

A letter from Henry Walters to Henry David Thoreau

from the *Journal*, December 30, 1856

Had the experience of losing a pin & then hunting for it a long time in vain.

Dear Henry,

You make me laugh, what with your irrepressible devotion to minutiae. If a bean went for a stroll in your garden, you would bend down to measure the stride and straddle of the prints. Wood mold; the burdock velcroed onto your coat; the dusty bloom on a huckleberry; the dew-crackle on a telegraph line; the blue in last week's snow—if I stopped for half the things you stopped for, I'd never make it back for breakfast. Even your handwriting makes me laugh, with its illegible lean forward, the track of a nearsighted ant very late to work and hoofing it. (When were you ever late? The place you were was always the place you seemed to be going.) No sprout too small to be worth your while, no mote beneath notice. A democrat of scale, magician of the minuscule, you make bonsai of our oldest oaks and pull whole forests out of an acorn cap. Gulliver, too big for his britches, and Alice, having shut up like a telescope, and Pinocchio, having forgotten what was true, and I, a fly cobwebbed in fine print—all of us pressed our respective noses like species of aster between the pages of your *Journal*, and when we pulled them out again, voilà, we fell straightway in love with the world's proportions.

20-20,

Your hindsight