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Henry David Builds His Hut
Ashton Nichols

I borrowed an axe to begin my hut.
It is always better to borrow than to buy,
For borrowing leaves only one axe
To be loaned, and after the loan, the return
Makes both borrower and lender feel good.
The lender feels good because he has loaned
His axe to a neighbor, and now that neighbor
Is a newfound friend. And the borrower feels good
Because he has gotten his house begun for free.

To buy an axe is to establish the need
For many more axes like the first one, since one
Buyer makes other people want to show off
The wealth and buy their own axe, too.
But then everyone buys an axe, and no one
Needs to borrow any more. Thus begins the
Path to no one ever needing to see his neighbor
At all, and thus is born the way for
Every soul to stay in his own house, with the
Window shutters closed up tight. A world full
Of borrowing is better than a world full of axes.

What else was I thinking about as I started
My hut? I thought a great deal about leaving home
To come away to these woods. There was mother
Back in Concord, just a mile and a half away.
I could walk home with ease. It would be easy to decide
To have dinner with her, or perhaps with
My best mentor and friend, Waldo Emerson. That
Is what I call him now. I have done so ever since
He said, “Henry David, from now on call me Waldo.”

And I thought a lot about the town I left behind,
That Concord world of getting and spending,
As master Wordsworth says in one of his finest poems,
A world where men and women care more for money
Than for each other, a world where no one cares
As much for truth as for a life of things, or a life
Of his own loves. And those loves, even love for people,
But especially for things, are loves that do not matter.
Rather than love of money, or love of fame, or
Love of any man of woman, give me love of Truth.

So now it is time for me to get on with my hut,
For even though it is a warm summer day today,
The winter is cold, and winter will be coming on soon.