

**THE FIRST AND LAST JOURNEYS
OF THOREAU: LATELY
DISCOVERED AMONG HIS
UNPUBLISHED JOURNALS AND
MANUSCRIPTS**

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The First and Last Journeys of Thoreau: Lately Discovered Among His Unpublished Journals and Manuscripts by Franklin Benjamin Sanborn

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FRANKLIN BENJAMIN SANBORN

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Henry D. Thoreau

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1861
May 11
July 10
1861

III

THE LAST JOURNEY OF THOREAU

May 11 to July 10, 1861

ALTHOUGH Henry Thoreau took a short trip to visit his New Bedford friend, Daniel Ricketson, a month or two after his return from Minnesota and Mackinaw, the latter was the longest and last journey of his journeying life. He was never in health afterward sufficient to enable him to bear the fatigue of his travels in the Maine forest, on Cape Cod, in Canada, at the White Mountains, or the Monadnoc region nearer Concord, and, in view from its Indian hills, Nashawtuc or Anursnac. His Minnesota journey took him farther from those dear hills than ever before; not less than three thousand five hundred miles going and re-

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turning; and occupied about two months. It had been planned long in advance, for the benefit of Thoreau's failing health; but it was not decided, until within a week of his setting forth, who should be his companion. He had thought of Ellery Channing, and it had been almost settled that Channing should meet him at Niagara. This would have had the advantage that Channing was his best friend, had travelled long with him, and was familiar with much of the country through which they were to go, from an early residence in Illinois near Wisconsin, and frequent journeys and voyages among the great lakes and over the prairies, which Thoreau had never seen. But as everything was uncertain which depended on Channing's variable mood, his friend wrote, May 3, 1861, to another intimate comrade, Harrison Blake of Worcester, modestly proposing that he should go. He said:

I have concluded it will be most expedient for me to try the air of Minnesota, say somewhere about St. Paul. I am only waiting to be well enough to start; hope to

get off within a week or ten days. I am so much an invalid that I shall have to study my comfort in travelling to a remarkable degree — stopping to rest, etc., if need be. I think to get a through ticket to Chicago, with liberty to stop frequently on the way : at Niagara Falls several days or a week, at a private boarding-house ; then a night or day at Detroit ; and as much at Chicago as my health may require. At Chicago I can decide at what point (Fulton, Dunleith, or another) to strike the Mississippi, and take a boat to St. Paul. I expect to be gone three months, and would like to return by a different route, — perhaps Mackinaw and Montreal.

I have thought of finding a companion, of course ; yet not seriously, because I had no right to offer myself as a companion to anybody, having such a peculiarly private and all-absorbing but miserable business as *my* health, and not altogether *his* to attend to. Nevertheless, I have just now decided to let you know of my intention, thinking it barely possible that you might like to make a part or the whole of this journey at the

same time, and perhaps that your own health may be such as to be benefited by it.

Mr. Blake could not go, but invited Thoreau to spend a Sunday with him at Worcester on his way, which was done, as will be seen. He was really accompanied by Horace Mann,—the son of the educational reformer and statesman, who died in 1859. Mrs. Mann with her three sons came to reside in Concord soon after his death, and in 1860 bought and enlarged the house on Sudbury Street now occupied by Dr. Titcomb, where she was living early in 1861, when she wrote the following note to Thoreau, on the back of which he wrote notes of authorities for his Minnesota journey :

DEAR MR. THOREAU:—

Mrs. Josiah Quincy, a lady who reads and admires your books very much, is passing a few days with me. Will you come in and dine with us to-day? It will give her much pleasure to see you, and when you are tired of talking with ladies, Horace will be glad to have his promised visit, and