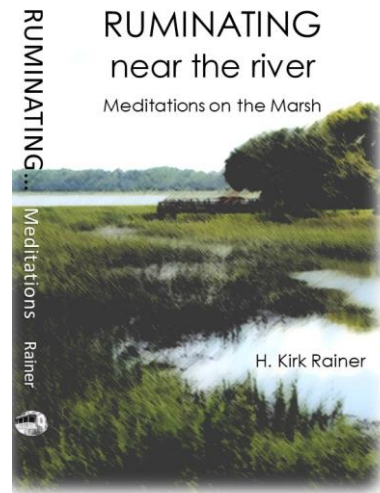


RUMINATING near the river Meditations on the Marsh

To begin, some clarification or similarity between ruminating and meditation; that the two have some association, though one seems to suggest too much thinking, obsessing over things, while the other as generally healthy, meaningful, therapeutic. In my choice, my aim, is that the two be similar, practically the same, as just two ways of concentrating on a problem or predicament and trying to draw out clarity amid all the chaos, confusion and consternation—the things that have and do trouble my soul, river and marsh aside.

It seems that I have always lived near a river and, much as the coast has been my stay, the panoramic and peaceful perspectives of the tidal waters, the marsh with all its features, pleasant and putrid, but teeming with life. Reflecting on times far away, I go back to shores and shoals to fish, crab or just be where land ends and water begins, here to there, beyond. And had those times been as fascinating and formulating as of Mark Twain's ventures, well, who knows what I might have found—or at least fictionalized—with all that which he is renowned, revered and remembered.

The waters and marshes are vast, sometimes appearing endless on the horizon, perhaps like ruminating and meditation; that out of nowhere comes an event, an experience, thought forgotten, arriving with such surprise as to wonder if it really did happen, credible or something conjured as memory is not always loyal, lucid. Still, and I embark on this book, I begin with the inspiration of Rainer Maria Rilke, "May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back, the way it is with children," for anything less is the adult, addled and inauthentic. Yes, to be a child again and to see things as I thought or think, and perhaps really were, for all the rivers and marshes, all the ruminating and meditations, and all that comes when "We begin thinking like a river [as if] if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations."¹



¹ David Brower