

Dot [***] is

* Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), American novelist and short story writer. He kept a private journal all his life, later published posthumously. The book Edison had was *Passages From Hawthorne's English Note-Books* covering the years 1853 to 1858.

** George Selwyn (1719–1791), who had been a Member of Parliament in England.

*** “Dot” was Edison’s nickname for his daughter Marion, aged 12 – as in the dot and dash of telegraphy.

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very busy cleaning the abode of our deaf and dumb parrot. She has fed it tons of edibles and never got a sound out of it. This bird has the taciturnity of a statue, and the dirt producing capacity of a drove of buffalo.

This is by far the nicest day of this season, neither too hot [n]or too cold. It blooms on the apex of perfection — an Edenday. Good day for an angels’ picnic. They could lunch on the smell of flowers and new mown hay, drink the moisture of the air, and dance to the hum of bees. Fancy the soul of Plato astride of a butterfly, riding around Menlo Park with a lunch basket.

Nature is bound to smile somehow. Holzer [*] has a little dog which just came on the veranda. The face of this dog was as dismal as a bust of Dante, but the dog wagged its tail continuously. This is evidently the way a dog laughs. I wonder if dogs ever go up to flowers and smell them. I think not. Flowers were never intended for dogs and perhaps only incidentally for man, evidently Darwin has it right. They make themselves pretty to attract the insect world who are the transportation agents of their pollen, pollen freight via B^{ce} line.

There is a bumblebees nest somewhere near this veranda, several times one came near me. Some little information (acquired experimentally) I obtained when a

* William Holzer was one of Edison’s glassblowers. He held several patents on methods of mass-producing the glass part of a light bulb.

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small boy causes me to lose all delight in watching the navigation of this armed flower burglar.

Had dinner at 3 PM. Ruins of a chicken, rice pudding. I eat too quick.

At 4 o'clock Dot came around with her horse "Colonel" and took me out riding. Beautiful roads. Saw 10 acre lot full [of] cultivated red raspberries. "A burying ground" so to speak. Got this execrable pun off on Dot. Dot says she is going to write a novel, already started on. She has the judgement of a girl of 16 although only 12. We passed through the town of Metuchen. This town was named after an Indian chief, they called him Metuchen the chief of the rolling lands, the country being undulating. Dot laughed heartily when I told her about a church being a heavenly fire-escape.

Returned from drive at 5 PM. Commenced [to] read short sketches of life's Macauley, Sidney Smith, Dickens, and Charlotte Bronte. [*] Macauley when only 4 years old [was an] omnivorous reader, used book language in his childish conversations. When 5 years old, [a] lady spilled some hot coffee on his legs. After a while she asked him if he was better. He replied "Madam the agony has abated." Macauley's mother must have built his mind several years before his body.

Sidney Smith's flashes of wit are perfect, to call them chestnuts would be literary blasphemy.

* Thomas Macaulay (1800–1859), English lawyer and historian. W. Sidney Smith (1764–1840), English naval officer. Charles Dickens (1812–1870), English writer. Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855), English novelist.

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They are wandering jewels to wander forever in the printers world. Don't like Dickens — don't know why. I'll stock my literary cellar with his works later. Charlotte Bronte was like DeQuincy, [*] what a nice married couple they would have been. I must read Jane Eyre.

Played a little on the piano. It's badly out of tune. Two keys have lost their voice.

Dot just read to me outlines of her proposed novel, the basis seems to be a marriage under duress. I told her that in case of a marriage to put in bucketfuls of misery. This would make it realistic. Speaking of realism in painting etc Steele Macaye at a dinner given to H H Porter, Wm Winter^[**] and myself told us of a definition of modern realism given by some frenchman whose name I have forgotten, "Realism, a dirty long haired painter sitting on the head of a bust of Shakespeare painting a pair of old boots covered with dung." The bell rings for supper. I go.

Sardines the principal attraction. On seeing them was attacked by a stroke of vivid memory of some sardines I ate last winter that caused a rebellion in the labyrinth of my stomach. Could scarcely swallow them today.

* Thomas de Quincey (1785–1859), English writer.

** Steele MacKaye (1842–1894), actor, playwright, producer, theater manager. Henry H. Porter (1835–1910), railroad president and banker. William Winter (1836–1917), dramatic critic.

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They nearly did the "return ball" act.

After supper Dot pitched a ball to me several dozen times, first I ever tried to catch. It was as hard as Nero's heart — nearly broke my baby-finger. Gave it up. Learned Dot and Maggie how to play "Duck on the rock." They both thought it great fun, and this is Sunday. My conscience seems to be oblivious of Sunday — it must be incrustated with a sort of irreligious tartar. If I was not so deaf I might go to church and get it taken off or at least loosened — [p]eccavi, I will read the new version of the bible.

Holzer is going to use the old laboratory for the purpose of hatching chickens artificially by an electric incubator. He is very enthusiastic. Gave me full details. He is a very patient and careful experimenter. Think he

will succeed. Everything succeeded in that old laboratory. Just think, electricity employed to cheat a poor hen out of the pleasures of maternity — Machine born chickens — What is home without a mother. [*]

I suggested to H that he vaccinate his hens with chicken pox virus, then the eggs would have their embryo hereditarily inoculated and none of the chickens would have the disease. For economy's sake he could start with one hen and rooster. He being

* “What is home without a mother” is the first line of a popular song of that title written in 1854 by Septimus Winner. (He also wrote “Ten Little Injuns” which lived on into the twentieth century in simplified form as “Ten Little Indians.”)

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a scientific man with no farm experience I explained the necessity of having a rooster. He saw the force of this suggestion at once.

The sun has left us on time, am going to read from the Encyclopedia Britannica to steady my nerves and go to bed early. I will shut my eyes and imagine a terraced abyss, each terrace occupied by a beautiful maiden. To the first I will deliver my mind and they will pass it down down to the uttermost depths of silence and oblivion. Went to bed, worked my imagination for a supply of maidens, only saw Mina, Daisy and Mamma [G]. Scheme busted. Sleep.

Woodside Villa
Boston Harbor

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Menlo Park NJ July 13 1885

Woke (is there such a word) at 6 o'clock. Slipped down the declivity of unconsciousness again until 7. Arose and tried to shave with a razor so dull that every time I scraped my face it looked as if I was in the throes of cholera morbus. By shaving often I to a certain extent circumvent the

diabolical malignity of these razors. If I could get my mind down to details perhaps could learn to sharpen it, but on the other hand I might cut myself.

As I had to catch the 7:30 AM train for New York I hurried breakfast, crowded meat, potatoes, eggs, coffee, tandem down into the chemical room of my body. I've now got dyspepsia in that diabolical thing that Carlyle calls the stomach. [*] Rushed and caught train.

Bought a New York World at Elizabeth [NJ station] for my mental breakfast. Among the million of perfected mortals on Manhattan island two of them took it into their heads to cut their navel chord from mother earth and be born into a new world, while two other less developed citizens stopped two of the neighbors from living. The details of these two little

* Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881, England) made a distinction between what he called "stomach" and "soul."

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incidents conveyed to my mind what beautiful creatures we live among, and how with the aid of the police, civilization so rapidly advances.

Went to New York via Desbrosses Street ferry. Took [horse-drawn street] cars across town. Saw a woman get into car that [who] was so tall and frightfully thin as well as dried up that my mechanical mind at once conceived the idea that it would be the proper thing to run a lancet into her arm and knee joints and insert automatic self feeding oil cups to diminish the creaking when she walked. Got off at Broadway. Tried experiment of walking two miles to our office [at] 65 5th Ave with idea it would alleviate my dyspeptic pains. It didn't. Went into Scribner & Sons on way up, saw about a thousand books I wanted right off. Mind N° 1 said why not buy a box full and send to Boston now. Mind N° 2 (acquired and worldly mind) gave a most withering mental glance at mind N° 1 and said You fool, buy only two books, these you can carry without trouble and will last until you get to Boston. Buying books in NYork to send to Boston is like "carrying coals to Newcastle." Of course I took the advice of this

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earthly adviser. Bought Aldrich's [*] *Story of a Bad Boy* which is a spongecake kind of literature, very witty and charming, and a work on Goethe and Schiller by Boynsen which is soggy literature, a little wit and anecdote in this style of literature would have the same effect as baking soda on bread, give pleasing results.

Waited one hour for the appearance of a lawyer who is to cross-examine me on events that occurred 11 years ago. Went on stand at 11:30. He handed me a piece of paper with some figures on it, not another mark, asked in a childlike voice if these were my figures, what they were about and what day 11 years ago I made them. This implied compliment to the splendor of my memory was at first so pleasing to my vanity that I tried every means to trap my memory into stating just what he wanted. But then I thought what good is a compliment from a 10 cent lawyer and I waived back my recollection. A lawsuit is the suicide of time.

Got through at 3:30 PM. Waded through a lot of accumulated correspondence mostly relating to other peoples business. Insull [**] saw Wiman [***] about getting car

* Thomas Bailey Aldrich. *The Story of a Bad Boy* is an account of his childhood in New Hampshire and was first published serially in 1869 in *Our Young Folks* magazine.

** Samuel Insull, Edison's secretary at the time, English born.

*** Erastus Wiman, a Canadian expatriate businessman working out of New York.

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for Railroad Telegh experiment. Will get costs in day or so. Tomlinson [*] made Sammy mad by saying he – Insull – was Valet to my intellect. Got \$ 100, met Dot and skipped for the Argosy of the Puritan Sea i.e. Sound Steamboat.

Dot is reading a novel — rather trashy. Love hash. I completed reading Aldrich's *Bad Boy* and advanced 50 pages in Goethe then retired to a

“Sound” Sleep.

* John Tomlinson, Edison’s attorney. Soon after this vacation Ezra Gilliland (Damon) left the Bell Telephone Company and went to work for Edison. A few years later Tomlinson and Gilliland tried to defraud Edison in the marketing of Edison’s phonograph. Edison fired Tomlinson and severed all relations with Gilliland.

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Woodside Villa July 14, 1885.

Dot introduced me to a new day at 5:30 AM. Arose — toiletted quickly — breakfasted. Then went from boat to street car. Asked colored gentleman, how long before car left. [He] worked his articulating apparatus so weakly I didn’t hear [a] word he said. It’s nice to be a little deaf when travelling, you can ask everybody directions then pump your imagination for the answer, it strengthens this faculty.

Took train leaving at 7 from Providence for the metropolis of culture. [*] Arrived there 9 am. “Coupaid” it to Damon’s office. [**] Waited 3/4 hour for his arrival. Then left for the Chateau-sur-le-mer. [***] If I stay there much longer Mrs G___ will think me a bore. Perhaps she thinks I make only two visits each year in one place each of 6 months.

Noticed there was no stewardess on the ferryboat, strange omission considering the length of the voyage and the swell made by the tri-monthly boat to Nantucket. Man with a dusty railroad Co expression let down a sort of portcullis

* Boston.

** In the 19th century a coupé was a closed four-wheel horse-drawn carriage having a forward facing seat for the passengers.

Damon (as in Damon and Pythias of Roman legend) was the nickname Edison used for Ezra Gilliland, a friend from his days as a telegraph operator and now working for the Bell Telephone Company. They would see one another in the course of business because Bell Telephone had acquired the patents on Edison’s improvements to Bell’s original telephone. Gilliland rented a beach cottage in an area near

Winthrop, Massachusetts known as Woodside Park, and he and his wife had invited Edison to visit.

*** House on the sea.

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and the passengers poured themselves out. Arrived Winthrop junction. Found Patrick there according to telephonic instructions, another evidence that the telephone works sometimes. Patrick had the Americanized dog cart [*] and incidentally a horse, suppose[ed] Patrick would forget the horse, because last week he went into Boston to Damon's city residence and turned on the gas and started up the meter from a state of innocence to the wildest prevarication and forgot to turn gas off. Arrived at Woodside Villa and was greeted by Mamma [G] with a smile as sweet as a cherub that buzzed around the bedside of Raphael. [**]

A fresh invoice of innocence and beauty had arrived in my absence in the persons of Miss Louise Igoe [***] and her aunt. Miss Igoe like Miss Daisy is from Indianapolis, that producer of Hoosier Venus's. Miss Igoe is a pronounced blonde, blue eyes, with a complexion as clear as the conscience of a baby angel, with hair like Andromache. [****]

Miss Igoe's aunt is a bright elderly lady who beat me so bad at checkers that my bump of "Strategic combination" [*****] has sunk in about two

* A dogcart is a light one horse-drawn vehicle. The original design had a box behind the driver to hold hunting dogs, or the box could be converted into a backward-facing seat. Later designs simply had a seat behind the driver. The American version had four wheels instead of two.

** Raphael (1483–1520), Italian Renaissance painter, contemporary of Leonardo and Michelangelo.

*** Louise Igoe, a friend of Mrs. Gilliland from Indianapolis who was visiting Boston. She had a friend whose younger sister was Mina Miller, studying music at a school in Boston. She later married Mina's brother.

**** Trojan princess of Greek mythology, had long beautiful hair (not necessarily blonde).

***** Phrenology, where the contours of ones head, its “bumps,” signal personality traits, was a fad at the time.

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inches. For fear that Mrs G. might think I had an inexhaustible supply of dirty shirts, I put on one of those starched horrors procured for me by Tomlinson. Put my spongy mind at work on life [of] Goethe.

Chewed some Tulu gum presented me by Mrs G. Conceived the idea that the mastication of this chunk of illimitable plasticity — a dentiferous treadmill so to speak — would act on the salivial glands to produce an excess of this necessary ingredient of the digestive fluid and thus a self acting home made remedy for dyspepsia would be obtained. Believe there is something in this as my dyspeptic pains are receding from recognition.

Dot is learning to play Lange’s “Blumenlied” [*] on the piano.

Miss Igoe I learn from a desultory conversation is involved in a correspondence with a brother of Miss Mina who resides at Canton Ohio being connected with the Mower and reaper firm of Aultman & Miller. The letter received today being about as long as the bills at the Grand Hotel at Paris are, I surmise [is] of rather a serious character, cupid-ly speaking.

* Gustav Lange (1830–1889), German composer. “Blumenlied” (Flower Song) is Op.39. (He also wrote “Edelweiss,” Op. 31.)

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The frequency of their reception will confirm or disaffirm my conjectures as to the proximity of a serious catastrophe. A postoffice courtship is a novelty to me, so I have resolved to follow up this matter for the experience which I will obtain. This may come handy should “My head ever become the dupe of my heart” as papa Rochefoucauld [*] puts it.

In evening went out on sea wall. Noticed a strange phosphorescent light in the west, probably caused by a baby moon just going down Chinaward,

thought at first the Aurora Borealis had moved out west. Went to bed early, dreamed of a demon with eyes four hundred feet apart.

* François de la Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), French author.

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Woodside Villa July 15 1885

Slept well. Breakfasted clear up to my adams apple. Took shawl strap and went to Boston with Damon with following memorandum of things to get. Lavater on the human face – Miss Cleveland’s book – Heloise by Rousseau – short neckties – Wilhelm Meister – basket [of] fruit – Sorrows of Werther – Madame Recamier’s works – diary books – pencils – telephone documents – Mark Twain’s gummed Potentiality of Literature ie. scrap book – also book called “How Success is Won” containing life of Dr Vincent and something in about Mina’s father and your humble servitor. [*]

Found that only copy of Lavater which I saw the other day had been sold to some one who was on the same lay as myself. Bought Disreali’s Curiosities of Literature instead. [**] Got Miss C^s book — Twain’s scrap book —diary books — How Success is Won. Also fruit among which are some peaches which the vendor said came from California. Think

* *Julie, or the New Heloise* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) , a French writer. *Wilhelm Meister* and *The Sorrows of Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), a German writer. *Mark Twain’s Patent Scrapbook* first came out in 1872. *How Success is Won* by Sarah K. Bolton (1841–1916), published that year. The other books will be described when they are mentioned later.

** *Curiosities of Literature* by Isaac D’Israeli (1766–1848).

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of a lie 3000 miles long. There seemed to be a South Carolina accent in their taste.

Started back to office with fruit, apparently by the same route I came, brought up in a strange street, saw landmark and got on right course again.

Boston ought to be buoyed and charts furnished strangers. Damon suggests American District Messenger buoys with uniform. Saw a lady who looked like Mina. Got thinking about Mina and came near being run over by a street car. If Mina interferes much more will have to take out an accident policy.

Went to dinner at a sort of No-bread-with-one-fishball restaurant then came up towards Damon's office, met Damon, Madden and Ex Gov Howard of Rhode Island. The Governor whom I know and who is very deaf greeted me with a boiler yard voice. He has to raise his voice so he can hear himself to enable him to check off the accuracy of his pronunciation. The Governor never has much time, always in a hurry — full of business, inebriated with industry. If he should be on his death bed I believe he would

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call in a shorthand clerk to dictate directions for his funeral, short sketch of his life, taking a press copy of the same in case of litigation. Madden looks well in the face but I am told it's an Undertakers blush.

Went to Damon's office. He was telling me about a man who had a genius for stupidity when Vail came in dressed like Beau Brummel. [*] Both went into another room to try some experiments on Damon's Phonometer.

Saw Hovey, a very very bright newspaper man. Told me a story related to him by a man who I never would have imagined could or would have told such stories. I refer to a gentleman in the employment of the Telephone Co who Tomlinson nicknamed "Prepositum" because he got off that word in a business conversation. His eminent respectability so impressed Tomlinson that when he came out of his office [he] asked me to take him quickly somewhere disreputable so he could recover. This story would have embarrassed Satan. I shall not relate it, but I have called it "Prepositum's Turkish Compromise." Hovey told me a lot about a 6th sense, mind reading etc

* George Bryan Brummell (1778-1840) among the rich the authority on men's fashion in early 19th century England. He claimed he took five hours to dress.

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made some suggestions about Railroad Telegraph. Came home with Damon at 5 o'clock. Damon has an ulcerated molar.

Just before supper Mrs Roberts and another lady came in to visit Mrs G. Mrs R is a charming woman. Condensed sunshine — beautiful. Plays piano like a long haired professor — played several of Lange's pieces first time seeing them. This seems as incomprehensible to me as a man reciting the Lord's prayer in four languages simultaneously. Mrs R promised to come tomorrow evening and bring with her a lady who sings beautifully and a boy dripping with music.

Everyone after supper started their Diary, Mrs G, Igoe, Daisy and Dot. Went to bed at 11:30. Forgot two nights running to ask Damon for night shirt. That part of my memory which has charge of the night shirt department is evidently out of order.

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Woodside Villa July 16 1885

I find on waking up this morning that I went to bed last night with the curtains up in my room. Glad the family next door retire early — I blushed retroactively to think of it. Slept well — weather clear — warm. Thermometer prolongatively progressive — day so fine that barometer anaesthetized. Breakfasted. Diaried a lot of nonsense. Read some of Longfellow's Hyperion, [*] read to where he tells about a statue of a saint that was attacked with somnambulism and went around nights with a lantern repairing roofs, especially that of a widow woman who neglected her family to pray all day in the church.

Read account of two murders in morning Herald to keep up my interest in human affairs. Built an air castle or two. Took my new shoes out on a trial

trip. Read some of Miss Cleveland's book [\[**\]](#) where she goes for George Eliot for not having a heavenly streak of imaginative twaddle in her poetry.

The girls assisted by myself trimmed the Elizabeth collars on twelve daisies, inked eyes nose and mouth on the yellow part which gave them a quaint human look, paper dresses were put on them

* *Hyperion* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), American poet, a book of travel writings about his trips abroad published in 1839.

** *George Eliot's Poetry and Other Studies* by Rose Elizabeth Cleveland published in 1885.

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and all were mounted on the side of a paper box and labeled "The Twelve Daughters of Venus." I hope no college bred dude will come down here and throw out insinuations that Venus was never married, and never had any children anyway.

Girls went in bathing. Me and Damon went out in the steam yacht, sailed around over the lobster nursery for an hour or so. In the evening Damon started a diary — very witty. Miss Igoe told Damon she couldn't express her admiration whereupon he told her to send it by freight.

Lunched our souls on a Strauss waltz played by Miss Daisy, then we all set around the table to write up our diaries. I learned the girls how to make shadow pictures by use of crumpled paper. We tried some experiments in mind reading which were not very successful. Think mind reading contrary to common sense, wise provision of the Bon Dieu that we cannot read each other's minds, twould stop civilization and everybody would take to the woods. In fifty or hundred thousand centuries when mankind have become perfect by evolution then perhaps this sense could be developed with safety to the state.

Damon

and I went into a minute expense account of our proposed earthly paradise in the land of Flowers, [*] also a duplicate north and we concluded to take short views of life and go ahead with the scheme. It will make a savage onslaught on our bank account. Damon remarked that now all the wind work is done there only remains some little details to attend to such as “raising the money” etc.

Mrs Roberts hurt her soprano arm and could not come over and play for us as promised and thus we lost her perfumed conversation, lovely music and seraphic smile — La Femme qui-rit. [**] Since Miss Igoe has been reading Miss Cleveland’s book her language has become disyllabic, ponderous, stiff and formal, each observation seems laundered.

If this weather gets much hotter, Hell will get up a reputation as a summer resort. Dot asked how books went in the mail, Damon said as second class mail matter. I said me and Damon would go at this rating — suggested that Mina would have to pay full postage. Damon thought she should be registered. This reminds me that I read the other day of a man who applied for a situation as sexton in the Dead letter office.

Daisy’s sister’s

* Probably Fort Meyers, Florida.

** The woman who laughs. Edison loved Victor Hugo’s novels and this is a play on the title *L’homme Qui Rit* or *The Man Who Laughs*.

photograph rests on the mantel, shews very beautiful girl. Every fly that has attempted to light on it has slipped and fallen. Going to put piece [of] chalk near it so they can chalk their feet, this will permit with safety the insectivorous branch of nature to gaze upon a picture of what they will attain after ages of evolution.

Ladies went to bed, this removed the articulating upholstery, then we went to bed.

[24]

Woodside Villa July 17 1885

Slept so sound that even Mina didn't bother me. It would stagger the mind of Raphael in a dream to imagine a being comparable to the Maid of Chataqua [*] so I must have slept very sound. As usual I was the last one up. This is because I'm so deaf.

Found everybody smiling and happy. Read more of Miss Cleveland's book, think she is a smart woman — relatively. Damon's diary progressing finely. Patrick went to city [to] get tickets for Opera of Polly, [**] we can comparrot with Sullivan's. We are going out with the ladies in yacht to sail perchance to fish. The lines will be bated at both ends.

Constantly talking about Mina who me and Damon use as a sort of yardstick for measuring perfection makes Dot jealous, she threatens to become an incipient Lucretia Borgia.

Hottest day of season — Hell must have sprung a leak. At two o'clock went out on yacht — cooler on the water. Sailed out to the Rock-buoy. This is the point where Damon goes to change his mind. He circles

* Mina lived in Chautauqua, New York, part of the time.

** The operetta "Polly, the Pet of the Regiment," music by Edward Solomon (see footnote, page 27 below) and libretto by James Mortimer of London. It was presented for the first time in the U.S. on April 27, 1885.

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the boat around several times, like a carrier pigeon before starting out on a journey, then we start right. Dropped anchor in a shady part of the open bay. I acted as Master of the fish lines, delivered them bated to all. The clam bouquets were thrown to the piscatorial actors. Miss Daisy caught the

first. He came up smilingly to seize the bouquet when she jerked him into the dress circle, genus unknown. I caught the next — genus uncertain. The next was not caught.

Fish seem to be rather conservative around this bay, one seldom catches enough to form the fundamental basis for a lie. Dante left out one of the torments of Hades — I could imagine a doomed mortal made to untangle wet fish lines forever.

Everybody lost patience at the stupidity of the fish in not coming forward promptly to be murdered. We hauled up anchor, and Damon steering by the compass (he being by it) made for the vicinity of Apple island. While approaching it we saw a race between two little model vessels full rigged and about 2 feet long. Two yawl boats filled apparently with US naval officers and men

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were following them. Are these effeminate pursuits a precursor of the decline and fall of a country as history tells us? Landed at dock 4³⁰. Came into villa and commenced reading Lavater on Facial Philosophy. [*]

Dot saw a jelly fish and vehemently called our attention to this translucent chestnut. Barge called to take us to theatre via Winthrop Junction and Railroad. When we arrived at junction found we should have to wait some time, so we took an open street car for city. While passing along saw man on Bicycle, asked Damon if he ever rode one. He said he did, once practiced riding in large freight shed where floor was even with door of cars and three feet from ground. One day from reason he never could explain he went right through one of the doors to the ground. I remarked that I supposed he kept right on riding. No said Damon I jumped back.

Arriving at Ferry boat I asked Damon if it was further across River at high tide, said he thought it was as he noticed the piles in the slip were at a slight angle. Arriving on the other side, took street Gondola, arrived near top of Hanover Street. When horses were unable to pull cars to the

* *Essays on Physiognomy* by Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss author who believed that an individual's looks offers clues to his character. Edison wanted to know how to judge character quickly because he was hiring new people to manage his growing enterprises, particularly the light and power distribution business.

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top of the hill, car slipped back. The executive department of my body was about to issue a writ of ejectment when some of the passengers jumped out and stopped car, one passenger halloed out to let her go they would get more ride. Arriving a little too early for theatre, went to an Ice cream bazaar, frigidified ourselves. Then went to theatre, where we found it very hot. Solomon the composer[*] came from the cellar of fairies and sprung a chestnut overture on the few mortals in the audience chamber. Then the curtain arose shewing the usual number of servant girls in tights. The raising of the panoply of fairyland let some more heat in. A rushing sound was heard and Damon said they were turning on the steam. The fairies mopped their foreheads. Perspiration dripped down on stage from the painted cherubs over the arch. After numerous military evolutions by the chorus Miss Lillian Russell made her appearance. Beautiful woman, sweet voice. Wore a fur lined cloak which I thought about as appropriate in this weather as to clothe the

* Edward Solomon (1855–1895), English composer, conductor, orchestrator and pianist.

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firemen on the Red Sea Steamers in sealskin overcoats. Noticed one or two original strains, the balance of the music seemed to be Bagpipean Improvisations. Didn't hear anything that was spoken except once when I thought I heard one of the actors say that his mother sung in the Chinese ballet. Our seats were in the baldhead section. After theatre walked to ferryboat. Saw a steamer passing brilliantly lighted. Mrs. G asked what could be nicer than a lighted steamer on the waters at night. Somebody suggested two steamers. Arrived at sister ferry, took RR train. Saw Miss Russell with her last husband Mr Solomon get on train, they stop I believe at the sea shore near us. Home — Bed — Sleep.

Last night room was very close, single sheet over me seemed inch thick. Bug proof windows seems to repel obtrusiveness on the part of any prowling Zephyr that might want to come in and lunch on perspiration. Rolled like a ship in a typhoon, if this weather keeps on I'll wear holes in the bed clothes. Arose early. Weather blasphemingly hot. Went out in sun, came back dripping with water, tried to get into the umbrella rack to drain off, took off two courses of clothes. This would be good day to adopt Sidney Smith's plan of taking off your flesh and sitting down in your bones. Mem — go to a print cloth mill and have yourself run through the calico printing machine. This would be the ultima thule of thin clothing.

Read some in Lavater, M^m Recamier, [*] Rousseau's Emile. Laid down on sofa, fell asleep. Dreamed that Damon had the sunstroke and was laid on the floor of his office, where he swelled up so that he broke the floor above and two editors of a baseball journal fell through and were killed. Thought the chief of the

* Juliette Recamier (1777-1849), French salon hostess.

fire department came in and ordered holes to be bored in him. Then something changed the dream. Saw a lot of animals which [with, or had] such marvellous characteristics as would be sufficient to bust up the whole science of paleontology. Cuvier, Buffon and Darwin [*] never could have started their theories had a few samples of these animals ever browsed around on this little mud ball of ours. After a survey of this vast imaginative menagerie I woke up by nearly falling off the sofa.

Found the heat had reached the apex of its malignity. Went out yachting. All the ladies in attendance. Twas delightfully unhot. Ladies played game called memory-scheme. N^o 1 calls out name of prominent author, N^o 2 repeats his name and adds another and so on. Soon one has to remember a

dozen names all of which must be repeated in the order given. Result, Miss Daisy had the best and I the poorest memory. We played another game called “pon honor,” resultant of which is that if you are caught you must truthfully answer a question put by each player. These questions generally relate to the amours of the players. Arrived home at 7:30.

* Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), French naturalist and zoologist. Helped establish the fields of comparative anatomy and paleontology. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), French naturalist, mathematician and author. Charles Darwin (1809–1882), English naturalist.

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Yacht brought in too far and left stranded by the receding of the tide. Suppered, went out and saw some fire works set off by an unknown sojourner in these ozonic parts, afterwards went over to Cottage Park at the kind invitation of the charming Mrs Roberts to hear the band play pro bono publico and her boy exclusivemento. Boy is quite a prodigy on the piano, plays with great rapidity, his hand and fingers went like a buzz saw. Played a solemn piece which I imagined might be God Kill the Queen. In walking back Miss Igoe got several boulders in her shoes. Miss Daisy smiled so sweetly all the evening that I imagined a ray of sunshine tried to pass her and got stuck. Mrs Roberts caught cold in her arm, its cough is better. Home — bed — oblivion.

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Woodside Villa July 19th 1885

Slept as sound as a bug in a barrel of morphine. Donned a boiled and starched emblem of respectability. Eat food for breakfast. Weather delightful. Canary seed orchestra started up with same old tune, ancestor of this bird sang the self same tune 6000 years ago to Adam down on the Euphrates, way back when Abel got a situation as the first angel.

Read Sunday Herald, learned of John Roach’s[*] failure — am sorry — he has been pursued with great malignity by newspapers and others, from ignorance I think. Americans ought to be proud of Roach, who started in

life as a day laborer and became [a] giant of industry and the greatest shipbuilder in the United States, employing thousands of men and feeding innumerable families. What has he now for this 40 years of incessant work and worry. People who hound such men as these I would invent a special Hades, I would stricken them with the chronic sciatic neuralgia and cause them to wander forever stark naked within the arctic circle. Saw in same paper account of base ball match. This struck me as something unusual.

Read more about that immeasurable immensity of tact and beauty Madame

* John Roach (1813–1887), from Ireland, emigrated to New York at age 16 and became a shipbuilder renowned for marine engines.

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Recamier. I would like to see such a woman. Nature seems to be running her factory on another style of goods nowadays and won't switch back until long after I'm baldheaded. Damon went out to assist the tide in. Daisy told me something about a man who kept livery stable in Venice.

In afternoon went out in yacht. On first trip all our folks, and [a] lot of smaller people, sailed around for an hour. Returned and landed the abbreviated people. Started for Cottage Park where we took on board the charming Mrs Roberts brevet Recamier, and a large lady friend whose name has twice got up and jumped out of my mind. Then sailed away for Rock buoy, and for some occult reason Damon didn't stop and change his mind but headed for Liverpool. Went out two miles in ocean, undulations threatened to disturb the stability of the dinner of divers persons, returned at 7 PM. Then Damon took out a boat load of Slaves of the Kitchen.

Damon and I after his return study plans for our Floridian bower in the lowlands of the peninsular Eden, [*] within that charmed zone of beauty, where wafted from the table lands of the Oronoco and the dark Carib sea, perfumed zephyrs forever

* In Fort Myers.

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kiss the gorgeous flora. Rats ! Damon took the plans to Boston to place them into the hands of an architectualist to be reduced to a paper reality. Damon promised to ascertain probable cost chartering schooner to plough the Spanish main loaded with our hen coops.

Dot came in and gave us a lot of girlish philosophy which amused us greatly.

Oh dear, this celestial mud ball has made another revolution and no photograph yet received from the Chataquain Paragon of Perfection. How much longer will Hope dance on my intellect?

Miss Igoe told me of a picture she had taken on a rock at Panama NY. There were several others in the group, interpolated so as to dilute the effect of Mina's beauty. As she stated the picture was taken on a rock I immediately brought my scientific imagination to work to ascertain how the artist could have flowed collodion over a rock and put so many people inside his camera. Miss Igoe kindly corrected her explanation by stating that a picture was taken by a camera of a group on a rock. Thus my mind was brought back from a suspicion of her verbal integrity to a belief in the honesty of her narrative.

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After supper Mrs G, Daisy and Louise with myself as an incidental appendage walked over to the town of Ocean Spray, went into a drug store and bought some alleged candy. Asked the gilded youth with the usual vacuous expression, if he had any nitric peroxide. He gave a wild stare of incomprehensibility. Then I simplified the name to nitric acid, which I hoped was within the scope of his understanding. A faint gleam of intelligence crept over his face whereupon he went into another room from which he returned with the remark that he didn't keep nitric acid. Fancy a drug store without nitric acid. A drug store nowadays seems to consist of a frontage of red, blue and green demijohns, a soda fountain, case with candy and toothbrushes, a lot of almost empty bottles with death and stomachatic

destruction written in Latin on them, all in charge of a young man with a hatchet shaped head, hair laid out by a civil engineer, and a blank stare of mediocrity on his face that by comparison would cause a gum indian in the Eden Musée [to] look intellectual. [*]

On our return I carried the terrealbian gum drops. [**] Moon was

* There must have been something about the sales clerk that annoyed Edison besides his primitive chemical knowledge and lack of nitric acid. The Eden Musée was a museum of waxwork figures in midtown Manhattan, founded in 1883. Gum, however, is not wax. Perhaps this adjective comes from the fact that Indian chiefs were portrayed on pinback buttons from American Pepsin Gum Co.

** The alleged candy. “Terre” is French for earth, “albian” refers to a stratum of sedimentary rocks deposited about 100 million years ago.

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shining brightly. Girls called my attention several times to beauty of the light from said moon shining upon the waters. Couldn't appreciate it, was so busy taking a mental triangleation of the moon, the two sides of said triangle meeting the base line of the earth at Woodside and Akron Ohio.

Miss Igoe told us about her love of ancient literature, how she loved to read Latin, but couldn't. I told her I was so fond of Greek that I always rushed for the comedies of Aristophanes to read whenever I had the jumping toothache. Bed — Mina, morning.

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Woodside July 20 1885

Arose before anybody else. Came down and went out to look at Mamma Earth and her green clothes. Breakfasted. Read aloud from Madame Recamier's memoirs for the ladies. Kept this up for an hour, got as hoarse as a fog horn. Think the ladies got jealous of Madame Recamier.

It's so hot, I put everything off. Hot weather is the mother of procrastination. My energy is at ebb tide. I'm getting Caloricly stupid.

Tried to read some of the involved sentences in Miss Cleveland's book, mind stumbled on a ponderous peroration and fell in between two paragraphs and lay unconscious for ten minutes. Smoked a cigar under the alias of Reina Victoria. Think it must have been seasoned in a sewer.

Miss Clark told me a story about Louise's mother singing in a company a song called "I have no home, I have no home." Somebody halloed out that he would provide her with a good home if she would stop. I understood Mrs Clark to say that this gentleman was a

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bookkeeper in a smallpox hospital.

Mrs G has placed fly paper all over the house. These cunning engines of insectiverous destruction are doing a big business. One of the first things I do when I reach heaven is to ascertain what flies are made for — this done I'll be ready for business. Perhaps I am too sanguine and may bring up at the other terminal and one of my punishments will be a general ukase from Satan to keep mum when Edison tries to get any entomological information. Satan is the scarecrow in the religious cornfield.

Towards sundown went with the ladies on yacht. Talked about love, cupid, Apollo, Adonis, ideal persons. One of the ladies said she had never come across her ideal. I suggested she wait until the second Advent. Damon steered the galleon. Damon's heart is so big it inclines him to embonpoint.

On shore it was hot enough to test safes but on the water twas cool as a cucumber in an arctic cache. Mrs G has promised for three consecutive days to have some clams a la Taft. She has perspired her memory all away.

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Been hunting around for some ant nests, so I can have a good watch of them laying on the grass. Don't seem to be any around. Don't think an ant could make a decent living in a land where a yankee has to emigrate from to survive.

For the first time in my life I have bought a pair of premeditatively tight shoes. These shoes are small and look nice. My N° 2 mind (acquired mind) has succeeded in convincing my N° 1 mind (primal mind or heart) that it is pure vanity, conceit and folly to suffer bodily pains that ones person may have graces the outcome of secret agony.

Read the funny column in The Traveler and went to bed.

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Woodside July 21 1885

Slept splendidly — evidently I was inoculated with insomnic bactilli when a baby. Arose early, went out to flirt with the flowers. I wonder if there are not microscopic orchids growing on the motes of the air. Saw big field of squashes throwing out their leafy tentacles to the wind preparing to catch the little fleeting atom for assimilation into its progeny the squash gourd. A spider weaves its net to catch an organized whole, how like this is the living plant, the leaves and stalk catch the primal free atom, all are then arranged in an organized whole. Heard a call from the house that sounded like the shriek (How is this spelled?) of a lost angel. It was a female voice three sizes too small for the distance and was a call for breakfast.

After breakfast laid down on sofa, fell into light draught sleep. Dreamed that in the depth of space, on a bleak and gigantic planet, the solitary soul of the great Napoleon was the sole inhabitant. I saw him as in the pictures, in

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contemplative aspect with his blue eagle eye, amid the howl of the tempest and the lashing of gigantic waves high up on a jutting promontory gazing out among the worlds and stars that stud the depths of infinity. Miles above him circled and swept the sky with ponderous wing the imperial condor bearing in his talons a message. Then the scene busted. This comes from reading about Napoleon in Madame Recamier's memoirs. Then my dream changed. Thought I was looking out upon the sea, suddenly the air was filled with millions of little cherubs as one sees in Raphael's pictures. Each

I thought was about the size of a fly. They were perfectly formed and seemed semi-transparent. Each swept down to the surface of the sea, reached out both their tiny hands and grabbed a very small drop of water, and flew upwards where they assembled and appeared to form a cloud. This method of forming clouds was so different from the method described in Ganot's Physics[*] that I congratulated myself on having learned the true method and was

* Adolphe Ganot (1804–1887), his *Éléments de Physique*, translated into English by Edmund Atkinson, went through many editions. The full title is *Elementary Treatise on Physics, Experimental and Applied*.

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thinking how I would gloat over the chagrin of those cold blooded Savants who would dissect an angel or boil a live baby to study the perturbations of the human larynx. Then this scheme was wrecked by my awakening.

The weather being cool went out on Veranda to exercise my appreciation of nature. Saw bugs, butterflies as varied as Prang's chromos, [*] birds innumerable, flowers with as great a variety of color as calico for the African market. Then to spoil the whole two poor miserable mortals came, who probably carry the idea that this world was created for them exclusively and that a large portion of the Creator's time was specially devoted to hearing requests, criticisms and complaints about the imperfection of the natural laws which regulate this mud ball. What a wonderfully small idea mankind has of the Almighty. My impression is that he has made unchangeable laws to govern this and billions of other worlds and that he has forgotten even the existence of this little mote of ours ages ago. Why can't

* Louis Prang was a famous publisher of colored prints called chromolithographs.

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man follow up and practice the teachings of his own conscience, mind his business, and not obtrude his purposely created finite mind in affairs that will be attended to without any volunteered advice.

Came into the house at the request of the ladies and read aloud for two hours from the Memoirs Recamier. Then talked on the subject of the tender passion. The ladies never seem to tire of this subject. Then supper.

Some Trovotores du Pave [*] made their appearance and commenced to play. I requested the distinguished honor of their presence on the veranda. After supper weather being cool but rather windy, took our trovotores on the yacht and all hands sailed out on the bay. Had to go around an arm of the bay to get coal. Water splashed so I got dashed wet. Three several times the water broke loose from the iron grasp of gravitation and jumped on my 65 dollar coat. But when one of the ladies got a small fragment of a drop on her dress orders were issued to make for port. Landed and

* Trovatore du pavé – troubadours of the paving stones, or street musicians, perhaps a whimsical appellation.

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took our trovotores to house. Several ladies hiring houses for the summer brought their husbands with them and helped sop up the music. Afterwards Mrs and Mr G hospitablized by firing off several champaign bottles and some of those delightful cookies. I do believe I have a big bump for cookies. The first entry made by the recording angel on my behalf was for stealing my mother's cookies. 11 o'clock came and the pattering of many footsteps upon the stairs signaled the coming birth of silence only to be disturbed by the sonorous snore of the amiable Damon and the demonic laughter of the amatory family cat.

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