

This essay composed, on laptop computer, in response
to one question, of August 2009,
concerning invading buckthorn
on farm and park lands
near Essex, New York:

“Make Sense of Place Invaders!”

composed for Mary Byrd Davis
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by

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ABSTRACT

“What ought we to do about invasive species?”

To invade is to be out of one’s proper place. We ought to thus explore the question of *estrangement* in nature. In particular, we ought to explore the proposition that some *estrangement* in nature is manifestly vicious and ought to be treated as such. Let us set a path that high-lights three appealing ideas: that no *estrangement* in nature matters to us because all events in nature are in time good, but that *estrangement* in nature, caused by human greed and sloth, is manifestly vicious in character, and that *estrangement* caused by human greed and sloth may be treated by us so long as the treatment improves our character and community. Our exploration should arrive at propositions describing what treatments may improve character and community, and what treatments cannot.

Make Sense of Place Invaders

Like many wonderful college towns, Eugene, Oregon, harbors peaceful neighborhoods and wooded parks. Here and there, home-owners and professional landscapers decided to enhance the natural beauty of the landscape by planting dark-green crawling ivy (commonly known as “English Ivy”, or *Hedera Helix*). Crawling ivy is similar in appearance to that variety of ivy found in pleasant bathrooms and kitchens.

In Eugene, the outdoor variety of ivy soon populated landscaped borders, shaded lawns, and neighborhood woodlots, providing maintenance-free ground cover. Home-owners must have rejoiced: “No more lawn mowers!”, “No more fertilizers!”, and “No more endless weeding!” Landscape designers for local banks and government offices planted crawling ivy to decorate efficiently-built concrete buildings. Efficient apartment complexes did the same, creating leafy courtyards and walkways. The aesthetic produced by crawling ivy was something of the Orient: forbidding and invincible.

By century’s turn, the prodigious crawling ivy was found in every heavily wooded neighborhood of Eugene. Some neighborhood woodlots had become astonishingly overrun: the crawling ivy grew into dense carpets, and the crawling ivy sent thick vines up every tall conifer.

The casual pedestrian in Eugene notices such overrun woodlots either with pleasure or with disdain. The crawling ivy creates a homogeneous texture, which, in the morning fog, is aesthetically pleasing. On the other hand, the monstrous balloon of crawling ivy, feeding, in broad sunlight, up into the mid-branches of tall conifers, appears a manifest crime in the making: a vegetable mafia conspiring against pine cathedrals! a photosynthetic raccoon plundering the halls of fine dining!

In 2001, the state of Oregon gathered experts to declare crawling ivy among the “noxious weeds”. A “noxious weed”, according to Oregon government documents, is any member of the plant kingdom posing a tremendous threat to agriculture, recreation, health, property, and native species. In 2002, as if echoing the world-wide terror crisis, Oregon state authorities again marshaled expertise, this time to declare that crawling ivy had inched its way onto the quarantined species list. A quarantined plant species, in Oregon, may not be sold, imported, or propagated.

In early 2003, the city of Eugene issued its own “administrative order” prohibiting the use of crawling ivy on city property for landscaping and ground-cover purposes. The order acknowledged that crawling ivy, among others, had become a municipal pest, and the city government proposed to meticulously extract crawling ivy from overrun city parks and woodlots. Extraction was expected to be expensive and painstaking.

Crawling ivy provides an illustration of an *introduced* invasive species: crawling ivy was deliberately planted to improve the quality of life for home-owners and, in the case of city projects, crawling ivy was intended to improve the quality of life for the community in general.

Some invasive species, we know, are introduced for eventual harvest, by hunting or by gathering. In Eugene, Oregon, crawling ivy was introduced primarily for its aesthetic contributions. The “introduction” of crawling ivy seemed therefore almost morally blameless.

Very few citizens could have known that crawling ivy would easily invade neighborhood woodlots. Therefore the state's quarantine list and the city's administrative order mostly correct for human ignorance about crawling ivy: that crawling ivy has no natural limitation on growth and propagation in forest habitats such as are found in Eugene, Oregon.

There are infamous stories about *intentionally* introduced invasive species, and there are infamous stories about *unintentionally* introduced invasive species. In the first case, the introduction is motivated by some good purpose, personal or communal. In the second case, the introduction is an act of foolish neglect, or the introduction is an accidental consequence of well-traveled human industry, such as herding or fishing.

Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, published in the year 1948, describes interesting examples of invasive species unintentionally introduced by the herding and grazing industry. Mr. Leopold, for example, describes in the essay "Oregon and Utah" how invasive cheat grass came to overrun the celebrated oak savannahs of California and Oregon.

According to Mr. Leopold, European and Asian herders of sheep and cattle migrated far and wide throughout the Coastal Range and the Sierra Nevada mountains. Ungulates, at first, were transported by ship from distant Europe and Asia. Needle-like grass seeds, evolved to implant in mammal fur, were un-intentionally brought across the seas and into the hilly savannah of the West Coast. There the grass seeds found ample opportunity to germinate, and the new pioneers soon propagated invasively.

The unintentional introduction of invasive grasses, claims Mr. Leopold, gradually worked against the herding and grazing industry: the introduced grasses were much less edible to grazing ungulates than were the native grasses and wild flowers, and the painfully sharp seed jackets molested shepherds and herders moving on foot.

Mr. Leopold observes that the rolling hills of the Coastal Range and the Sierra Nevada, prior to herding and grazing, had a different ecology of grasses, shrubs, and trees. That which we see today is but a semblance. Mr. Leopold's *Almanac* argues for the proposition, still meaningful to us in the early 21st century, that the invaded community, while aesthetically attractive, is more likely to suffer natural catastrophes, such as wild fire, blight, and drought.

Mr. Leopold expresses remorse for the unexpected changes to the land community wrought by centuries of human industry. "*What can be done?*" the author asks us, helplessly, in the closing chapters of the *Almanac*. "*What ought to be done?*" we, the reading audience, anxiously query. A bored voice provokes us all from the dark recesses of the university auditorium: "*Why do anything?!*" A host of good answers comes to the defense:

"Because invasive species are ugly!"
"Because maybe we still have time...!"
"...to fend off ecological disaster!"
"Because we need a healthy land community!"

Let us explore the questions of ethics and the questions of practicality that arise with respect to invasive species, introduced or accidental.

Let us leave to others, the question of released, non-invasive exotic species, such as elegant ring-tailed pheasants and demure pear trees, and let us set aside the question of domestic, exotic species, such as pernicious fighting dogs and unpleasant tropical birds.

Let us explore *ideas* in stages, just as hiking trips are conducted in stages. Let us begin with the most provocative idea, “*Why do anything?*”, and proceed, gently and gradually, toward the specific, climactic answer of the rocky quandary overhead. We may express this rocky quandary in the form of a question, “*What ought we to do about invasive species?*”

Just how things appear to us from the highest summit, is never known to us in advance. Our descent from the summit, we hope, shall release tidings of what ways and means, in a word *practices*, may inform our practical life, in this way answering Mr. Leopold’s mournful question, “*What can we do?*”

And let us be cognizant of our place and situation. We do not purport to be fools who speak of vast continents and abstract nations. Who human among us may have such knowledge? We mean to speak only of what we encounter and experience, in light of what we know. *For truth and love arise within our environs, enlightened and provided by our near horizons.*

We, therefore, mean to speak of invasive species in our community, in our nearby forest and waterways, and in our own backyard.

Let’s begin here then: “*Why do anything?*”

Invasions and abandonment, floods and wild fires, mutations and new hybrids, are facts of the natural world. The scales of time vary greatly. The magnitudes of space are expansive, or minute. Some natural events are experienced by human observers. Some natural events far surpass the time of human life.

Given that disturbance and constant change are characteristic of the natural world, and given that we ourselves are constantly implicated in disturbance and change, we ought to consider the straight-forward but provocative idea that, *we should do nothing* about invasive species and *we should do nothing* about the introduction of invasive species!

Such events, we may hold, are entirely within the bounds of nature and, for this reason, ought to be regarded, by us, as good.

On this account, the crawling ivy woodlots of Eugene, Oregon are but a hot afternoon in the cool temporality of far-reaching earth. Landscapers and homeowners are playing the part of innocent propagators: the creepy vines have yet to fructify.

On this account, the cheat grasses that populate the rolling savannahs of the West Coast are a short stand. Perhaps the native grasses will reclaim their keep. Perhaps new invaders will arrive, brought by new varieties of grazing ungulate: the sun-powered automobile and the sun-gliding airplane.

Who are we mortals to know? Who are we fools to say? What far-reaching human act is not short folly? Oftentimes, Aldo Leopold gives expression to this garden variety of non-anthropocentrism. Such non-anthropocentrism seems to justify *doing nothing*. In the essay “Oregon and Utah”, for example, Mr. Leopold writes, “In the end, every region and every resource get their quota of uninvited ecological guests”.

Mr. Martin Gorke, a contemporary philosopher of Germany, provides lots of argument for this sort of idea in the book, *The Death of Our Planet’s Species*, published by Island Press in 2003. Mr. Gorke argues that our concepts of natural harmony, natural stability, and perfection are false ideals, without basis in actual science.

Mr. Gorke offers his view within the philosophy of skepticism. According to traditional skepticism, human knowledge is limited to simple facts and ideas of experience, beyond which human knowledge cannot, and perhaps may not, extend. Moreover, according to traditional skepticism, our experience gives us no idea of how things ought to be.

In the ancient world, the figure of Socrates in Plato's *Apology* provides an important champion of skepticism. In the modern period, Mr. David Hume defends skepticism in the celebrated *Inquiries*, arguing that we may never arrive at certain knowledge about natural events nor about morality.

Such skepticism justifies Mr. Gorke's proposal that science cannot justify action to arrest ecological change, including those changes brought about by *invasive species*.

Prejudice and apprehension are, for Mr. Gorke, the usual cause of "quarantine lists" and "administrative orders" against invasive species. We have, Mr. Gorke thinks, false ideas about what is proper and natural.

From the standpoint of science, invasive species show just the same range of qualities found in any other species: growth, reproduction, distinct structures, genetic variation, genetic mutation, and limiting conditions.

What fact may we point to, argues skepticism, that distinguishes the invasive species from all the others, making the accused species a turn against order, natural and civil? "*There are no such qualities.*" Thus, for the skeptic, there is no meaningful way for science to distinguish invasive species from native species. Mr. Gorke approves David Hume's famous proposition: that no idea of morality, no sense of right or wrong, may be drawn from external matters of fact. Nature provides many facts, we may say, none of which are moral facts. The prevalence of crawling ivy in Eugene is but a fact. The fact stands out to us, becomes an idea perhaps, because we are prejudiced for what's familiar and fearful for the unknown. The skeptic may point out that there are many prevalent facts that we overlook: guided by childish aesthetics, we make crimes out of compost, and guided by apprehension, we make mafias out of vigor.

The "do nothing" philosophy, espoused by Mr. Gorke, receives justification not only from skepticism; the idea may receive different justification from theologies like that expressed by Thomas Aquinas. Unlike Mr. Gorke, the theology of Thomas Aquinas incorporates the Aristotelian idea that nature may be "perfect" and "good".

For Thomas Aquinas, all created beings in nature proceed toward their perfection. For most beings, the path to fulfillment is not a matter of thought and will, which are either true or false, but of drives and internal principles. For Thomas Aquinas, trees and animals are always "pursuing" what God intends: earthly perfection. Only human beings, endowed with the natural law, have room to choose what is truly good, or to choose what is falsely good, in pursuit of fulfillment.

Environmentalists, according to this theology, ought to be optimistic about all events of the natural world: natural events are all to the good, and we ought to be optimistic even for those changes that cause us great apprehension, such as wild fires, blight, and drought.

The "*Why do anything?*" provocation offers good sense. The starting point for our exploration is comfortable and apparently sane. Our day-pack shifts easily on our shoulders: we'll be at the summit in no time!

But let's keep walking up this hill: we need to reconcile the problem that we, however mortal and limited, are nonetheless trusting, faithful, loving, temporal beings. By temporal, I mean we have a sense of the future and the past, and we have good ideas about how things ought to be.

We certainly do not accept crime. We will not even admit poor taste. We have, in fact, very clear ideas about right and wrong. We do not write off all events as mere ticks of earthly time, as the sluggish fits of evolution, and we find such an idea an impossible feat for human imagination. We must always be creatures of our context, and, thus, we must understand events from within modest horizons.

We certainly should not accept war and slavery as inherently "all to the good". We are very serious that change, in human contexts, proceed meaningfully, lawfully, and piously. We are beings that make sense. We love sense. We relish sense. Nature is sensible. Nature invigorates our senses. *What time have we for skepticism?*

Those who follow this idea, must walk away from skepticism's reduction of all moral sense and distinction to mere prejudice and apprehension.

Surely there is apprehension: apprehension whenever we encounter nonsense elaborate and bizarre, apprehension whenever we are brought to discover what does not, and should, matter. Knowledge that enlightens us, that gives us *right* from *wrong*, is already known to us and worked into every crook and corner of our experience, allowing us to discern, by sight and ear and nose and touch, all at a moment, the good from the false.

How else do we know the good student? How else do we trust the true friend? Only immediately. If skepticism is entirely right, then skepticism must be wrong, for skepticism will also assert its truth and propriety for human life.

John Muir wrote a wonderful journal, *My First Summer in the Sierras*, in which he describes the antics and migrations of a company of sheep herders. Mr. Muir, who joined the company for the purpose of nature study, compares observations of wild nature to observations of domestic nature: wild nature is pure, alive, and wondrous; domestic nature is filthy, humiliated, and dull. The water ouzel on the one hand; the sheep herd on the other.

Mr. Muir proposes human sin as the cause. For without humankind, nature breathes the air of creation, stands upright, strokes her perfect feathers, and darts her precious eye. Even the mountain ridges are sharp, with quartz specks and delicate lichens. Mr. Muir, who spent many long and eternal hours on the highest ridges of the Sierra Nevada, soon learned how the mountains, too, have life.

We admire Mr. Muir for youthful tenacity. Shall we attribute, further, that John Muir was romantic? Shall we believe that all in nature is fair and that distinctions between purity and muck, brilliance and dullness, are but projections of the romantic heart? The ancients wondered at Plato's theory of forms in just this register, and asked, "*There is a form of Goodness, there is a Form of Chair. So, Plato, Is there a form of Mud?*"

Surely there is not a Form of Mud. There is no order for mud: mud cannot be perfect. The varieties of mud are many and gradual. Like fashion, mud may be adjusted frequently, by adding water or by subtracting water, to our purposes, or, mud simply does not matter at all. But true beings, such as are beings of nature, do have perfection and distinction, do always matter, and thus may always be evaluated objectively, as to how well they embody and manifest the Form.

All this is to say that John Muir may discern what is good, and what is falsely good, in the natural order of the Sierra Mountains because our knowledge of proportion is already in us. Our experience is not a mere accumulation, but is directed, guided, sound, and instant. We recognize *excess*. We welcome *suitability*. We abhor *nonsense*. We adore *beauty*.

The invasive species is just these: *excess* and *nonsense* in the natural world! We may list, in the form of propositions, perceivable qualities that encapsulate what we encounter when we report *excess* and *nonsense*:

The crawling ivy sends redundant climbing vines into the conifers.

The crawling ivy aggressively carpets the entire woodlot.

The crawling ivy tangles absurdly in the branches of the tall conifers.

The crawling ivy creeps beyond natural borders provided by shade and soil.

The crawling ivy shows repetitive structures that fail to distinguish.

We would go astray if we attempted a complete list of invasive qualities as a field-guide to improve our judgment: we would cause quarrels with our friends. We always ought to trust our perception, borne of meditation and experience, borne walking, ourselves and others, through neighborhood parks, local forests, and city waterways.

We discover that natural beings always have their niche in the land community. We discover that natural beings prosper within limitations created by circumstances and community neighbors like themselves. We discover, also, that natural beings, periodically and only periodically, stand out from their surroundings.

The invasive species, paradoxically, cannot find its proper place and timeliness, like breakfast milk pooled across the busy kitchen table. The profligate, redundant, repetitive, tangled, creeping growth of the crawling ivy is indication that the crawling ivy is not tempered by the limitations of temperature, moisture, sunlight—in a word, *season*.

The crawling ivy is, in this way, truly criminal.

John Muir attributes the criminality manifest in domesticated nature to human *greed*. Humankind wishes to store itself against calamity. Humankind wishes to make large room for sin. Giant stables and ranches are set up to keep more sheep than are needed locally, in order to accumulate profit; and profit is the vat of grease with which ranchers purport to bribe the future into dormancy. The sheep herd, crowded and starved, in time manifest qualities reported by Mr. Muir in the *Sierra* journals.

So, too, the crawling ivy of Eugene, Oregon. While the professional landscapers and home-owners may be blameless about their ignorance of plant life, landscapers and home-owners are not yet blameless about their motivation and vice, *sloth*. The care of homes and businesses is a painstaking effort. The weeding of yards and borders is but one of many tasks that create a complete sense of place. The crawling ivy was adopted as an antidote to, and release from, the obligations of hard work.

Professor Thomas E. Hill, philosopher of the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, wrote, in 1983, a well-received paper called “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environment”, which explores the topic of virtue and the environment. Professor Hill claims that we ought to express our disapproval of excessive development in terms of *human vice*, and Professor Hill claims that such expressions are justified because character, and habits, are what determine our goals and actions.

As Professor Hill describes, when we asphalt our entire front yard, we do so because we are controlling and greedy. In Eugene, Oregon, we plant recently purchased “starts” of crawling ivy in the shaded front-yard because we are too honor-seeking and lazy. On Professor Hill’s view, the municipal pest has not yet been correctly identified: the municipal pest is ourselves!

If we were to defend the crawling ivy in the city courtroom, then we may say that, before crawling ivy was declared a municipal pest, crawling ivy was *transported* and *enslaved* for the purposes of liberating humans from the tasks of improving the quality of life, personal and communal.

Such clandestine actions, we know now, were falsely good: we know because the paintaking work is yet before us.

Intended or unintended, introduced invasive species manifest qualities that are recognizable to human perception. Human perception arises through commitment to place and locality, neighbor and work. Introduced invasive species are commonly the consequence of human vice, *greed* and *sloth* especially. Whether from profit or neglect, invasive species are nature set at odds to nature. We may call being set-at-odds, *estrangement*.

The summit of our quest is now attained. The ascending hike was a challenge after all! We were required to transform from skeptical empiricists to transcendental idealists. We may wonder about the epistemological ledge we were hard put to climb. Some of us knew the way.

No matter: *What ought we to do about invasive species?*

Our commitment to the most meaningful answer possible means that we must pose our question in the most specific way. We should thus press the question with questions that promise us more *specificity*: Who are the *we*? We, the town of Eugene? We, the people of the state of Oregon? We, the Pacific Northwest? We, the oak savannah hills of the Coastal Range?

And, then, more specifying questions: What *invasive species* in particular? The tenacious Scottish broom of Marin, perhaps? The impudent buckthorn of upstate New York? The gluttonous gypsy moth?

Our ideal of the most specifically poised question is to the point. We cannot solve our moral problems with general answers and prescriptions. We cannot legislate for the Nation. We make sense where we live, and, from there, our questioning truly takes place, and makes place.

That we ought to rescue the estranged is a principle of the dutiful and compassionate, the young and the old, the wanderer and the citizen. That we may keep the principle near to our hearts, and life, is perhaps a consequence of how we live and of what matters to us most, that we ourselves are truly and always free.

What we do when we rescue the estranged is a complex matter of style and wisdom. We untangle two children, boys or girls, from fighting over a toy in the backyard. The distribution of justice must be swift and firm, or perhaps we let wait. Bias may come into play: the girl is always the entrapped, and the boy is always the crawling ivy. Surely our relations are more complex than this! But separation is immediate and satisfying.

We may be as Solomon, divining beautiful folds of ancient tangles. Solomon, we know, found the way to solve dispute between owners of grazing ungulates. The herd was “tangled”; neighbors were estranged. What did Solomon propose? The best way to untangle the estranged.

So, too, with invasive species. We ought to discover the right way to untangle the invasive species from within the ecology of the land community.

A principle comes forth! The summit shows all sides of the quandary! The principle has the form of the conditional: “Whenever we encounter and recognize *estrangement*, in human life and in nature, then we are, just then, available and prepared to discover the right way to rescue the estranged.” Solomon recognized the best solution to the herder’s dilemma; the herders, for their part, presented the case for Solomon to perceive.

Whenever we must walk by estrangement, when our pause does not give way to rescue, then we ourselves are among the number estranged! We ourselves are out of place and making our way to some place we do not yet know.

Let us return to Eugene! a town I know, for I lived there well, and almost satisfied, for three years, just as the crawling ivy was announced a municipal pest. We thought, then, in the town newspapers, that the crawling ivy must be the one removed — the boy — and not the conifers.

We noticed that the crawling ivy collected, and provided harbor for, trash. We were sure, moreover, that rodent pests were collaborating with the crawling ivy for protection. We were sure, also, that the crawling ivy was sapping the trees, which in time, we knew, would rot gruesomely.

Most people involved advocated pulling the crawling ivy off the trees soon, for trees are the treasure of the town. The physical removal of the homogeneous carpets of crawling ivy would follow. The crawling ivy propagates in long strands and feelers, thus the physical removal would be at times pleasant and geometrically satisfying, like peeling onion skins.

Clippers and hand-axes would be needed to work through areas of dense entanglement. The work would thus be dangerous.

The crawling ivy, we know, propagates easily from small cuttings. What’s more, fibrous roots sunk into tree trunks, and into the ground, sprout back after trimming and removal with the hand axe. Thus, in all likelihood, the crawling ivy would rejuvenate and renew its invasion within the year. Return crews would therefore be required. After several years of careful work, we know the crawling ivy would finally retreat. The innocent would be liberated. Our landscaping profession would be wiser, more community-oriented, and more collaborative with town government.

Our approach to invasive species ought to be: *rescue the estranged!* Invasive species are *estranged* from their proper place! The native species are *estranged!* The more wise our solution is, the more complete our rescue. A Solomon’s solution will be a rescue in many respects for all parties attending.

In Eugene, Oregon, the estranged are not merely the native plants and trees. The estranged are not merely the crawling ivy, transported and enslaved to serve *greed* and *sloth*. The guilty home-owners are estranged from their neighbors, town government, and environment. So too are innocent neighbors estranged from the local businesses and apartment complexes, who fail to comply with Oregon’s “noxious weeds” and “quarantine” laws. So, too, are the city crews estranged, from citizenry in general, by working long hours in peaceful residential neighborhoods.

We ought to rescue the estranged. Enslaving young men and women to restore the neglected obligations of home-owners and business owners may not be the most ideal solution. Perhaps any general solution, applied to every circumstance, will be a thoroughly false and estranging solution. Perhaps the ideal solution is always local and can be found only from within the perspectives of the parties involved.

Perhaps each Eugene neighborhood should explore together how to treat its particular invasive species — not merely the crawling ivy but also the lawn weeds, the bamboo plants, and the wonderful marauding mammals.

Perhaps some Eugene neighborhoods will elect to experiment and allow the crawling ivy to flourish in one particular area of the local woodlot, gradually bringing down the tall conifers.

The possibilities are nearly endless and thus cannot be generalized. The opportunity for creativity becomes available as optimism is shared, and occasioned, by neighborhood meetings.

*“Couldn’t we harvest the crawling ivy for some useful purpose?”
 “Environmental Studies could research the history of crawling ivy!”
 “Wouldn’t crawling ivy produce cellulose for paper-making?”
 “What about insulation?” “Composting!” “Mulch!”
 “What about ‘green’ houses composed of crawling ivy!?”*

Given that the causes of invasive species are human vices, greed and sloth, we may suppose that any community solution which generates profit, or postpones hard work, will only promote our troubles.

The use of guns for extermination, the use of fire for clearing, the use of intense chemicals on vegetation, and the use of complex mechanical extractors are all ways that technology promises to relieve the neighborhood of hard work that brings people and land community together.

The application of herbicides, in particular, seems useful for Eugene, Oregon’s crawling ivy problem. But by “useful” we mean only *expedient*, and *expediency* is by no means the ideal sense of “useful”. We seek rather the ideal “useful”, and that will be the “useful” which brings people and land together, improving our persons, characters, and quality of life.

Plants, we know, develop easy tolerance to herbicides ingeniously keyed to the plant’s biochemical growth. Herbicides, moreover, require our local community to depend on corporations, who are not always committed to the civil law of our particular state and county. Moreover, the application of herbicides can only be best carried out by professionals, who care not for what other concerns may show up in the process of applying chemicals. We shall speak nothing of the known worries about long-term exposure to chemicals, chemical spills, and other mistakes of herbicide application.

Our trail is ended. The pathway is good. We are too often ready to be engineers, scientists, and technicians. We love to be of service. Better are we poets, doctors, lawyers, and artists, who employ what is known, and, who work with what sits near to hand.

“The County government has other ideas”. “The department demands the herbicide”. Let us hold meetings, then. Meetings are our government. Our voice grows meaningful; our language becomes convincing. Let us write essays, and study the civil law. Let us write letters; our thoughts will carry far. Let us make music, and sing about our quandaries. “Let’s harvest the crawling ivy, and fill up all the quarries!”

*Whenever invaders cover,
the bright of day,
the paths of flowers,
we ought to meet, to be as lovers,
who discover the way,
who marshal the powers.*

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