

EYES AND EARS.

BY

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why, we must say, that if any birds are to be shot, these are the ones. We do not recommend it. For it may scare the song-birds, and wound the feelings of robins and their fellows. All the cherries on earth could not be so sweet in our mouth as are the notes of robins in our ears. These drops of sound are the true fruits, and the wide air is that garden universal which rears and shakes them down for all whose senses are refined enough to know how to feed by the eye and the ear, more than by the mouth!

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COUNTRY STILLNESS AND WOODCHUCKS.

NOTHING marks the change from the city to the country so much as the absence of grinding noises. The country is never silent. But its sounds are separate, distinct, and, as it were, articulate. The grinding of wheels in paved streets, the clash and din of a half-million men, mingling, form a grand body of sound, which, however harsh and dissonant to those near by, becomes at a little distance softened, round, and almost musical. Thus, from Brooklyn heights, New York sounds its diapason, vast and almost endless. The direction of the wind greatly influences the sound. When the air is moist, and the wind west, the city sends a roar across like the incessant break of surf upon the ocean shore. But with an eastern wind, the murmur is scarcely greater, and almost as soft, as winds moving gently in forests.

But it is not simply *sound* that acts upon us. There is a jar, an incessant tremor, that affects one more or less according to the state of his nerves. And, in leaving the city by rail-cars, the roar and jar of the train answer a good purpose in keeping up the sense of the city, until you reach your destination. Once removed from all these sound-making agencies, and one is conscious of an almost new atmosphere. Single sounds come through the air as arrows fly, but do not fill it. The crowing of a cock, the cawing of a crow, the roll of a chance wagon, and the patter of horses' feet, — these, one by one, rise into the air to stir it, and sink back again, leaving it without a ripple. For a time, this both excites and soothes. During the wakening hours the very stillness plays upon your imagination with importunity. You *feel* how still it is. You murmur to yourself, "O how quiet! how tranquil!" On a side-hill, with a wide look-out, upon a rock, or under its shade, you lie for the hour stupid in the bath of stillness. The wings of birds that fly past you are audible. A leaf falling on a leaf reports itself. The squeak of field-mice, in their petty synods, the frolic and bark of squirrels, become very prominent sounds.

I cannot say that such scenes are favorable to *thought*. It is fancy that moves quickest then. It is a nourishing of the sentiments and feelings. The past and the future play together, and memory and expectation pitch sweet fancies to each other.

We said that country silence was also soothing. Let the few first nights' sleep bear witness! In the first place, men's habits right themselves. We dine at noon, not at sundown. We take tea in the broad

light of the sun. And by nine o'clock the evening has become very late, and we nod and yawn, and drop off to bed. You look out first to see if all is right. The moon has it all her own way up there. There is not a breath of wind. The leaves hold as still as if they did not know how to swing and quiver. The cricket is singing. A whippowill stirs up fond remembrances. Some super-serviceable dog lets off a bark, as if he had pulled the trigger by accident, then shuts his muzzle, and leaves the great round heavens almost empty of a sound. Ah! these long country nights, full of unawakening sleep!

To find yourself in the morning just where you lay down! To sleep without a wink, a roll, or the slightest change, eight hours, — that is to get back far toward boyhood again.

Speaking of boyhood, did you ever hunt woodchucks? We remember well what venatorial perturbation our young bosom used to suffer on seeing a woodchuck popping up his head above the grass, and with what headlong zeal we plunged after him, invariably to just miss catching him as his tail disappeared down his hole. This region seems to be a favorite haunt for these marmots. Some dozen, we judge, are tenants on our farm. The boys have made several sagacious forays upon them with arms and dog, but Sir Marmot has always been just a little too deep for them. Not so the dog. Jocko had been down upon a visit to a neighboring dog, talking of rabbits, cats, and other things which have power over dogs' imaginations. On his way home, a young woodchuck, whose ma did not know that he was out, inadvertently exposed himself. The temptation was

too strong for Jocko. With one or two tremendous bounds, a nip, and a very busy shaking, the work was done. For all the good his parents had of him, the woodchuck might as well not have been born. John skinned him neatly. He was roasted. The family sat around. The lady of the house peremptorily refused to touch the "varmint." The eldest son agreed to support the father, and the two youngsters were fierce to eat woodchuck! The head of the family disposed of one mouthful, and looked around. Being watched, he boldly took a second, and was imitated. But about the third taste made it plain that woodchuck satisfies the appetite very speedily.

These singular, chubby, nimble fellows have a very good time of it, on the whole. They wake up from a winter's sleep; enjoy the spring, summer, and autumn. They have no migration to attend to. They lay up no stock of winter food. When the time comes, they roll up into a heap in the chamber of their burrow, poke their nose into their belly, and tuck their tail around, to make a good finish, and then they outsleep storms, snow, and winter. But we have saved one member of this family even this trouble. We have looked in the Prices Current of *The Independent* in vain to find the ruling prices of *woodchuck-skins*. Can any one inform us? From the amazing enterprise shown by the boys, hitherto, they might turn an honest penny yet, in selling packs of woodchuck-skins!

Meanwhile, my young marmots, you are welcome to all the clover you can eat, to all the holes you dig. You may sit serene after your morning feed, and sun yourselves without fear of the boys, for really, jesting

apart, they are not half as smart as you are. Don't flinch if they shoot, especially if they take aim. But beware of the dog. He does not say much. He is apt to perform first, and promise afterwards.

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A CANNON-BALL IN THE HAT.

WHEN I was a lad of thirteen years, my father removed from a country town to Boston. Nothing of all its sights produced upon me such an impression as the ships. The outlying bay, the ocean beyond, its mystery, the ships coming in and going out, the masts and rigging, standing up against the sky, — these things produced an indelible impression on my imagination. All the world rose up to my fancy. Real and fabulous things commingled, — voyagers and buccaneers, merchantmen and pirates, fleets of men-of-war, came before my inward sight, and all distant lands and famous islands. Long Wharf has taught me a great deal of geography and sea-history.

But the Navy-Yard, in the adjoining town of Charlestown, separated only by Charles River from Boston, was my especial wonder and glory. I became familiar with all its marvels. I crept down to the bottom of its huge and dismantled ships, I climbed up to the decks of those which were building in the covered ship-houses, I watched the construction of its famous stone Dry Dock, I ranged along the silent mouths of its massive cannon.