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纯英文注解版

瓦尔登湖

亨利·梭罗

朱伟 许乃夫 | 主编 江颖 | 注解

Walden

Henry Thoreau



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序 言

第一次读《瓦尔登湖》，是在 2013 年组织新东方 SAT（美国高考）教学团队进行集体教研的时候。《瓦尔登湖》是美国 SAT 考试的真题题源，也是美国高中生必读经典作品之一。以考试为目标的学习是功利性的，因为学生和老师只会在乎答案选择是否正确而获得高分。时隔四年，再次拿起这本让人生畏的经典著作，仔细研读之后才发现这本被美国国会评为“塑造人类文明的 25 部作品之一”的《瓦尔登湖》是那么让人宁静致远，心驰神往。

在此，我要郑重感谢一个和我有着十年交情的人，他就是当今国内著名的考研研究专家朱伟。他不仅出版了很多在考研党中广受好评的考研书，还倡导“少一些功利主义的追求，多一些不为什么的坚持”，鼓励学生利用闲暇时间多读书，读英文原著，以拓宽知识面。每年夏天，朱伟老师都会带领学生到国外游学，去领略世界名校的精彩课堂，收获游历山川之后内心的自信。今年的“全英文名著精读课”就由我和朱伟老师带领大家读《瓦尔登湖》。课堂之内，由我领读；课堂之外，就由朱伟老师带领大家，在瓦尔登湖畔读《瓦尔登湖》。

感谢梭罗文学大师的解读和互联网资料，让我专注投入地在文学海洋里遨游，穿越时空跟着 170 多年前这位伟大的哲学家，去到那位于康科德镇区南边大约一英里处的瓦尔登湖，寻找那片只属于他一个人的小木屋。让我们在城市的喧嚣中保持一颗安静而炙热的心，倾听这位先哲给我们留下来的巨大精神财富。

《瓦尔登湖》是 19 世纪美国文学家、诗人、哲学家、自然主义者亨利·戴维·梭罗最著名、对后世影响最大的一本著作。而梭罗也被 19 世纪美国超验主义先驱爱默生称赞为“美利坚群狮之王”。2004 年，普林斯顿大学出版社和耶鲁大学出版社分别推出了各自的《瓦尔登湖》150 周年纪念版。曾两次获得普利策文学奖的约翰·厄普代克给普林斯顿大学出版社出版的版本撰写了导读，评价“《瓦尔登湖》是对当今美国对其自身认知的贡献最大的”一本书。

一本有关一个人的孤独书

1845年7月4日,梭罗带着一把斧子走进森林,搬到瓦尔登湖湖畔独自生活时,他万万没想到他的举动会成为世界文学史上最著名的事件之一。在两年零两个月的孤独生活中,大自然成了他的叙述对象,大至四季交替的景色变化,小到两只蚂蚁的争斗。梭罗带你观察大自然的美,带给你一颗宁静的心,也给了你一片蔚蓝的湖,因为梭罗对自然的寻觅在于回归自身的灵性。

一本晦涩难读的书

《瓦尔登湖》曾经滞销,其主要原因是经过梭罗7次修改之后的文本不仅文字艰涩,而且思想激进。书中不仅大量引用希腊、罗马、中国和印度的典故,也有动物的习性、植物形状的描写,还有很多基于超验主义基础上的假设和推断。如果没有足够的古典学知识、博物学基础和超验主义的阅读,一般人是很难读懂梭罗的《瓦尔登湖》,这也是同学们需要老师带读的主要原因。

例如:第一章“节俭有方”中谈到的 **Bramins**(婆罗门教徒),《印度史》的引言,赫拉克勒斯的十二伟业(**the twelve labors of Hercules**),《新约·马太福音》的引言;第二章“居所和生活的目标”对孔子《礼记·大学》的引言等,都包含着人文社科类不同领域的知识。因此,如果没有深厚的文学素养和较高的英文水平,阅读此书会比较困难。

一本唤醒梦游者的书

追溯美国历史,梭罗的作品就如一股清流,让每一位阅读者都能够清醒地活着,追随自己内心的真实感受和想法,去成为与众不同的、独立自主的人,这也是这位最伟大的个人主义先行者的理想。“清醒得足以从事体力劳动的人数以百万计,但百万人中只有一个清醒得足以从事脑力劳动,而清醒得足以过上诗意或者神圣生活的人,一亿人中才有一人。唯有清醒才是真正的活着。”(徐迟译)

一位大自然的观察家

《瓦尔登湖》是梭罗在湖畔独居生活的记录,书中描绘了他在这两年多生活的所见、所闻和所思。他天生对大自然充满好奇之心,愿意花大量的

时间在森林里,细致入微地观察各种动植物。他笔下所描绘的生灵栩栩如生。就在他 1847 年 9 月 6 日离开瓦尔登湖之后,他决定研究自然史,纯粹是出于天性。

在《瓦尔登湖》这部作品中,有大量的例子描绘出自然界的美好。梭罗的妙笔生花,使得我们从更高层次去审视原本只会用大自然作为衬托背景的写作手法。博物学是人类和大自然打交道的学问,指对动物、植物、矿物、生态系统等所做出的宏观层面的观察、描述、分类等。如果没有这方面的知识基础,很难去体会作者对于大自然精准的描写。

例如,第四章“声音”(Sounds)中有这么一段描述: As I sit at my window this summer afternoon, hawks are circling about my clearing; the tantivy of wild pigeons, flying by two and three athwart my view, or perching restless on the white pine boughs behind my house, gives a voice to the air; a fish hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; a mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reed-birds flitting hither and thither; and for the last half-hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travelers from Boston to the country.

作者在某个夏日的午后,面对宁静的湖面,用了短短 120 个词,却描绘出这样一幅生动和生机盎然的画面。其中竟然出现了七种生物和两种植物,他们分别是苍鹰(hawk),野鸽子(wild pigeon),鱼鹰(fish hawk),水貂(mink),青蛙(frog),芦苇莺(reed-bird),鹧鸪(partridge),五针松(white pine)和莎草(sedge)。

从语言学习的角度来看这段文字,动词的使用更是精妙绝伦。苍鹰在天空盘旋,用了 circling(盘旋式的飞翔);用 give a voice to the air 去描绘野鸽子的尽情啼唱;更出神入化地用 dimple the glassy surface of the pond 描写鱼鹰突然从空中飞向湖面,打破湖面的平静,使湖面泛起涟漪,从而构成一幅动静结合的图画,使整个画面萦绕在脑际。火车发出的咔嚓声(rattle of the railroad cars)似乎打破了原有的平静,作者巧妙地用鹧鸪拍打翅膀发出的声音(reviving like the beat of partridge)和火车声作对比,反衬出周围的寂静。

一位“忧天下”的哲学家

被称为“美国文艺复兴”的超验主义(transcendentalism),是美国思想史上一次重要的思想解放运动,是发生在19世纪30年代美国新英格兰地区(美东)的一场哲学运动。美国文化精神的代表人物,被前总统林肯称为“美国的孔子”的拉尔夫·沃尔多·爱默生是美国超验主义的先驱。而梭罗是爱默生的弟子。

超验主义强调人更为重要,是相对于加尔文教提出的“神”为中心论而言。而梭罗在《瓦尔登湖》这部作品中所提倡的自己自足的生活方式,是在呼吁当时的美国人不要因为社会商业文明的进步而忽视了思想境界的提升,但是他并不反对社会客观条件的改善。虽然他在文章中也提到不提倡大家像他一样生活,但是他却做出了榜样,身体力行地去实践他自己认为正确的生活方式,告诉人们不要随波逐流,放任自我,而要听从内心的呼唤,找到真实的自我。

超验主义思想运动是在特定的历史时期和背景下产生的。19世纪中叶美国还是一个以农民为主的国家。贸易和生产加工业的发展空前迅速,与此同时,人口也从1850年的2300万激增至1900年的7600万。而在当时的美国社会,黑奴问题仍是美国社会的一大矛盾。美国南北战争(1861年—1865年)一触即发,改变美国命运的历史时刻到了。

美国内战以后,整个国家进入到商业快速发展期,铁路修建贯穿东西,工厂越来越多,城市也越来越大,人们创造并积累财富。不仅是美国本土人,外来移民也因为拥有创造财富的机会和自由而在这个遍地是黄金的年代挣得盆满钵溢。因此,美国人坚信美国是世界上最好的国家。

美国当时也正处于重要的成长期,尤其是领土的扩张和商业的繁华。众所周知,1776年7月4日美利坚合众国诞生,美国东部沿岸的十三个英属北美殖民地宣布独立,他们分别是:弗吉尼亚、马萨诸塞、纽约、新泽西、新罕布什尔、南卡罗来纳、北卡罗来纳、佐治亚、马里兰、宾夕法尼亚、特拉华、罗得岛、康涅狄格(当时还不能称作为州)。直到1789年4月30日,“美国之父”、第一任总统乔治·华盛顿宣誓就职的时候,美国总共只有11个州。等到1850年9月加利福尼亚共和国加入美利坚联合国时,美国已经拥有31个州,是立国之初的三倍多。

虽然美国在政治上获得了独立,但是在文化和身份上,对英国这个曾经的宗主国来说还是有一衣带水的依附性,尤其是当时的新英格兰地区。超验

主义是让美国文学进入到浪漫主义时期的文学时代。1837年8月31日,拉尔夫·沃尔多·爱默生发表了著名的演讲——《美国学者》,他批判了当时美国知识分子唯欧洲是从的倾向。这次演讲极为成功,也引起了极大的反响,被认为是“美国知识界的独立宣言”。

例如,在第一章“节俭有方”中有这么一段话:As if the main object were to talk fast and not to talk sensibly. We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the Old World some weeks nearer to the New; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.

梭罗其实并不反对新生的社会现象,他所担忧的是社会进步只带给人们客观条件的改善,而不能促进思想境界的提升。就如上面一段所讽刺的那样,传过来的新闻只不过是公主得了百日咳。

又如在第二章“我生活的地方;我为何生活”中谈到:It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain.

这段话极具讽刺意味:不知道是人们改变的物质生活,还是铁路把人们改变了。

一位个人主义的倡导者

《瓦尔登湖》这本书体现出了最美国式的风格:个人主义。个人主义(individualism)是相对于集体主义(collectivism)而言。政治哲学或者社会学上个人主义主张平等和自由是人人皆有的自然权利,个人价值至高无上,超越传统、宗教和政治。我们在书中找不到个人主义这个词,但是从哲学思想上,可以找到梭罗对个人主义的倡导,尤其是在废奴制这件事情上。

例如,在第一章“节俭有方”中,他蔑视一切统治者:As for the Pyramids, there is nothing to wonder at in them so much as the fact that so many men could be found degraded enough to spend their lives constructing a tomb for some ambitious booby, whom it would have been wiser and manlier to have drowned in the Nile, and then given his body to the dogs.

一位影响力巨大的集大成者

《瓦尔登湖》这本书能经久不衰的原因就在于后世的拥戴。在政治上，梭罗的《论公民的不服从》(Civil Disobedience)启迪了圣雄甘地、马丁·路德·金；在文学上，厄尼斯特·海明威的文风也深受其影响。

我喜欢《瓦尔登湖》不仅在于它语言优美，更在于它所倡导的“每个人都能够清醒地活着，追随内心真实感受和想法”的生活哲学。在经济飞速发展的今天，在大众创业、万众创新的新经济形势下，如何保持清醒的自我，不随波逐流，不因一时之利做一些迎合伪需求和违背人性的互联网产品，是现代人所需要思考的问题。其实，生活不必如此，我更提倡做个有专注力的专家或工匠。

在互联网碎片化阅读大行其道的今天，手机阅读成为消费习惯的今天，有多少人对于信息接收是被动的，因此造成了生活和事业上的焦虑，而没有真正静下心来去阅读经典。传世之作、经典之作可以读上无数遍，而畅销书只能在短时间内告诉大家当下的认知，以不变应万变，做清醒的自我是如此重要。

对于人文社科类书籍的爱好者来说，这本书将带给你巨大的信息量，把书读厚的过程就是在修身的过程，孔子说“择善而固执”，因此我们选择做我们认为正确的事情并为之付出热情与爱。在研读原作过程中，感谢团队每一位成员的辛苦付出，他们是常宇杰、涂军、王珉悦、彭雪莉。

许乃夫

网师学院创始人兼 CEO

We Learn 英文名著精读系列首席讲师

2017年4月16日

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Economy

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond^①, in Concord^②, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner^③ in civilized life again.

I should not obtrude^④ my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent^⑤, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked what I got to eat; if I did not feel lonesome; if I was not afraid; and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. I will therefore ask those of my readers who feel no particular interest in me to pardon me if I undertake to answer some of these questions in this book. In most books, the *I*, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism^⑥, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, *I*, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's

① Walden 瓦尔登,是一地名;而我们常说的瓦尔登湖,在美国指的即是“Walden Pond”

② 康科德,位于美国马萨诸塞州东部的一个小镇,在波士顿西北部 31 公里处,瓦尔登湖即位于此

③ sojourner *n.* a temporary resident 过客(源自动词 sojourn, -er 为构成指人的名词后缀)

④ obtrude *vt.* to push (oneself, one's opinions, etc) on others in an unwelcome way 强加于人

⑤ impertinent *adj.* improperly forward or bold 不恰当的,无礼的(im-为否定前缀,同样的构词法还有如下词:immature, imbalance, impoverished)

⑥ egotism *n.* an exaggerated opinion of your own importance 自负(-ism 为名词后缀,表示“行为、特征、状态”等,同样构词法的还有如下词:naturalism, heroism, optimism)

lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me. Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students. As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them. I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits.^①

I would fain^② say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance^③ in a thousand remarkable ways. What I have heard of Brahmins^④ sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders “until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach”; or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars—even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. The twelve labors of Hercules^⑤ were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolau^⑥ to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra’s head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.

① 这句话很经典,适合背诵,用于多种场合。译文:我相信没有人会削足适履的;只有合乎尺寸的衣履,才能对一个人有用。(徐迟译)

② fain *adv.* in a willing manner 乐意地

③ penance *n.* remorse for your past conduct (赎罪的)苦行

④ 婆罗门,古印度地位最高的阶级

⑤ 赫拉克勒斯,古希腊神话中的大力神,受奴役要完成十二项几乎不可能完成的任务

⑥ 伊俄拉俄斯,希腊神话中赫拉克勒斯的朋友,曾协助赫拉克勒斯杀死九头水蛇海德拉(Hydra)

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs^① of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck^② of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh^③ crushed and smothered^④ under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables^⑤ never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and woodlot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances^⑥, find it labor enough to subdue^⑦ and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost^⑧. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha^⑨ created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them;—

① serf *n.* a person who is bound to the land and owned by the feudal lord 农奴

② peck *n.* a large number or amount 大量

③ well-nigh *adv.* 几乎

④ smother *vt.* deprive of oxygen and prevent from breathing 使窒息

⑤ 奥吉斯的牛舍。奥吉斯王有三千头牛，牛圈三十年没有打扫，赫拉克勒斯引河水一天就将国王的牛舍冲洗干净。这也是赫拉克勒斯需要完成的十二项不可能完成的任务中的一项。

⑥ encumbrance *n.* (*pl.*) sth. or someone that encumbers you 不动产上的负担(-ance 为名词后缀,表示“状态、性质、情况”等,同样构词法的还有如下词: acceptance, resemblance, acceptance)

⑦ subdue *vt.* hold within limits and control 抑制,克制(sub-前缀表示“在下面,次一等,副手”等,同样构词法的还有如下词: submerge, subscribe, subtitle)

⑧ compost *n.* used as a fertilizer 混合肥料

⑨ 杜卡利翁和皮拉夫妇。希腊神话中,宙斯的洪水过后,世上只剩下这对夫妻,神示意他们把母亲的骨骼从头顶扔到背后,他们认为大地是万物之母,石头是母亲的骨骼,于是,从肩头向身后扔石头,石头变成男女,重新创造了人类。

*Inde genus durum sumus, experiensque laborum,
Et documenta damus qua simus origine nati.*^①

Or, as Raleigh^② rhymes it in his sonorous way,—

“From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring pain and care,
Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are.”

So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle, throwing the stones over their heads behind them, and not seeing where they fell.

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious^③ cares and superfluously^④ coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them.^⑤ Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated^⑥ in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously^⑦ sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials^⑧, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom^⑨ on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.^⑩

Some of you, we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are

①引自奥维德(Publius Ovidius Naso, 公元前43—公元17年,古罗马诗人)的《变形记》(*Metamorphoseon libri*),与下面罗利咏叹的诗句意思相近,“从此人心坚硬,任劳任怨,证明我们的身体本是岩石。”

②罗利(Walter Raleigh, 1552—1618),英国航海家、作家

③factitious *adj.* not produced by natural forces 人工的

④superfluously *adv.* in a superfluous manner 多余的,过剩的

⑤这句话很经典,适合背诵,用于多种场合。译文:大多数人,仅仅是因为无知和错误,满载着虚构的忧虑,忙不完的粗活,却不能采集生命的美果。(徐迟译)

⑥depreciated *vt.* belittle 使…贬值(de-前缀表示“去掉,变坏,离开,变慢,向下”等,同样构词法的还有如下词:destruction, depress, decode)

⑦gratuitously *adv.* in an uncalled-for manner 无偿地(-ly副词后缀表示“方式、状态、方向、时间、地点”等,同样构词法的还有如下词:typically, slowly, badly)

⑧cordials *n.* a stimulating or medicinal drink 兴奋剂

⑨bloom *n.* a powdery deposit on a surface (葡萄、蓝莓和李子等水果的)粉衣,粉霜

⑩这两句话很经典,适合背诵,用于多种场合。译文:我们的天性中最优美的品格,好比果实上的粉霜一样,是只能轻手轻脚,才能保全的。然而,人与人之间就是没有能如此温柔地相处。(徐迟译)

sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath. I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners which you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are fast wearing or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time, robbing your creditors of an hour. It is very evident what mean^① and sneaking^② lives many of you live, for my sight has been whetted^③ by experience; always on the limits, trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt, a very ancient slough^④, called by the Latins *aes alienum*, another's brass, for some of their coins were made of brass; still living, and dying, and buried by this other's brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, tomorrow, and dying today, insolvent^⑤; seeking to curry favor^⑥, to get custom, by how many modes, only not state-prison offenses; lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility^⑦ or dilating^⑧ into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, or import his groceries for him; making yourselves sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day, something to be tucked away in an old chest, or in a stocking behind the plastering, or, more safely, in the brick bank^⑨; no matter where, no matter how much or how little.

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous^⑩, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross^⑪ but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both North and South. It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a

① mean *adj.* having or showing an ignoble lack of honor or morality 低劣的

② sneaking *adj.* slight but persistent 鬼鬼祟祟的

③ whet *vt.* sharpen by rubbing 磨

④ slough *n.* a hollow filled with mud 泥沼

⑤ insolvent *adj.* unable to meet or discharge financial obligations 无力偿还的 (in-为否定前缀, 表示“不, 无, 非”, 同样构词法的还有如下词: incapable, inimitable, insubordinate)

⑥ 巴结, 讨好

⑦ civility *n.* formal or perfunctory politeness 礼貌, 礼仪

⑧ dilate *vt.* become wider 膨胀, 扩大 (di-前缀表示“使…变成, 分开, 离开”, 同样构词法的还有如下词: digest, diminish, digress)

⑨ 银行的砖屋子, 讽刺美国 1837 年的经济大恐慌, 银行大量破产

⑩ frivolous *adj.* not serious in content or attitude or behavior 轻浮的, 肤浅的 (-ous 为形容词后缀, 表示“实行…的, 像…的, 具有…特征的”, 同样构词法的还有如下词: spontaneous, continuous, spacious)

⑪ gross *adj.* conspicuously and tastelessly indecent 粗野的

Northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself. Talk of a divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway, wending^① to market by day or night; does any divinity stir within him? His highest duty to fodder^② and water his horses! What is his destiny to him compared with the shipping interests? Does not he drive for Squire Make-a-stir^③? How godlike, how immortal, is he? See how he cowers^④ and sneaks, how vaguely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate. Self-emancipation even in the West Indian provinces^⑤ of the fancy and imagination—what Wilberforce^⑥ is there to bring that about? Think, also, of the ladies of the land weaving toilet cushions against the last day, not to betray too green^⑦ an interest in their fates! As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation^⑧. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation.^⑨ From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats^⑩. A stereotyped^⑪ but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.^⑫

① wend *v.* direct one's course or way 行,走

② fodder *vt.* to give food (to domesticated animals) 喂养

③ 繁忙的绅士,作者自己组合的词

④ cower *vi.* show submission or fear 弯腰屈膝

⑤ 西印度群岛,借指爱默生谈废奴问题的《关于解放西印度群岛奴隶的演讲》

⑥ 威尔伯福斯(William Wilberforce 1759—1833),英国国会议员,他支持完全废除奴隶的运动,促使《废除奴隶制度法案》的通过

⑦ green *adj.* immature 不成熟的,缺乏经验的(如 green hand 表示“新手,没有经验的人”)

⑧ desperation *n.* a state in which everything seems wrong and will turn out badly 绝望(-ion 为名词后缀,表示“行为的过程,结果,状况”,同样构词法的还有: destruction, donation, prevention)

⑨ 这句话很经典,适合背诵,用于多种场合。译文:所谓的听天由命,是一种得到证实的绝望。

⑩ mink *n.* 貂 muskrat *n.* 麝鼠

⑪ stereotyped *adj.* lacking spontaneity or originality or individuality, 老一套的,默守成规的,(-d/-ed 为形容词后缀,表示“具有…特征的”等,同样构词法的还有: ashamed, delighted, frightened)

⑫ 这句话很经典,适合背诵,用于多种场合。译文:可是不做绝望的事,才是智慧的一种表征。

When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism^①, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately^② chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices.^③ No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true today may turn out to be falsehood tomorrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle^④ fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new. Old people did not know enough once, perchance^⑤, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire agoing; new people put a little dry wood under a pot, and are whirled round the globe with the speed of birds, in a way to kill old people, as the phrase is. Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe; and it may be that they have some faith left which belies that experience, and they are only less young than they were. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors^⑥ said nothing about.

One farmer says to me, “You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it

① catechism: 教义问答法

② deliberately *adv.* in a deliberate unhurried manner 谨慎地

③ 这句话很经典, 适合背诵, 用于多种场合。译文: 抛弃我们的偏见, 是永远不会来不及的。(never too late to do sth. 意思是“做…永远都不觉得晚”)

④ sprinkle *v.* distribute loosely 撒, 洒

⑤ perchance *adv.* by chance 偶然, 可能

⑥ 人名“门特”, 古希腊史诗《奥德赛》中, 奥德赛临终前将抚育、培养爱子忒勒马科斯的重任托付给朋友门特。现在 mentor 即指“富有智慧和值得信赖的老师”。