

VII

APRIL, 1852

(ÆT. 34)

April 1. Gilpin says well that the object of a light mist is a "*nearer distance.*"

Among winter plants, regarded as component parts of the forest, he thinks the fern the most picturesque. He says: "We are often at a loss to distinguish in pictures, the rising from the setting sun; though their characters are very different, both in the lights and shadows. The ruddy lights indeed of the evening are more easily distinguished: but it is not perhaps always sufficiently observed, that the shadows of the evening are much less opaque, than those of the morning."

This morning, the ground was completely covered with snow, and the water on the meadows looked dark and stormy and contrasted well with the white landscape. Now, at noon, the ground is once more as bare as before.

He is in the lowest scale of laborers who is merely an able-bodied man and can compete with others only in physical strength. Woodchoppers in this neighborhood get but fifty cents a cord, but, though many can chop two cords in a day in pleasant weather and under favorable circumstances, yet most do not average more than seventy-five cents a day, take the months together. But one among them of only equal physical

strength and skill as a chopper, having more wit, buys a cross-cut saw for four dollars, hires a man to help him at a dollar a day, and saws down trees all winter at ten cents apiece and thirty or forty a day, and clears two or more dollars a day by it. Yet as long as the world may last few will be found to buy the cross-cut saw, and probably the wages of the sawyer will never be reduced to a level with those of the chopper.

2 P. M. — To Flint's Pond cedar woods *via* railroad, returning by C. Smith's orchard.

Saw the first bee of the season on the railroad causeway, also a small red butterfly and, later, a large dark one with buff-edged wings.

Gilpin's "Forest Scenery" is a pleasing book, so moderate, temperate, graceful, roomy, like a gladed wood; not condensed; with a certain religion in its manners and respect for all the good of the past, rare in more recent books; and it is grateful to read after them. Somewhat spare indeed in the thoughts as in the sentences. Some of the cool wind of the copses converted into grammatical and graceful sentences, without heat. Not one of those humors come to a head which some modern books are, but some of the natural surface of a healthy mind.

Walden is all white ice, but little melted about the shores. The very sight of it, when I get so far on the causeway, though I hear the *spring* note of the chickadee from over the ice, carries my thoughts back at once some weeks toward winter, and a chill comes over them.

There is an early willow on sand-bank of the rail-

road, against the pond, by the fence, grayish below and yellowish above. The railroad men have dug around the sleepers that the sun may thaw the ground and let them down. It is not yet out. Cut across near Baker's barn. The swollen buds of some trees now give a new tint to their tops seen at a distance, — to the maples at least. Baker's peach orchard looks at this distance purplish below and red above, the color of the last year's twigs. The geranium (?)¹ is the most common green leaf to be seen everywhere on the surface now the snow is gone.

They have been shooting great numbers of muskrats the last day or two. Is that the red osier (cornel or viburnum) near the grape-vine on the Bare Hill road? How sure the farmer is to find out what bush affords the best withes, little of a botanist as he is! The mountains seen from Bare Hill are very fine now in the horizon, so evanescent, being broadly spotted white and blue like the skins of some animals, the white predominating. The Peterboro Hills to the north are almost all white. The snow has melted more on the more southern mountains. With their white mantles, notwithstanding the alternating dark patches, they melt into the sky. Yet perhaps the white portions may be distinguished by the peculiar light of the sun shining on them. They are like a narrow strip of broadly spotted leopard-skin, the saddle-cloth of the sun spread along the horizon.

I am surprised to find Flint's Pond frozen still, which should have been open a week ago. The Great Sud-

¹ Cowslip.

bury Meadows covered with water are revealed. Blue they look over the woods. Each part of the river seen further north shines like silver in the sun, and the little pond in the woods west of this hill is half open water. Cheering, that water with its reflections, compared with this opaque dumb pond. How unexpectedly dumb and poor and cold does Nature look, when, where we had expected to find a glassy lake reflecting the skies and trees in the spring, we find only dull, white ice! Such am I, no doubt, to many friends. But, now that I have reached the cedar hill, I see that there is about an acre of open water, perhaps, over Bush Island in the middle of the pond, and there are some water-fowl there on the edge of the ice, — mere black spots, though I detect their character by discovering a relative motion, — and some are swimming about in the water. The pond is, perhaps, the handsomer, after all, for this distant patch only of blue water, in the midst of the field of white ice. Each enhances the other. It is an azure spot, an elysian feature, in your cold companion, making the imagined concealed depths seem deeper and rarer. This pond is worth coming to, if only because it is larger than Walden. I can so easily fancy it indefinitely large. It represents to me that Icy Sea of which I have been reading in Sir J. Richardson's book.

The prevailing color of the woods at present, excepting the evergreens, is russet, a little more red or grayish, as the case may be, than the earth, for those are the colors of the withered leaves and the branches; the earth has the lighter hue of withered grass. Let me

see how soon the woods will have acquired a new color. Went over the hill toward the eastern end of the pond. What is the significance of odors, of the odoriferous woods? Sweet and yellow birch, sassafras, fever-bush, etc., are an interesting clan to me. When we bruise them in our walk, we are suddenly exhilarated by their odor. This sweet scent soon evaporates, and you must break the twig afresh. If you cut it, it is not as if you break it. Some, like the sassafras, have brought a great price as articles of commerce. No wonder that men thought they might have some effect toward renovating their lives. Gosnold, the discoverer of Cape Cod, carried home a cargo of sassafras. What could be more grateful to the discoverer of a new country than a new fragrant wood?

Gilpin's is a book in which first there is nothing to offend, and secondly something to attract and please.

The branches of the young black birch grow very upright, as it were appressed to the main stem. Their buds appear a little expanded now. Saw the fox-colored sparrows and slate-colored snowbirds on Smith's Hill, the latter singing in the sun, — a pleasant jingle.

The mountains, which an hour ago were white, are now all blue, the mistiness has increased so much in the horizon, and crept even into the vales of the distant woods. The mist is in wreaths or stripes because we see the mist of successive vales. There could not easily be a greater contrast than between this morning's and this evening's landscapes. The sun now an hour high.

Now I see the river-reach, far in the north. The more distant river is ever the most ethereal.

Sat awhile before sunset on the rocks in Saw Mill Brook. A brook need not be large to afford us pleasure by its sands and meanderings and falls and their various accompaniments. It is not so much size that we want as picturesque beauty and harmony. If the sound of its fall fills my ear it is enough. I require that the rocks over which it falls be agreeably disposed, and prefer that they be covered with lichens. The height and volume of the fall is of very little importance compared with the appearance and disposition of the rocks over which it falls, the agreeable diversity of still water, rapids, and falls, and of the surrounding scenery. I require that the banks and neighboring hillsides be not cut off, but excite a sense of at least graceful wildness. One or two small evergreens, especially hemlocks, standing gracefully on the brink of the rill, contrasting by their green with the surrounding deciduous trees when they have lost their leaves, and thus enlivening the scene and betraying their attachment to the water. It would be no more pleasing to me if the stream were a mile wide and the hemlocks five feet in diameter. I believe that there is a harmony between the hemlock and the water which it overhangs not explainable. In the first place, its green is especially grateful to the eye the greater part of the year in any locality, and in the winter, by its verdure overhanging and shading the water, it concentrates in itself the beauty of all fluvial trees. It loves to stand with its foot close to the water, its roots running over the rocks of the shore, and two or more on opposite sides of a brook make the most beautiful frame to a waterscape, especially

in deciduous woods, where the light is sombre and not too glaring. It makes the more complete frame because its branches, particularly in young specimens such as I am thinking of, spring from so near the ground, and it makes so dense a mass of verdure. There are many larger hemlocks covering the steep side-hill forming the bank of the Assabet, where they are successively undermined by the water, and they lean at every angle over the water. Some are almost horizontally directed, and almost every year one falls in and is washed away. The place is known as the "Leaning Hemlocks."

But to return to Saw Mill Run. I love that the green fronds of the fern, pressed by the snow, lie on its rocks. It is a great advantage to take in so many parts at one view. We love to see the water stand, or seem to stand, at many different levels within a short distance, while we sit in its midst, some above, some below us, and many successive falls in different directions, meandering in the course of the fall, rather than one "chute," — rather spreading and shoaling than contracting and deepening at the fall. In a small brook like this, there are many adjuncts to increase the variety which are wanting in a river, or, if present, cannot be attended to; even dead leaves and twigs vary the ripples and increase the foam. And the very lichens on the rocks of the run are an important ornament, which in the great waterfall are wont to be overlooked. I enjoy this little fall on Saw Mill Run more than many a large one on a river that I have seen. The hornbeams and witch-hazel and canoe birches all come in for their share of

attention. We get such a complete idea of the small rill with its overhanging shrubs as only a bird's-eye view from some eminence could give us of the larger stream. Perhaps it does not fall more than five feet within a rod and a half. I should not hear Niagara a short distance off. The never-ending refreshing sound! It suggests more thoughts than Montmorenci. A stream and fall which the woods imbosom. They are not in this proportion to a larger fall. They lie in a more glaring and less picturesque light. Even the bubbles are a study. It can be completely examined in its details. The consciousness of there being water about you at different levels is agreeable. The sun can break through and fall on it and vary the whole scene infinitely.

Saw the freshly (?) broken shells of a tortoise's eggs — or were they a snake's? — in Hosmer's field. I hear a robin singing in the woods south of Hosmer's, just before sunset. It is a sound associated with New England village life. It brings to my thoughts summer evenings when the children are playing in the yards before the doors and their parents conversing at the open windows. It foretells all this now, before those summer hours are come.

As I come over the Turnpike, the song sparrow's jingle comes up from every part of the meadow, as native as the tinkling rills or the blossoms of the spirea, the meadow-sweet, soon to spring. Its cheep is like the sound of opening buds. The sparrow is continually singing on the alders along the brook-side, while the sun is continually setting.

We have had a good solid winter, which has put the

previous summer far behind us; intense cold, deep and lasting snows, and clear, tense winter sky. It is a good experience to have gone through with.

April 2. 6 A. M. — To the riverside and Merrick's pasture.

The sun is up. The water on the meadows is perfectly smooth and placid, reflecting the hills and clouds and trees. The air is full of the notes of birds, — song sparrows, red-wings, robins (singing a strain), blue-birds, — and I hear also a lark, — as if all the earth had burst forth into song. The influence of this April morning has reached them, for they live out-of-doors all the night, and there is no danger that they will oversleep themselves such a morning. A few weeks ago, before the birds had come, there came to my mind in the night the twittering sound of birds in the early dawn of a spring morning, a semiprophecy of it, and last night I attended mentally as if I heard the spray-like dreaming sound of the midsummer frog and realized how glorious and full of revelations it was. Expectation may amount to prophecy. The clouds are *white* watery, not such as we had in the winter. I see in this fresh morning the shells left by the muskrats along the shore, and their galleries leading into the meadow, and the bright-red cranberries washed up along the shore in the old water-mark. Suddenly there is a blur on the placid surface of the waters, a rippling mistiness produced, as it were, by a slight morning breeze, and I should be sorry to show it to the stranger now. So is it with our minds. •

As a fair day is promised, and the waters are falling, decide to go to the Sudbury meadows with C., 9 A. M. Started some woodcocks in a wet place in Hi Wheeler's stubble-field. Saw six spotted tortoises (*Emys guttata*), which had crawled to the shore by the side of the Hubbard Bridge causeway. Too late now for the morning influence and inspiration. The birds sing not so earnestly and joyously; there is a blurring ripple on the surface of the lake. How few valuable observations can we make in youth! What if there were united the susceptibility of youth with the discrimination of age? Once I was part and parcel of Nature; now I am observant of her.

What ails the pewee's tail? It is loosely hung, pulsating with life. What mean these wag-tail birds? Cats and dogs, too, express some of their life through their tails.

The bridges are a station at this season. They are the most advantageous positions. There I would take up my stand morning and evening, looking over the water.

The Charles Miles Run full and rumbling. The water is the color of ale, here dark-red ale over the yellow sand, there yellowish frothy ale where it tumbles down. Its foam, composed of large white bubbles, makes a kind of arch over the rill, snow white and contrasting with the general color of the stream, while the latter ever runs under it carrying the lower bubbles with it and new ones ever supply their places. At least eighteen inches high, this stationary arch. I do not remember elsewhere such highly colored water. It drains a

swamp near by and is dry the greater part of the year. Coarse bubbles continually bursting. A striped snake by the spring, and a black one. The grass there is delightfully green while there is no fresh green anywhere else to be seen. It is the most refreshing of all colors. It is what all the meadows will soon be. The color of no flower is so grateful to the eye. Why is the dog black and the grass green? If all the banks were suddenly painted green and spotted with yellow, white, red, blue, purple, etc., we should more fully realize the miracle of the summer's coloring.

Now the snow is off, it is pleasant to visit the sandy bean-fields covered with last year's blue-curls and sorrel and the flakes of arrowhead stone. I love these sandy fields which melt the snows and yield but small crops to the farmer. Saw a striped squirrel in the wall near Lee's. Brigham, the wheelwright, building a boat. At the sight of all this water, men build boats if ever. Are those large scarred roots at the bottom of the brooks now, three inches in diameter, the roots of the pickerel-weed? What vigor! What vitality! The yellow spots of the tortoise (*Emys guttata*) on his dark shell, seen bright through clear water, remind me of flowers, the houstonias, etc., when there are no colors on the land.

Israel Rice's dog stood stock-still so long that I took him at a distance for the end of a bench. He looked much like a fox, and his fur was as soft. Rice was very ready to go with us to his boat, which we borrowed, as soon as he had driven his cow into the barn where her calf was, but she preferred to stay out in the yard

this pleasant morning. He was very obliging, persisted, without regard to our suggestions that we could help ourselves, in going with us to his boat, showed us after a larger boat and made no remark on the miserableness of it. Thanks and compliments fell off him like water off a rock. If the king of the French should send him a medal, he would have to look in many dictionaries to know what the sending of a medal meant, and then he would appreciate the abstract fact merely, and it would fail of its intended effect.

Steered across for the oaks opposite the mouth of the Pantry. For a long distance, as we paddle up the river, we hear the two-stanza'd lay of the pewee on the shore, — pee-wet, pee-wee, etc. Those are the two obvious facts to eye and ear, the river and the pewee. After coming in sight of Sherman's Bridge, we moored our boat by sitting on a maple twig on the east side, to take a leisurely view of the meadow. The eastern shore here is a fair specimen of New England fields and hills, sandy and barren but agreeable to my eye, covered with withered grass on their rounded slopes and crowned with low reddish bushes, shrub oaks. There is a picturesque group of eight oaks near the shore, and through a thin fringe of wood I see some boys driving home an ox-cartload of hay. I have noticed black oaks within a day or two still covered with oak-balls. In upsetting the boat, which has been newly tarred, I have got some tar on my hands, which imparts to them on the whole an agreeable fragrance. This exercise of the arms and chest after a long winter's stagnation, during which only the legs have la-

bored, this pumping off the Lincolnshire fens, the Harlem lakes, of wintry fumes and damps and foul blood, is perhaps the greatest value of these paddling excursions. I see, far in the south, the upright black piers of the bridge just rising above the water. They are more conspicuous than the sleepers and rails. The occasional patches of snow on the hillsides are unusually bright by contrast; they are landmarks to steer by.

It appears to me that, to one standing on the heights of philosophy, mankind and the works of man will have sunk out of sight altogether; that man is altogether too much insisted on. The poet says the proper study of mankind is man. I say, study to forget all that; take wider views of the universe. That is the egotism of the race. What is this our childish, gossiping, social literature, mainly in the hands of the publishers? When another poet says the world is too much with us, he means, of course, that man is too much with us. In the promulgated views of man, in institutions, in the common sense, there is narrowness and delusion. It is our weakness that so exaggerates the virtues of philanthropy and charity and makes it the highest human attribute. The world will sooner or later tire of philanthropy and all religions based on it mainly. They cannot long sustain my spirit. In order to avoid delusions, I would fain let man go by and behold a universe in which man is but as a grain of sand. I am sure that those of my thoughts which consist, or are contemporaneous, with social personal connections, however humane, are not the wisest and widest, most universal. What is the village, city, State,

nation, aye the civilized world, that it should concern a man so much? the thought of them affects me in my wisest hours as when I pass a woodchuck's hole. It is a comfortable place to nestle, no doubt, and we have friends, some sympathizing ones, it may be, and a hearth, there; but I have only to get up at midnight, aye to soar or wander a little in my thought by day, to find them all slumbering. Look at our literature. What a poor, puny, social thing, seeking sympathy! The author troubles himself about his readers, — would fain have one before he dies. He stands too near his printer; he corrects the proofs. Not satisfied with defiling one another in this world, we would all go to heaven together. To be a good man, that is, a good neighbor in the widest sense, is but little more than to be a good citizen. Mankind is a gigantic institution; it is a community to which most men belong. It is a test I would apply to my companion, — can he forget man? can he see this world slumbering?

I do not value any view of the universe into which man and the institutions of man enter very largely and absorb much of the attention. Man is but the place where I stand, and the prospect hence is infinite. It is not a chamber of mirrors which reflect me. When I reflect, I find that there is other than me. Man is a past phenomenon to philosophy. The universe is larger than enough for man's abode. Some rarely go outdoors, most are always at home at night, very few indeed have stayed out all night once in their lives, fewer still have gone behind the world of humanity, seen its institutions like toadstools by the wayside.

Landed on Tall's Island. It is not cold or windy enough, perchance, for the meadow to make its most serious impression. The staddles, from which the hay has been removed, rise a foot or two above the water. Large white gulls are circling over the water. The shore of this meadow lake is quite wild, and in most places low and rather inaccessible to walkers. On the rocky point of this island, where the wind is felt, the waves are breaking merrily, and now for half an hour our dog has been standing in the water under the small swamp white oaks, and ceaselessly snapping at each wave as it broke, as if it were a living creature. He, regardless of cold and wet, thrusts his head into each wave to gripe it. A dog snapping at the waves as they break on a rocky shore. He then rolls himself in the leaves for a napkin. We hardly set out to return, when the water looked sober and rainy. There was more appearance of rain in the water than in the sky, — April weather look. And soon we saw the dimples of drops on the surface. I forgot to mention before the cranberries seen on the bottom, as we pushed over the meadows, and the red beds of pitcher-plants.

We landed near a corn-field in the bay on the west side, below Sherman's Bridge, in order to ascend Round Hill, it still raining gently or with drops far apart. From the top we see smoke rising from the green pine hill in the southern part of Lincoln. The steam of the engine looked very white this morning against the oak-clad hillsides. The clouds, the showers, and the breaking away now in the west, all belong to the summer side of the year and remind me of long-past

days. The prospect is often best from two thirds the way up a hill, where, looking directly down at the parts of the landscape — the fields and barns — nearest the base, you get the sense of height best, and see how the land slopes up to where you stand. From the top, commonly, you overlook all this, and get a sense of *distance* merely, with a break in the landscape by which the most interesting point is concealed. This hill with its adjuncts is now almost an island, surrounded by broad lakes. The south lakes reflect the most light at present, but the sober surface of the northern is yet more interesting to me.

How novel and original must be each new man's view of the universe! for though the world is so old, and so many books have been written, each object appears wholly undescribed to our experience, each field of thought wholly unexplored. The whole world is an America, a *New World*. The fathers lived in a dark age and throw no light on any of our subjects. The sun climbs to the zenith daily, high over all literature and science. Astronomy, even, concerns us worldlings only, but the sun of poetry and of each new child born into the planet has never been astronomized, nor brought nearer by a telescope. So it will be to the end of time. The end of the world is not yet. Science is young by the ruins of Luxor, unearthing the Sphinx, or Nineveh, or between the Pyramids. The parts of the meadows nearly surrounded by water form interesting peninsulas and promontories.

Return to our boat. We have to go ashore and upset it every half-hour, it leaks so fast, for the leak in-

creases as it sinks in the water in geometrical progression. I see, among the phenomena of spring, here and there a dead sucker floating on the surface, perhaps dropped by a fish hawk or a gull, for the gulls are circling this way overhead to reconnoitre us. They will come sailing overhead to observe us. On making the eastward curve in the river, we find a strong wind against us. Pushing slowly across the meadow in front of the Pantry, the waves beat against the bows and sprinkle the water half the length of the boat. The froth is in long white streaks before the wind, as usual striping the surface.

We land in a steady rain and walk inland by R. Rice's barn, regardless of the storm, toward White Pond. Overtaken by an Irishman in search of work. Discovered some new oaks and pine groves and more New England fields. At last the drops fall wider apart, and we pause in a sandy field near the Great Road of the Corner, where it was agreeably retired and sandy, drinking up the rain. The rain was soothing, so still and sober, gently beating against and amusing our thoughts, swelling the brooks. The robin now peeps with scared note in the heavy overcast air, among the apple trees. The hour is favorable to thought. Such a day I like a sandy road, snows that melt and leave bare the corn and grain fields, with Indian relics shining on them, and prepare the ground for the farmer. Saw a cow or ox in a hollow in the woods, which had been skinned and looked red and striped, like those Italian anatomical preparations. It scared the dog. Went through a reddish andromeda swamp, where still a little icy stiffness in the crust under the woods

keeps us from slumping. The rain now turns to snow with large flakes, so soft many cohere in the air as they fall. They make us white as millers and wet us through, yet it is clear gain. I hear a solitary hyla for the first time. At Hubbard's Bridge, count eight ducks going over. Had seen one with outstretched neck over the Great Meadows in Sudbury. Looking up, the flakes are black against the sky. And now the ground begins to whiten. Get home at 5.30 P. M.

At the bend of the river above the river [*sic*], I noticed many ferns on the bank where there was much snow, very green.

April 3. They call that northernmost sea, thought to be free from ice, "Polina," — whither the musk oxen migrate. The coldest natures, persevere with them, go far enough, are found to have open sea in the highest latitudes.

It is a clear day with a cold westerly wind, the snow of yesterday being melted. When the sun shines unobstructedly the landscape is full of light, for it is reflected from the withered fawn-colored grass, as it cannot be from the green grass of summer. (On the back of the hill behind Gourgas's.)

The bluebird carries the sky on his back.

I am going over the hills in the rear of the windmill site and along Peter's path. This path through the rolling stubble-fields, with the woods rather distant and the horizon distant in front on account of the intervention of the river and meadow, reminds me a little of the downs of Cape Cod, of the Plains of Nau-

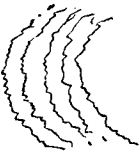
set. This is the only walk of the kind that we have in Concord. Perhaps it should be called Cæsar's Path. The maple at the brook by this path has not expanded its buds, though that by the Red Bridge had so long ago. What the cause? Are they different species?

I have observed much snow lately on the north slopes where shrub oaks grow, where probably the ground is frozen, more snow, I think, than lies in the woods in such positions. It is even two or three feet deep in many such places, though few villagers would believe it. One side of the village street, which runs east and west, appears a month in advance of the other. I go down the street on the wintry side; I return through summer. How agreeable the contrasts of light and shade, especially when the successive swells of a hill-side produce the shade! The clouds are important to-day for their shadows. If it were not for them, the landscape would be one glare of light without variety. By their motion they still more vary the scene.

Man's eye is so placed as to look straight forward on a level best, or rather down than up. His eye demands the sober colors of the earth for its daily diet. He does not look up at a great angle but with an effort. Many clouds go over without our noticing them, for it would not profit us much to notice it, but few cattle pass by in the street or the field without our knowing it.

The moon appears to be full to-night. About 8.30 P. M. I walked to the Clamshell Hill. It is very cold and windy, and I miss my gloves, left at home. Colder than the last moon. The sky is two-thirds covered with great four or more sided downy clouds, drifting

from the north or northwest, with dark-blue partitions between them. The moon, with a small brassy halo, seems travelling ever through them toward the north. The water is dull and dark, except close to the windward shore, where there is a smooth strip a rod or more in width protected from the wind, which reflects a faint light. When the moon reaches a clear space, the water is suddenly lit up quite across the meadows, for half a mile in length and several rods in width, while the woods beyond are thrown more into the shade, or seen more in a mass and indistinctly, than before. The ripples on the river, seen in the moonlight, those between the sunken willow lines, have this form:



the arc of a circle, as if their extremities were retarded by the friction of the banks. I noticed this afternoon that the bank below Caesar's, now partially flooded, the neighboring meadow, so higher than that sometimes you can walk down on it a mile dryshod with water on both sides of you. Like the banks of the Mississippi. There always appears to be something phosphorescent in moonlight reflected from water. Venus is very bright now in the west, and Orion is there, too, now. I came out mainly to see the light of the moon reflected from the meadowy flood. It is a pathway of light, of sheeny ripples, extending across the meadow toward the moon, consisting of a myriad little bent and broken moons. I hear one faint peep from a bird on its roost. The clouds are travelling very fast into the south. I would not have believed the heavens could be cleared so soon. They consist of irregularly

margined, wide whitish bars, *apparently* converging, rendezvousing, toward one point far in the south horizon. Like the columns of a host in the sky, each being conducted by its own leader to one rendezvous in the southern heavens. Such is the illusion, for we are deceived when we look up at this concave sphere, as when we look on a plane map representing the convex globe,—not by Mercator's projection. But what a grand incident of the night—though hardly a night passes without many such—that, between the hours of nine and ten, a battalion of downy clouds many miles in length and several in width were observed sailing noiselessly like a fleet from north to south over land and water, town and cottage, at the height of half a dozen miles above the earth! Over woods and over villages they swept along, intercepting the light of the moon, and yet perchance no man observed them. Now they are all gone. The sky is left clear and cold and but thinly peopled at this season. It is of a very light blue in all the horizon, but darker in the zenith, darkest of all in the crevice between two downy clouds. It is particularly light in the western horizon. Who knows but light is reflected from snow lying on the ground further inland? The water, as I look at it in the north or northeast, is a very dark blue, the moon being on my right; afterwards, crossing the railroad bridge, is a deep sea-green. The evenings are now much shortened, suggesting that ours is to be henceforth a daylight life.

April 4. Sunday. I have got to that pass with my friend that our words do not pass with each other for

what they are worth. We speak in vain; there is none to hear. He finds fault with me that I walk alone, when I pine for want of a companion; that I commit my thoughts to a diary even on my walks, instead of seeking to share them generously with a friend; curses my practice even. Awful as it is to contemplate, I pray that, if I am the cold intellectual skeptic whom he rebukes, his curse may take effect, and wither and dry up those sources of my life, and my journal no longer yield me pleasure nor life.

P. M. — Going across Wheeler's large field beyond Potter's, saw a large flock of small birds go by, I am not sure what kind, the near ones continually overtaking the foremost, so that the whole flock appeared to roll over as it went forward. When they lit on a tree, they appeared at a distance to clothe it like dead leaves. Went round Bear Garden Hill to the bank of the river. I am interested by the line of deposits which form the high-water mark. If you were to examine a bushel of it, how much you might learn of the productions of the shores above. I notice that the highest and driest lines, some months old, are composed mainly of sticks and coarse stems of plants; the most recent, which the water has but just left, have a large proportion of leaves, having been formed since the March winds have blown off so many dry leaves. So you can tell the season of the year when it was formed. It makes a manure in which the grass, etc., springs earlier and more luxuriantly than elsewhere. The water has plainly stood comparatively still at a few levels, for there are but two or three lines of deposit or drift. So that in this

respect, too, nature is self-registering. Is it the columbine or the anemone leaf that I now see grown a few inches among the rocks under the Cliffs?

It is refreshing to stand on the face of the Cliff and see the water gliding over the surface of the almost perpendicular rock in a broad thin sheet, pulsing over it. It reflects the sun for half a mile like a patch of snow, — as you stand close by, bringing out the colors of the lichens like polishing or varnish. It is admirable, regarded as a dripping fountain. You have lichens and moss on the surface, and starting saxifrage, ferns still green, and huckleberry bushes in the crevices. The rocks never appear so diversified, and cracked, as if the chemistry of nature were now in full force. Then the drops, falling perpendicularly from a projecting rock, have a pleasing geometrical effect.

I see the snow lying thick on the south side of the Peterboro Hills, and though the ground is bare from the seashore to their base, I presume it is covered with snow from their base to the Icy Sea. I feel the north-west air cooled by the snow on my cheek. Those hills are probably the dividing line at present between the bare ground and the snow-clad ground stretching three thousand miles to the Saskatchewan and Mackenzie and the Icy Sea.

The shrub oaks on the plateau below the Cliffs have now lost so many of their leaves that I see much more of the grass ground between them. I see the old circular shore of Fair Haven, where the tops of the button-bushes, willows, etc., rise above the water. This pond

is now open; only a little ice against the Pleasant Meadow. There are three great gulls sailing in the middle. Now my shouting (perchance) raises one, and, flying low and heavily over the water, with heavy shoulders and sharp beak, it utters its loud mewing or squeaking notes, some of them like a squeaking pump-handle, which sound very strange to our woods. It gives a different character to the pond. To the south of the Island there is a triangular strip of smooth water many rods wide in its lee, contrasting with the waved surface elsewhere. No obvious signs of spring as yet except in the buds of a few trees and the slight greenness of the grass in some places.


April 6. Last night a snow-storm, and this morning we find the ground covered again six or eight inches deep — and drifted pretty badly beside. The conductor in the cars, which have been detained more than an hour, says it is a dry snow up-country. Here it is very damp.

April 8. To-day I hear the croak of frogs in small pond-holes in the woods, and see dimples on the surface, which I suppose that they make, for when I approach they are silent and the dimples are no longer seen. They are very shy. I notice the alder, the *A. serrulata*,¹ in blossom, its reddish-brown catkins now lengthened and loose. What mean the apparently younger small red (catkins?)²

¹ [The name is queried in pencil.]

² They are the female aments

I see a light, of fishermen, I suppose, spearing to-night on the river, though half the ground is covered with snow.

April 9. I frequently detect the Canadian in New England by his coarse gray homespun capote, with a picturesque red sash round his waist, and his well-furred cap made to protect his ears and face against the severities of his winter.¹ Observe the *Alnus incana*, which is distinguished from the common by the whole branchlet hanging down, so that the sterile aments not only are but appear terminal, and by the brilliant polished reddish green of the bark, and by the leaves. The snow now disappearing, I observe the Mill Brook suddenly inclosed between two lines of green. Some kind of grass rises above the surface in deep water, like two faint lines of green drawn with a brush, betraying the sun's chemistry. Perhaps three days ago it was not. Answering  to the dotted lines.

Went into the old Hunt house, which they said Uncle Abel said was built one hundred and fifty years ago. The second story projects five or six inches over the first, the garret a foot over the second at the gables. There are two large rooms, one above the other, though the walls are low. The fireplace in the lower room rather large, with a high shelf of wood painted or stained to represent mahogany. That whole side the room panelled. The main timbers about fifteen inches square, of pine or oak, and for the most part the frame

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 45; Riv. 55.]

exposed. Where cased, in the best rooms, sixteen inches or more in width. The sills of the house appearing in the lower rooms all round the house, and cased, making a low shelf to put your feet on. No weather-boards on the corners outside; the raw edges of the clapboards.

The maple by the bridge in bloom.

April 10. 8 A. M. — Down river to half a mile below Carlisle Bridge, the river being high, yet not high for the spring.

Saw and heard the white-bellied swallows this morning for the first time. Took boat at Stedman Buttrick's, a gunner's boat, smelling of muskrats and provided with slats for bushing the boat. Having got into the Great Meadows, after grounding once or twice on low spits of grass ground, we begin to see ducks which we have scared, flying low over the water, always with a striking parallelism in the direction of their flight. They fly like regulars. They are like rolling-pins with wings. A few gulls, sailing like hawks, seen against the woods; crows; white-bellied swallows even here, already, which, I suppose, proves that their insect food is in the air. The water on our left, *i. e.* the northwest, is now dark; on our right, has a silvery brightness on the summits of the waves, scarcely yellowish. Waves here do not break. Ducks most commonly seen flying by twos or threes.

From Ball's Hill the Great Meadow looks more light; perhaps it is the medium between the dark and light above mentioned. (*Mem.* Try this experiment again; *i. e.* look not toward nor from the sun but athwart

this line.) Seen from this hill in this direction, there are, here and there, dark shadows spreading rapidly over the surface, where the wind strikes the water. The water toward the sun, seen from this height, shows not the broad silvery light but a myriad fine sparkles. The sky is full of light this morning, with different shades of blue, lighter below, darker above, separated perhaps by a thin strip of white vapor; thicker in the east. The first painted tortoise (*Emys picta*) at the bottom on the meadow. Look now toward Carlisle Bridge. See ahead the waves running higher in the middle of the meadow, and here they get the full sweep of the wind and they break into whitecaps; but we, yet in the lee of the land, feel only the long smooth swells, as the day after a storm. It is pleasant, now that we are in the wind, to feel [*sic*] the chopping sound when the boat seems to fall upon the successive waves which it meets at right angles or in the eye of the wind. Why are some maples now in blossom so much redder than others? I have seen, then, the maples and the alders in blossom, but not yet the maple keys.

From Carlisle Bridge we saw many ducks a quarter of a mile or more northward, black objects on the water, and heard them laugh something like a loon. Might have got near enough to shoot them. A fine sight to see them rise at last, about fifty of them, apparently black ducks. While they float on the water they appear to preserve constantly their relative distance. Their note not exactly like that of a goose, yet resembling some domestic fowl's cry, you know not what one; like a new species of goose. See very red

cranberry vines now budded. The now brownish-red shrub growing everywhere in and about bogs (originally green), with fine-dotted leaf, is probably the dwarf andromeda.¹

When we go ashore and ramble inland below Carlisle Bridge, find here and there the freshly cut wood-piles which the choppers have not yet carted off, the ground strewn with chips. A field lately cleared (last fall perhaps), with charred stumps, and grain now greening the sandy and uneven soil, reminds me agreeably of a new country. Found a large bed of *Arbutus Uva-Ursi* with fruit in Carlisle half a mile below bridge. Some of the berries were turned black, as well as the berried stems and leaves next the ground at bottom of the thick beds. — an inky black. This vine red in the sunniest places. Never saw its fruit in this neighborhood before. As we ate our luncheon on the peninsula off Carlisle shore, saw a large ring round the sun. The aspect of the sky varies every hour. About noon I observed it in the south, composed of short clouds horizontal and parallel to one another, each straight and



dark below with a slight cumulus resting on it, a little marsh-wise; again, in the north, I see a light but rather watery-looking flock of clouds; at mid-afternoon, slight wisps and thin veils of whitish clouds also. This meadow is about two miles long at one view from Carlisle Bridge southward, appearing to wash the base of Pine Hill,² and it is about as much longer northward

¹ *Vide* April 15.

² Can it be the hill near C. Smith's?

and from a third to a half a mile wide. We sailed this whole distance with two or three pitch pine boughs for a sail, though we made leeway the whole width of the meadow. If the bridge and its causeway were gone, there would not be so long a reach to my knowledge on this river. There is a large swamp on the east above the bridge, maples and birches in front, with pines in the rear, making a low, wild shore, the shore opening farther south to one or two solitary farmhouses; on the west, low hills covered with woods, but no house. The young trees and bushes, now making apparent islands on the meadows, are there nearly in this proportion, I should think; *i. e.* in deep water, young maples, willows, button-bushes, red osier; where less water, alder, sweet-gale, and dwarf (?) andromeda, etc.

We lay to in the lee of an island a little north of the bridge, where the surface is quite smooth, and the woods shelter us completely, while we hear the roar of the wind behind them, with an agreeable sense of protection, and see the white caps of the waves on either side. When there is a ripple merely in our calm port, we see the sunny reflections of the waves on the bottom, and the cranberries, etc. It is warm here in the sun, and the dog is drying his wet coat after so many voyages, and is drowsily nodding.

April 11. 2.30 P. M. — To Second Division Brook.

The ground is now for the most part bare, though I went through drifts three feet deep in some places. I hear that Simmonds had planted his potatoes (! !)

before the snow a week ago. As I go over the railroad bridge, I hear the pewee singing *perwet pewee, pee-wet pee-woo*. The last time rising on the last syllable, sometimes repeating it thus many times, *pe-woo*. The maple beyond the railroad bridge is not yet in blossom, though that at the Red Bridge is.¹

The sight of Nut Meadow Brook in Brown's land reminds me that the attractiveness of a brook depends much on the character of its bottom. I love just now to see one flowing through soft sand like this, where it wears a deep but irregular channel, now wider and shallower with distinct ripple-marks, now shelving off suddenly to indistinct depths, meandering as much up and down as from side to side, deepest where narrowest, and ever gullying under this bank or that, its bottom lifted up to one side or the other, the current inclining to one side. I stop to look at the circular shadows of the dimples over the yellow sand, and the dark-brown clams on their edges in the sand at the bottom. (I hear the sound of the piano below as I write this, and feel as if the winter in me were at length beginning to thaw, for my spring has been even more backward than nature's. For a month past life has been a thing incredible to me. None but the kind gods can make me sane. If only they will let their south winds blow on me! I ask to be melted. You can only ask of the metals that they be tender to the fire that *melts* them. To naught else can they be tender.) The sweet flags are now starting up under water two inches high, and minnows dart. A pure brook is a very beau-

¹ Different species.


tiful object to study minutely. It will bear the closest inspection, even to the fine air-bubbles, like minute globules of quicksilver, that lie on its bottom. The minute particles or spangles of golden mica in these sands, when the sun shines on them, remind one of the golden sands we read of. Everything is washed clean and bright, and the water is the best glass through which to see it.

I asked W. E. C. yesterday if he had acquired fame. He answered that, giving his name at some place, the bystanders said: "Yes, sir, we have heard of you. We know you here, sir. Your name is mentioned in Mr. ——'s book." That's all the fame I have had, — to be made known by another man.

Great flocks of slate-colored snowbirds still about and uttering their jingling note in the sun. In the brook behind Jenny Dugan's I was pleased to find the *Alnus incana* (?) in bloom in the water, its long sterile aments, yellowish-brown, hanging in panicles or clusters at the ends of the drooping branchlets, while all the twigs else are bare and the well-cased and handsome leaf-buds are not yet expanded at all. It is a kind of resurrection of the year, these pliant and pendulous blossoms on this apparently dead bush, while all is sere and tawny around, withered and bleached grass. A sort of harbinger of spring, this and the maple blossoms especially, and also the early willow catkins. Even these humble and inconspicuous aments are as grateful now as the most beautiful flowers will be a month hence. They are two and a half inches long and more. This appears to be more forward, and the

aments larger, than what I take to be the common alder hereabouts. This and the maple and the earliest willow are the most flower-like now. The skunk-cabbage is not yet fairly in blossom, nor the mayflower. In all the brooks I see the spotted tortoise (*Emys guttata*) now, and in some fields and on some hillsides have seen holes apparently dug by turtles, but I have not yet noticed their tracks over the sand. The neat compact catkins of the hazel, — fawn-colored? The birches still rather hard.

If I am too cold for human friendship, I trust I shall not soon be too cold for natural influences. It appears to be a law that you cannot have a deep sympathy with both man and nature. Those qualities which bring you near to the one estrange you from the other.

Second Division Brook. — This is of similar character, but deeper than Nut Meadow Brook. It is pleasant that there be on a brook the remains of an old flume or dam or causeway, as here, overgrown with trees, and whose rocks make stepping-stones. Large skaters and small black water-bugs are out now on the surface. Now, then, migrating fishes may come up the streams. The expanding mayflower buds show a little pinkish tint under the snow. The cress is apparently all last year's. The cowslip does not yet spring. Very little change in anything since I was last here. Is that the  *Viburnum Lentago* with the They have cut down the black aspens that used to stand on the White Pond road, the Dantean trees. Thought I heard a snipe or

an owl. White Pond about a fourth or a fifth open at the north end. A man who passed Walden to-day says it is melted two rods wide on north side. Here are large flocks of *Fringilla hyemalis* in the stubble.

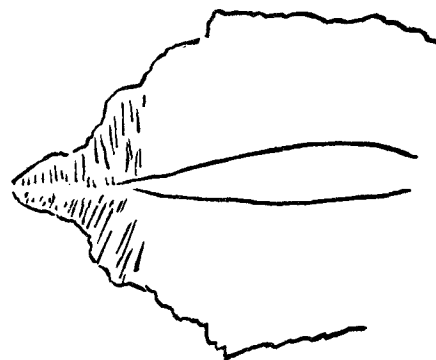
Every man will be a poet if he can; otherwise a philosopher or man of science. This proves the superiority of the poet.

It is hard for a man to take money from his friends, or any service. This suggests how all men should be related.

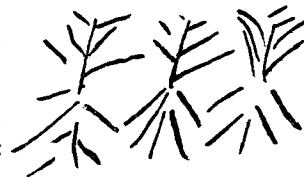
Ah! when a man has travelled, and robbed the horizon of his native fields of its mystery and poetry, its indefinite promise, tarnished the blue of distant mountains with his feet!! When he has done this he may begin to think of another world. What is this longer to him?

I see now the mosses in pastures, bearing their light-colored capsules on the top of red filaments. When I reach the bridge, it is become a serene evening; the broad waters are more and more smooth, and everything is more beautiful in the still light. The view toward Fair Haven, whose woods are now cut off, is beautiful. No obvious sign of spring. The hill now dimly reflected; the air not yet quite still. The wood on Conantum abuts handsomely on the water and can ill be spared. The ground on which it stands is not level as seen from this point, but pleasantly varied and swelling, which is important. (Before my neighbor's pig is cold his boys have made a football of his bladder! So goes the world. No matter how much the boy snivels at first, he kicks the bladder with ecstasy.) This is the

still evening hour. Insects in the air. The blackbirds whistle and sing *conquerree*; the robin peeps and sings; the bluebird warbles. The light of the setting sun on the pitch pines on Fair Haven and Bear Hill lights them up warmly, for the rays fall horizontally on them through the *mellow* evening atmosphere. They do not appear so bright to us at noon, nor do they now to the hawk that comes soaring sluggishly over them, — the brown and dusky bird seen even from beneath. Of course the pines seen from above have now more of the evening shades in them than seen from the earth on one side. The catkins of the willow are silvery. The shadow of the wood named above at the river end is indispensable in this scene; and, what is remarkable, I see where it has reached across the river and is creeping up the hill with dark pointed spears, though the intermediate river is all sunny, the reflection of the sunny hill covered with withered grass being seen through the invisible shadow. A river is best seen breaking through highlands, issuing from some narrow pass. It imparts a sense of power. The shadow at the end of the wood makes it appear grander in this case. The serenity and warmth are the main thing after the windy and cool days we have had. You may even hear a fish leap in the water now. The lowing of a cow advances me many weeks towards summer. The reflections grow more distinct every moment. At last the outline of the hill is as distinct below as above. And every object appears rhymed by reflection. By partly closing my eyes and looking through my eyelashes, the wood end appears thus: —



Now the shadow, reaching across the river, has crept so far up the hill that I see its reflection on the hillside in the water, and in this way it may at length connect itself with its source. Clouds are now distinctly seen in the water. The bridge is now a station for walkers. I parted with my companion here; told him not to wait for me. Maple in the swamp answers to maple, birch to birch. There is one clump of three birches particularly picturesque. In a few minutes the wind has thus gone down. At this season the reflections of deciduous trees are more picturesque and remarkable than when they are in leaf, because, the branches being seen, they make with their reflections a more wonderful rhyme. It is not mere mass or outline corresponding to outline, but a kind of geometrical figure. The maples look thus: The twilight must to the



extent above mentioned be earlier to birds soaring in the sky; *i. e.* they see more decided shades of evening than a man looking east. The frogs peep thinly.

My nature may be as still as this water, but it is not so pure, and its reflections are not so distinct. The snow has turned yellow the opening leaves of the nuphar. The song of a robin on an oak in Hubbard's Grove sounds far off. So I have heard a robin within three feet in a cage in a dark barroom (how unstained by all the filth of that place?) with a kind of ventriloquism, so singing that his song sounded far off on the elms. It was more pathetic still for this. The robins are singing now on all hands while the sun is setting. At what an expense any valuable work is performed! At the expense of a life! If you do one thing well, what else are you good for in the meanwhile?

April 12. Gilpin says that our turkey was domesticated in Windsor Forest at one time, and from its size was an object of consequence to lovers of the picturesque, as most birds are not, and, in its form and color and actions, more picturesque than the peacock or indeed any other bird. Being recently reclaimed from the woods, its habits continue wilder than those of other domestic fowls. "It strays widely for its food, it flies well considering its apparent inactivity, and it perches and roosts on trees." He says of the leaf of the beech: "On handling, it feels as if it were fabricated with metallic rigor. . . . For this reason, I suppose, as its rigor gives it an elastic quality, the common people in France and Switzerland use it for their beds."

I have heard thus far two sounds from two kinds of frogs, I suppose, the hyla's peep and a rather faint croak in pond-holes.

2 P. M.—To the powder-mills *via* Harrington's, returning by railroad.

The road through the pitch pine woods beyond J. Hosmer's is very pleasant to me, curving under the pines, without a fence,—the sandy road, with the pines close abutting on it, yellow in the sun and low-branched, with younger pines filling up all to the ground. I love to see a sandy road like this curving through a pitch pine wood where the trees closely border it without fences, a great cart-path merely. That is a pleasant part of the North River, under the black birches. The dog does not hesitate to take to the water for a stick, but the current carries him rapidly down. The lines of sawdust left at different levels on the shore is just hint enough of a sawmill on the stream above.

Saw the first blossoms (bright-yellow stamens or pistils) on the willow catkins to-day. The speckled alders and the maples are earlier than. The yellow blossom appears first on one side of the ament and is the most of bright and sunny color the spring has shown, the most decidedly flower-like that I have seen. It flowers, then, I should say, without regard to the skunk-cabbage, *q. v.* First the speckled alder, then the maple without keys, then this earliest, perhaps swamp, willow with its bright-yellow blossoms on one side of the ament. It is fit that this almost earliest spring flower should be yellow, the color of the sun.

Saw a maple in the water with yellowish flowers. Is it the water brings them forward? But I believe that these are all the barren flowers, and the perfect flowers appear afterward.

When I look closely, I perceive the sward beginning to be green under my feet, very slightly. It rains with sleet and hail, yet not enough to color the ground. At this season I can walk in the fields without wetting my feet in grass. Observed in the stonework of the railroad bridge — I think it must be in Acton — many large stones more or less disintegrated and even turned to a soft soil into which I could thrust my finger, threatening the destruction of the bridge. A geologist is needed to tell you whether your stones will continue stones and not turn to earth. It was very pleasant to come out on the railroad in this gentle rain. The track, laid in gray sand, looks best at such a time, with the rails all wet. The factory bridge, seen through the mist, is agreeably indistinct, seen against a dark-grayish pine wood. I should not know there was a bridge there, if I had not been there. The dark line made by its shaded under side is most that I see here spanning the road; the rails are quite indistinct. We love to see things thus with a certain indistinctness.

I am made somewhat sad this afternoon by the coarseness and vulgarity of my companion, because he is one with whom I have made myself intimate. He inclines latterly to speak with coarse jesting of facts which should always be treated with delicacy and reverence. I lose my respect for the man who can make the mystery of sex the subject of a coarse jest, yet, when you speak

earnestly and seriously on the subject, is silent. I feel that this is to be truly irreligious. Whatever may befall me, I trust that I may never lose my respect for purity in others. The subject of sex is one on which I do not wish to meet a man at all unless I *can* meet him on the most inspiring ground, — if his view degrades, and does not elevate. I would preserve purity in act and thought, as I would cherish the memory of my mother. A companion can possess no worse quality than vulgarity. If I find that *he* is not habitually reverent of the fact of sex, I, even I, will not associate with [him]. I will cast this first stone. What were life without some religion of this kind? Can I walk with one who by his jests and by his habitual tone reduces the life of men and women to a level with that of cats and dogs? The man who uses such a vulgar jest describes his relation to his dearest friend. Impure as I am, I could protect and worship purity. I can have no really serious conversation with my companion. He seems not capable of it. The men whom I most esteem, when they speak at all on this subject, do not speak with sufficient reverence. They speak to men with a coarseness which they would not use in the presence of women, and I think they would feel a slight shame if a woman coming in should hear their remarks. A man's speech on this subject should, of course, be ever as reverent and chaste and simple as if it were to be heard by the ears of maidens.

In the New Forest in Hampshire they had a chief officer called the Lord Warden and under him two distinct officers, one to preserve the *venison* of the forest,

another to preserve its *vert, i. e.* woods, lawns, etc. Does not our Walden need such? The Lord Warden was a person of distinction, as the Duke of Gloucester.

Walden Wood was my forest walk.

The English forests are divided into "walks," with a keeper presiding over each. My "walk" is ten miles from my house every way. Gilpin says, "It is a forest adage of ancient date, *Non est inquirendum unde venit venison,*" *i. e.* whether stolen or not.

"The incroachments of trespassers, and the houses and fences thus raised on the borders of the forest" by forest borderers, were "considered as great nuisances by the old forest law, and were severely punished under the name of *purprestures*, as tending *ad terrorem ferarum — ad nocumentum forestae*, etc."¹

There is, this afternoon and evening, a rather cool April rain. Pleasant to hear its steady dripping.

April 13. Tuesday. A driving snow-storm in the night and still raging; five or six inches deep on a level at 7 A. M. All birds are turned into snowbirds. Trees and houses have put on the aspect of winter. The traveller's carriage wheels, the farmer's wagon, are converted into white disks of snow through which the spokes hardly appear. But it is good now to stay in the house and read and write. We do not now go wandering all abroad and dissipated, but the imprisoning storm condenses our thoughts. I can hear the clock tick as not in pleasant weather. My life is enriched. I love to hear the wind howl. I have a fancy for sitting

¹ [*Walden*, p. 276; Riv. 387, 388.]

with my book or paper in some mean and apparently unfavorable place, in the kitchen, for instance, where the work is going on, rather a little cold than comfortable. My thoughts are of more worth in such places than they would be in a well furnished and warmed studio.

Windsor, according to Gilpin, is contracted from wind-shore, the Saxons not sounding the *sh*.

The robin is the only bird as yet that makes a business of singing, steadily singing, — sings continuously out of pure joy and melody of soul, carols. The jingle of the song sparrow, simple and sweet as it is, is not of sufficient volume nor sufficiently continuous to command and hold attention, and the bluebird's is but a transient warble, from a throat overflowing with azure and serene hopes; but the song of the robin on the elms or oaks, loud and clear and heard afar through the streets of a village, makes a fit conclusion to a spring day. The larks are not yet in sufficient numbers or sufficiently musical. The robin is the prime singer as yet. The blackbird's *conquerree*, when first heard in the spring, is pleasant from the associations it awakens, and is best heard by one boating on the river. It belongs to the stream. The robin is the only bird with whose song the groves can be said to be now *vocal* morning and evening, for, though many other notes are heard, none fill the air like this bird. As yet no other thrushes.

Snowed all day, till the ground was covered eight inches deep. Heard the robin singing as usual last night, though it was raining. The elm buds begin to

show their blossoms. As I came home through the streets at 11 o'clock last night through the snow, it cheered me to think that there was a little bit of a yellow blossom by warm sandy watersides which had expanded its yellow blossom on the sunny side amid the snows. I mean the catkins of the earliest willow. To think of those little sunny spots in nature, so incredibly contrasting with all this white and cold.

April 14. Going down the railroad at 9 A. M., I hear the lark singing from over the snow. This for steady singing comes next to the robin now. It will come up very sweet from the meadows ere long. I do not hear those peculiar tender die-away notes from the pewee yet. Is it another pewee, or a later note? The snow melts astonishingly fast. The whole upper surface, when you take it up in your hand, is heavy and dark with water. The slate-colored snowbird's (for they are still about) is a somewhat shrill jingle, like the sound of ramrods when the order has been given to a regiment to "return ramrods" and they obey stragglingly. It is oppressively hot in the Deep Cut, the sun is now so high and reflected from the snow on both sides. When I inquire again of Riordan where he gets his water now, seeing that the ditch by the railroad is full of rain-water and sand, he answers cheerfully as ever: "I get it from the ditch, sir. It is good spring water."—with a good deal of burr to the *r*. Certainly it will not poison him so soon for his contentedness. Walden is only melted two or three rods from the north shore yet. It is a good thermometer of the annual heats.

because, having no outlet nor inlet on the surface, it has no stream to wear it away more or less rapidly or early as the water may be higher or lower, and also, being so deep, it is not warmed through by a transient change of temperature. Is that *Cornus florida* at the Howard's Meadow dam? Many red oak leaves have fallen since yesterday, for now they lie on the surface of the snow, perchance loosened by the moisture. The white oak leaves are more bleached and thinner than the red. The squarish-leaved shrub oak appears to bear the winter still better. The leaves of the hornbeam are well withered. The snow in the sunshine is more white and dazzling now than in the winter; at least this is the effect on our eyes. Haynes told me of breams caught through the ice. The surface of the meadow is very attractive now, seen through a foot or more of calm water while the neighboring fields are covered with snow. The evenings have for a long time been grievously shortened. The pond-holes are filled with snow which looks like ice. With snow on the ground, the sky appears once more to wear the peculiar blue of winter, and contrasts in like manner with small whitish cumulus; but there is not yet in the air the vapor you would expect from the evaporation of so much snow.

On the Cliffs. — If it were not for the snow it would be a remarkably pleasant, as well as warm, day. It is now perfectly calm. The different parts of Fair Haven Pond — the pond, the meadow beyond the button-bush and willow curve, the island, and the meadow between the island and mainland with its own defining lines — are all parted off like the parts of a mirror.

A fish hawk is calmly sailing over all, looking for his prey. The gulls are all gone now, though the water is high, but I can see the motions of a muskrat on the calm sunny surface a great way off. So perfectly calm and beautiful, and yet no man looking at it this morning but myself. It is pleasant to see the zephyrs strike the smooth surface of the pond from time to time, and a darker shade ripple over it.

The streams break up; the ice goes to the sea. Then sails the fish hawk overhead, looking for his prey. I saw the first white-bellied swallows (about the house) on the morning of the 10th, as I have said, and, that day also, I saw them skimming over the Great Meadows, as if they had come to all parts of the town at once.

Can we believe when beholding this landscape, with only a few buds visibly swollen on the trees and the ground covered eight inches deep with snow, that the grain was waving in the fields and the apple trees were in blossom April 19, 1775? It may confirm this story, however, what Grandmother said, — that she carried ripe cherries from Weston to her brother in Concord Jail¹ the 17th of June the same year. It is probably true, what E. Wood, senior, says, that the grain was just beginning to wave, and the apple blossoms beginning to expand.

Abel Hunt tells me to-night that he remembers that the date of the old Hunt house used to be on the chim-

¹ [Mr. Sanborn informs the editors that this Mr. Jones was a Tory, who fled to Halifax and later, in trying to bring in supplies for the British soldiers in Boston during the siege, was captured with his vessel and sent to Concord Jail as prisoner.]

ney, and it was 1703, or 1704, within a year or two; that Governor Winthrop sold the farm to a Hunt, and they have the deed now. There is one of the old-fashioned diamond squares set in lead still, in the back part of the house.

The snow goes off fast, for I hear it melting [?] and the eaves dripping all night as well as all day.

I have been out every afternoon this past winter, as usual, in sun and wind, snow and rain, without being particularly tanned. This *forenoon* I walked in the woods and felt the heat reflected from the snow so sensibly in some parts of the cut on the railroad that I was reminded of those oppressive days two or three summers ago, when the laborers were obliged to work by night. Well, since I have come home, this afternoon and evening, I find that I am suddenly tanned, even to making the skin of my nose sore. The sun, reflected thus from snow in April, perhaps especially in the forenoon, possesses a tanning power.

April 15. My face still burns with yesterday's sunning. It rains this morning, as if the vapor from the melting snow were falling again. There is so much sun and light reflected from the snow at this season that it is not only remarkably white and dazzling but tans in a few moments. It is fortunate, then, that the sun on the approach of the snows, the season of snow, takes his course so many degrees lower in the heavens; else he might burn us up, even at that season. The face comes from the house of winter, tender and white, to the house of summer, and these late snows convey

the sun to it with sudden and scorching power. It was not the March winds or others. It was a still, warm, beautiful day. I was out but three hours. It was the sun suddenly and copiously applied to a face from winter quarters.

The broad flat brown buds on Mr. Cheney's elm, containing twenty or thirty yellowish-green *threads*, surmounted with little brownish-mulberry cups, which contain the stamens and the two styles, — these are just expanding or blossoming now. The flat imbricated buds, which open their scales both ways, have had a rich look for some weeks past. Why so few elms so advanced, so rich now? Are the staminiferous and pistilliferous flowers ever on different trees?

It is, according to Emerson, the dwarf cassandra (*C. calyculata* of D. Don) that is so common on the river meadows and in swamps and bogs; formerly called an andromeda, of the *Ericaceæ*, or Heath Family, with the uva-ursi (*Arctostaphylos*). Now well flower-budded. I had forgotten the aspen in my latest enumeration of flowers. *Vide* if its flowers have not decidedly appeared.

I think that the largest early-catkined willow in large bushes in sand by water now blossoming — the fertile catkins with paler blossoms, the sterile covered with pollen, a pleasant lively bright yellow — [is] the brightest flower I have seen thus far.

Gilpin says of the stags in the New Forest, if one "be hunted by the king, and escape; or have his life given him for the sport he has afforded, he becomes from thence forward a *hart-royal*. — If he be hunted

out of the forest, and there escape, the king hath sometimes honoured him with a royal proclamation; the purport of which is, to forbid any one to molest him, that he may have free liberty of returning to his forest. From that time he becomes a *hart-royal proclaimed*." As is said of Richard the First, that, having pursued a hart a great distance, "the king in gratitude for the diversion he had received, ordered him immediately to be proclaimed at Tickill, and at all the neighbouring towns." ¹ (A hart is a stag in his fifth or sixth year and upward.)

Think of having such a fellow as that for a king, causing his proclamation to be blown about your country towns at the end of his day's sport, at Tickill or elsewhere, that you hinds may not molest the hart that has afforded him such an ever-memorable day's sport. Is it not time that his subjects whom he has so sorely troubled and so long, be *harts-royal proclaimed* themselves, — who have afforded him such famous sport? It will be a finer day's-sport when the hinds shall turn and hunt the royal hart himself beyond the bounds of his forest and his kingdom, and in perpetual banishment alone he become a royal hart proclaimed. Such is the magnanimity of royal hearts that, through a whimsical prick of generosity, spares the game it could not kill, and fetters its equals with its arbitrary will. Kings love to say "shall" and "will."

Rain, rain, rain, all day, carrying off the snow. It appears, then, that if you go out at this season and walk in the sun in a clear, warm day like yesterday,

¹ [William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery*, London, 1794.]

while the earth is covered with snow, you may have your face burnt in a few moments. The rays glance off from the snowy crystals and scorch the skin.

Thinking of the value of the gull to the scenery of our river in the spring, when for a few weeks they are seen circling about so deliberately and heavily yet gracefully, without apparent object, beating like a vessel in the air, Gilpin says something to the purpose, that water-fowl "discover in their flight some determined aim. They eagerly coast the river, or return to the sea; bent on some purpose, of which they never lose sight. But the evolutions of the gull appear capricious, and undirected, both when she flies alone, and, as she often does, in large companies. — The more however her character suffers as a loiterer, the more it is raised in picturesque value, by her continuing longer before the eye; and displaying, in her elegant sweeps along the air, her sharp-pointed wings, and her bright silvery hue. — She is beautiful also, not only on the wing, but when she floats, in numerous assemblies on the water; or when she rests on the shore, dotting either one, or the other with white spots: which, minute as they are, are very picturesque: . . . giving life and spirit to a view."¹

He seems to be describing our very bird. I do not remember to have seen them over or in our river meadows when there was not ice there. They come annually a-fishing here like royal hunters, to remind us of the sea and that our town, after all, lies but further up a creek of the universal sea, above the head of the tide.

¹ [*Op. cit.*]

So ready is a deluge to overwhelm our lands, as the gulls to circle hither in the spring freshets. To see a gull beating high over our meadowy flood in chill and windy March is akin to seeing a mackerel schooner on the coast. It is the nearest approach to sailing vessels in our scenery. I never saw one at Walden. Oh, how it salts our fresh, our sweet watered Fair Haven all at once to see this sharp-beaked, greedy sea-bird beating over it! For a while the water is brackish to my eyes. It is merely some herring pond, and if I climb the eastern bank I expect to see the Atlantic there covered with countless sails. We are so far maritime, do not dwell beyond the range of the seagoing gull, the littoral birds. Does not the gull come up after those suckers which I see? He is never to me perfectly in harmony with the scenery, but, like the high water, something unusual.

What a novel life, to be introduced to a dead sucker floating on the water in the spring! Where was it spawned, pray? The sucker is so recent, so unexpected, so unrememberable, so unanticipatable a creation. While so many institutions are gone by the board, and we are despairing of men and of ourselves, there seems to be life even in a dead sucker, whose fellows at least are alive. The world never looks more recent or promising — religion, philosophy, poetry — than when viewed from this point. To see a sucker tossing on the spring flood, its swelling, imbricated breast heaving up a bait to not-despairing gulls! It is a strong and a strengthening sight. Is the world coming to an end? Ask the chubs. As long as fishes spawn, glory and

honor to the cold-blooded who despair! As long as ideas are expressed, as long as friction makes bright, as long as vibrating wires make music of harps, we do not want redeemers. What a volume you might [write] on the separate virtues of the various animals, the black duck and the rest!

How indispensable our one or two flocks of geese in spring and autumn! What would be a spring in which that sound was not heard? Coming to unlock the fetters of northern rivers. Those annual steamers of the air.

Would it not be a fine office to preserve the *vert* of this forest in which I ramble?

Channing calls our walks along the banks of the river, taking a boat for convenience at some distant point, *riparial* excursions. It is a pleasing epithet, but I mistrust such, even as good as this, in which the mere name is so agreeable, as if it would ring hollow ere long; and rather the thing should make the true name poetic at last. Alcott wished me to name my book *Sylvania!* But he and C. are two men in these respects. We make a good many prairial excursions. We take a boat four or five miles out, then paddle up the stream as much further, meanwhile landing and making excursions inland or further along the banks.

Walden is but little more melted than yesterday.

I see that the grass, which, unless in the most favored spots, did not show any evidence of spring to the casual glance before the snow, will look unexpectedly green as soon as it has gone. It has actually grown beneath it. The lengthened spires about our pump remind me

of flame, as if it were a kind of green flame allied to fire, as it is the product of the sun.

The aspen on the railroad is beginning to blossom, showing the purple or mulberry in the terminal catkins, though it droops like dead cats' tails in the rain. It appears about the same date with the elm.

Is it the chickweed so forward by our back doorstep?

Vide that sentence in Gilpin about "*Lawing*, or *expedition*, was a forest term for disqualifying a dog to exert such speed, as was necessary to take a deer. It was performed either by cutting out the sole of his foot, or by taking off two of his claws by a chisel, and mallet."¹ A gentleman might keep a greyhound within ten miles of the forest if he was *lawed*. It reminds me of the majority of human hounds that tread the forest paths of this world; they go slightly limping in their gait, as if disqualified by a cruel fate to overtake the nobler game of the forest, their natural quarry. Most men are such dogs. Ever and anon starting a quarry, with perfect scent, which, from this cruel maiming and disqualification of the fates, he is incapable of coming up with. Does not the noble dog shed tears?

Gilpin on the subject of docking horses' tails; thinks that leaving the tail may even help the racer to fly toward the goal.



I notice that the sterile blossoms of that large-catkin'd early willow begin to open on the side of the catkin, like a tinge of golden light, gradually spreading and

¹ Poet laureate lawed.

expanding over the whole surface and lifting their anthers far and wide. The stem of these sterile catkins is more reddish, smoother, and slenderer than that of the female ones (pale-flowered), which is darker and downy.

April 16. That large early swamp (?) willow catkin (the sterile blossom) opens on one side like a tinge of golden sunlight, the yellow anthers bursting through the down that invests the scales.

2 P. M. — To Conantum.

It clears up (the rain) at noon, with a rather cool wind from the northwest and flitting clouds. The ground about one third covered with snow still. What variety in the trunks of oaks! How expressive of strength are some! There is one behind Hubbard's which expresses a sturdy strength, thus:  with a protuberant ridge and seam toward the north. There is a still more remarkable one in a different style near Derby's  Bridge. The very emblem of sturdy resistance to tempests.

How many there are who advise you to print! How few who advise you to lead a more interior life! In the one case there is all the world to advise you, in the other there is none to advise you but yourself. Nobody ever advised me not to print but myself. The public persuade the author to print, as the meadow invites the brook to fall into it. Only he can be trusted with gifts who can present a face of bronze to expectations.

As I turned round the corner of Hubbard's Grove, saw a woodchuck, the first of the season, in the middle

of the field, six or seven rods from the fence which bounds the wood, and twenty rods distant. I ran along the fence and cut him off, or rather overtook him, though he started at the same time. When I was only a rod and a half off, he stopped, and I did the same; then he ran again, and I ran up within three feet of him, when he stopped again, the fence being between us. I squatted down and surveyed him at my leisure. His eyes were dull black and rather inobvious, with a faint chestnut (?) iris, with but little expression and that more of resignation than of anger. The general aspect was a coarse grayish brown, a sort of grisel (?). A lighter brown next the skin, then black or very dark brown and tipped with whitish rather loosely. The head between a squirrel and a bear, flat on the top and dark brown, and darker still or black on the tip of the nose. The whiskers black, two inches long. The ears very small and roundish, set far back and nearly buried in the fur. Black feet, with long and slender claws for digging. It appeared to tremble, or perchance shivered with cold. When I moved, it gritted its teeth quite loud, sometimes striking the under jaw against the other chatteringly, sometimes grinding one jaw on the other, yet as if more from instinct than anger. Which-ever way I turned, that way it headed. I took a twig a foot long and touched its snout, at which it started forward and bit the stick, lessening the distance between us to two feet, and still it held all the ground it gained. I played with it tenderly awhile with the stick, trying to open its gritting jaws. Ever its long incisors, two above and two below, were presented. But I thought

it would go to sleep if I stayed long enough. It did not sit upright as sometimes, but *standing* on its fore feet with its head down, *i. e.* half sitting, half standing. We sat looking at one another about half an hour, till we began to feel mesmeric influences. When I was tired, I moved away, wishing to see him run, but I could not start him. He would not stir as long as I was looking at him or could see him. I walked round him; he turned as fast and fronted me still. I sat down by his side within a foot. I talked to him *quasi* forest lingo, baby-talk, at any rate in a conciliatory tone, and thought that I had some influence on him. He gritted his teeth less. I chewed checkerberry leaves and presented them to his nose at last without a grit: though I saw that by so much gritting of the teeth he had worn them rapidly and they were covered with a fine white powder, which, if you measured it thus, would have made his anger terrible. He did not mind any noise I might make. With a little stick I lifted one of his paws to examine it, and held it up at pleasure. I turned him over to see what color he was beneath (darker or more purely brown), though he turned himself back again sooner than I could have wished. His tail was also all brown, though not very dark, rat-tail like, with loose hairs standing out on all sides like a caterpillar brush. He had a rather mild look. I spoke kindly to him. I reached checkerberry leaves to his mouth. I stretched my hands over him, though he turned up his head and still gritted a little. I laid my hand on him, but immediately took it off again, instinct not being wholly overcome. If I had had

a few fresh bean leaves, thus in advance of the season, I am sure I should have tamed him completely. It was a frizzly tail. His is a humble, terrestrial color like the partridge's, well concealed where dead wiry grass rises above darker brown or chestnut dead leaves, — a modest color. If I had had some food, I should have ended with stroking him at my leisure. Could easily have wrapped him in my handkerchief. He was not fat nor particularly lean. I finally had to leave him without seeing him move from the place. A large, clumsy, burrowing squirrel. *Arctomys*, bear-mouse. I respect him as one of the natives. He lies there, by his color and habits so naturalized amid the dry leaves, the withered grass, and the bushes. A sound nap, too, he has enjoyed in his native fields, the past winter. I think I might learn some wisdom of him. His ancestors have lived here longer than mine. He is more thoroughly acclimated and naturalized than I. Bean leaves the red man raised for him, but he can do without them.

The streaked mahogany spathes of the skunk-cabbage, which for some time have pushed up and stood above the naked ground where is no leaf yet, of this or other plant, inclosing the now perfect flower and for some time perfect, are like bent spear-heads (“ovate swelling,” “incurved,” “cucullate”) appearing above the ground, a sort of device in nature. The foremost of the summer's phalanx. This is the earliest flower that I know.

How inconspicuous the blossoms of the woods are! How many have seen the pistillate flowers of the hazel,

“star-like tufts of crimson stigmas?” All boys know the nuts, yet man nor boy the flower, though, minute [as it is,] it is interesting. They turn dark and shrivel soon in the pocket; cannot be brought home so. Their catkins also are perfect now. They may be mentioned immediately after the alders.

The red stems of the cornel (?) are conspicuous at this season. I think that the tassels of the *Alnus incana* are rather earlier, longer, and more yellow, with smaller scales, than those of the *A. serrulata*, which are not yellow but green, mixed with the purplish or reddish brown scales. It is pleasant to walk the windy causeways where the tassels of the alders are dangling and swinging now.

The water on the meadows is now quite high on account of the melting snow and the rain. It makes a lively prospect when the wind blows, where our summer meads spread, — a tumultuous sea, a myriad waves breaking with whitecaps, like gambolling sheep, for want of other comparison in the country. Far and wide a sea of motion, schools of porpoises, lines of Virgil realized. One would think it a novel sight for inland meadows. Where the cranberry and andromeda and swamp white oak and maple grow, here is a mimic sea, with its gulls. At the bottom of the sea, cranberries.

We love to see streams colored by the earth they have flown over, as well as pure.

Saxifrage, well named, budded but not risen (its stem) on Conantum Cliff. It there grows in the seams of the rocks, where is no earth apparent. The radical leaves of the columbine are also well advanced. Flight

of ducks and partridges earnest but not graceful. I see many nests of squirrels in the trees, which appear to have been made and used the past winter only.

Is that a black ash in Conant's orchard by the river-side? Stand half-way down the hill north of Fair Haven Pond, the sun in clouds, the wind pretty strong from the northward, the pond and meadow on the south (at 4 or 5 o'clock) are of dark and sad aspect as in a rainy day, with streaks of foam at intervals of six or eight feet, stretching quite across from north to south. Eastward the water is lighter; northeastward it is a very dark, deep blue, yet full of light; northward it is a dark and angry flood, with one or two white-capped waves in the distance.

I saw two or three large white birds in middle of pond, probably gulls (!),¹ though the ice has long been gone.

The two states of the meadow are to be remembered: first in a March or April wind, as I have described it; second in a perfectly calm and beautiful mild morning or evening or midday, as lately, at the same season, such as I have also partially described, when there are no gulls circling over it. What different thoughts it suggests! Would it not be worth the while to describe the different states of our meadows which cover so large a portion of the town? It is not as if we had a few acres only of water surface. From every side the milkman rides over long causeways into the village, and carries the vision of much meadow's surface with him into his dreams. They answer to moods of the Concord

¹ Whistlers.

mind. There might be a chapter: The Sudbury Meadows, the Humors of the Town.

Might I not write on sunshine as well as moonshine? Might I not observe the sun, at least when the moon does not show her crescent?

Saw a red squirrel, or a tawny one rather.

I think our overflowing river far handsomer and more abounding in soft and beautiful contrasts than a merely broad river would be. A succession of bays it is, a chain of lakes, an endlessly scalloped shore, rounding wood and field. Cultivated field and wood and pasture and house are brought into ever new and unexpected positions and relations to the water. There is just stream enough for a flow of thought; that is all. Many a foreigner who has come to this town has worked for years on its banks without discovering which way the river runs.

I see where moles have been at work near the river on the sides of hills, probably under the snow.

Hawks sail over dry (?) meadows now, because the frogs are out.

April 17. Gilpin says, "As the wheeling motion of the gull is beautiful, so also is the figured flight of the goose, the duck, and the widgeon; all of which are highly ornamental to coast-views, bays, and estuaries."¹ A flight of ducks adds to the wildness of our wildest river scenery. Undoubtedly the soaring and sailing of the hen-hawk, the red-shouldered buzzard (?), is the most ornamental, graceful, stately, beautiful to contemplate,

¹ [Remarks on Forest Scenery.]

of all the birds that ordinarily frequent our skies. The eagle is but a rare and casual visitor. The goose, the osprey, the great heron, though interesting, are either transient visitors or rarely seen; they either move through the air as passengers or too exclusively looking for their prey, but the hen-hawk soars like a creature of the air. The flight of martins is interesting in the same way. When I was young and compelled to pass my Sunday in the house without the aid of interesting books, I used to spend many an hour till the wished-for sundown, watching the martins soar, from an attic window; and fortunate indeed did I deem myself when a hawk appeared in the heavens, though far toward the horizon against a downy cloud, and I searched for hours till I had found his mate. They, at least, took my thoughts from earthly things.

Gilpin says that the black-cock, scarce in the New Forest, "has the honour, which no other bird can boast, of being protected as royal-game."¹

Stood by the riverside early this morning. The water has been rising during the night. The sun has been shining on it half an hour. It is quite placid. The village smokes are seen against the long hill. And now I see the river also is awakening, a slight ripple beginning to appear on its surface. It wakens like the village.

It proves a beautiful day, and I see that glimmering or motion in the air just above the fields, which we associate with heat. I noticed yesterday that some of those early staminate catkins had apparently been blasted on one side by the snow. The waters are, after

¹ [Op. cit.]

all, as quiet at noon as in the morning, and I see the reflections with rare distinctness from my window.

Up the east bank of river to Fair Haven at 2 P. M.

The farmers are in haste beginning their plowing. The season is remarkably backward. The wind is rising at last, and it is somewhat from the east-south-east, but it is the more fresh and life-giving. The water is over the Corner road since last night, higher than before this season, so that we (I and C.) go not that way. In that little pasture of Potter's under the oak, I am struck with the advantage of the fence in landscapes. Here is but a half-acre inclosed, but the fence has the effect of confining the attention to this little undulation of the land and to make you consider it by itself, and the importance of the oak is proportionally increased. This formation of the surface would be lost in an unfenced prairie, but the fence, which nearly enough defines it, frames it and presents it as a picture.

Sat on the smooth river-bank under Fair Haven, the sunlight in the wood across the stream. It proves a breezy afternoon. There are fresh cobwebs on the alders in the sun. The atmosphere grows somewhat misty and blue in the distance. The sun-sparkle on the water, — is it not brighter now than it will be in summer? In this freshet and overflow, the permanent shore and shore-marks are obliterated, and the wooded point making into the water shows no gradations, no naked stems beneath, but the pine boughs and the bushes actually rest gently on the water. There is no shore. The waters steal so gently and noiselessly

over the land amid the alders and the copses, so soft, so placid a shore, which would not wreck a cranberry! The groves are simply immersed, as when you raise the water in a wine-glass by dropping pins into it. What is that large hawk with a pure white belly and slender long black wings (a goshawk?)¹ which I see sailing over the Cliffs, — a pair of them looking for prey? From this burnt shrub oak plain beneath the Cliff, where in spots not even the grass has caught again, I see the pond southward through the hazy atmosphere, a blue rippled water surrounded mistily by red shrub oak woods and on one side green pines and tawny grass, — a blue rippled water surrounded by low reddish shrub oak hills, — the whole invested, softened, and made more remote and indistinct by a bluish mistiness. I am not sure but the contrast is more exciting and lastingly satisfactory than if the woods were green. A meadow must not be deep nor have well-defined shore. The more indented and finely divided and fringed and shallow and copsy its shore, the more islanded bushes and cranberry vines appear here and there above the surface, the more truly it answers to the word meadow or prairie.

These deep withdrawn bays, like that toward Well Meadow, are resorts for many a shy flock of ducks. They are very numerous this afternoon. We scare them up every quarter of a mile. Mostly the whitish duck which Brown thinks the golden-eye (we call them whistlers), and also black ducks, perchance also sheldrakes. They are quite shy; swim rapidly

¹ Or fish hawk (?).

away far into the pond. A flock which we surprised in the smooth bay of Well Meadow divided and showed much cunning, dodging under the shore to avoid us.

Struck upon a wild maple swamp a little north-west (?) of Well Meadow Head, where the ground had the appearance of a wild ravine running up from the swamp water here, even to the rocks of the Cliffs which from no other point would be associated with this place. Here is a very retired wild swamp, now drowned land, with picturesque maples in it, and the leaves and sticks on the bottom seen through the transparent water, the yellowish bottom, yellow with decayed leaves, etc. Found within the just swelling buds of the amelanchier¹ evidences of the coming blossom.

Observed in the second of the chain of ponds between Fair Haven and Walden a large (for the pond) island patch of the dwarf andromeda, I sitting on the east bank; its fine brownish-red color very agreeable and memorable to behold. In the last long pond, looking at it from the south, I saw it filled with a slightly grayish shrub which I took for the sweet-gale, but when I had got round to the east side, chancing to turn round, I was surprised to see that all this pond-hole also was filled with the same warm brownish-red-colored andromeda. The fact was I was opposite to the sun, but from every other position I saw only the sun reflected from the surface of the andromeda leaves, which gave the whole a grayish-brown hue tinged with red; but from this position alone I saw, as it were, through

¹ Or was it *Pyrus arbutifolia*, choke-berry?

the leaves which the opposite sun lit up, giving to the whole this charming warm, what I call *Indian*, red color, — the mellowest, the ripest, red imbrowned color; but when I looked to the right or left, *i. e.* north or south, the more the swamp had the mottled light or grayish aspect where the light was reflected from the surfaces of the leaves. And afterward, when I had risen higher up the hill, though still opposite the sun, the light came reflected upward from the surfaces, and I lost that warm, rich red tinge, surpassing cathedral windows. Let me look again at a different hour of the day, and see if it is really so. It is a very interesting piece of magic. It is the autumnal tints in spring, only more subdued and mellow. These leaves are so slow to decay. *Vide* when they fall. Already these ponds are greened with frog-spittle.¹ I see the tracks of muskrats through it. Hear the faint croak of frogs and the still rather faint peeping of hylas. It is about 4.30 P. M.

The form of the surface hereabouts is very agreeable. There are many dry hollows and valleys hereabouts connecting these two ponds. The undulating ground.

A fisherman, making change the other day, gave a ninepence whose pillars were indistinct. Some of the women returned it, whereupon he took it and, taking off his hat, rubbed it on his hair, saying he guessed he could make the pillars appear. The pond is still half covered with ice, and it will take another day like this to empty it. It is clear up tight to the shore on the south side, — dark-gray cold ice, com-

¹ [This sentence is queried in pencil.]

pletely saturated with water. The air from over it is very cold.

The scent of the earliest spring flowers! I smelt the willow catkins to-day, tender and innocent after this rude winter, yet slightly sickening, yet full of vernal promise. This odor, — how unlike anything that winter affords, or nature has afforded this six months! A mild, sweet, vernal scent, not highly spiced and intoxicating, as some ere long, but attractive to bees, — that early yellow smell. The odor of spring, of life developing amid buds, of the earth's epithalamium. The first flowers are not the highest-scented, — as catkins, — as the first birds are not the finest singers, — as the blackbirds and song sparrows, etc. The beginnings of the year are humble. But though this fragrance is not rich, it contains and prophesies all others in it.

The leaves of the *Veratrum viride*, American hellebore, now just pushing up.

April 18.¹ The ground is now generally bare of snow, though it lies along walls and on the north sides of valleys in the woods pretty deep. We have had a great deal of foul weather this season, scarcely two fair days together.


Gray refers the cone-like excrescences on the ends of willow twigs to the punctures of insects. I think that both these and the galls of the oak, etc., are to be regarded as something more normal than this implies. Though it is impossible to draw the line between disease and health at last.

¹ Storm begins this morning and continues five days incessantly.

Day before yesterday I brought home some twigs of that earliest large oval-catkin'd willow just over Hubbard's Bridge on the right hand, a male tree. The anthers just beginning to show themselves; not *quite* so forward as those above the Deacon Hosmer house, which I have thought to be the same. They looked much the worse for the rain. Catkins about one inch long, not being much expanded yet, opening a little below the apex, two stamens to a scale. There are smaller female bushes further on, on the left, catkins about the same size, with greenish ovaries stalked and rather small and slightly reddish stigmas, four-divided. I thought this the other sex of the same tree. There is also the very gray hardwood-like willow at the bars just beyond Hubbard's Brook, with long, cylindrical, caterpillar-like catkins, which do not yet show their yellow. And, thirdly, opposite the first-named, *i. e.* the other side the way, a smaller-catkin'd willow not yet showing its yellow. Fourthly, near the Conantum Swamp, sterile catkins *in blossom* on a bush willow an inch and a quarter long, more forward than any, but the stamens one to a bract or scale and bifid or trifid or quatrifid toward the top!! Fifthly, what I should think the *Salix humilis*, *i. e.* *S. Muhlenbergiana*, shows its small catkins now, but not yet blossoms.

I still feel stiff places in the swamps where there is ice still. Saw yesterday on an apple tree, in company with the *Fringilla hycmalis*, an olivaceous-backed [bird], yellow-throated, and yellow, brown-spotted breast, about the same size or a little less than they, — the first of

the late coming or passing, or the summer, birds? When we have got to these colors, the olivaceous and yellow, then the sun is high in the sky. The *Fringilla hyemalis* is the most common bird at present.

Was pleased to observe yesterday in the woods a new method (to me) which the woodchopper had invented to keep up his corded wood where he could not drive a stake on account of the frost. He had set up the stake on the surface, then looped several large birch withes once about it, resting the wood on their ends, as he  carried up the pile, or else he used a forked stick, thus:

2 P. M. — To river.

A driving rain, *i. e.* a rain with easterly wind and driving mists. River higher than before this season, about eighteen inches of the highest arch of the stone bridge above water.

Going through Dennis's field with C., saw a flock of geese on east side of river near willows. Twelve great birds on the troubled surface of the meadow, delayed by the storm. We lay on the ground behind an oak and our umbrella, eighty rods off, and watched them. Soon we heard a gun go off, but could see no smoke in the mist and rain. And the whole flock rose, spreading their great wings and flew with clangor¹ a few rods and lit in the water again, then swam swiftly toward our shore with outstretched necks. I knew them first from ducks by their long necks. Soon ap-

¹ The "honk" of the goose.

peared the man, running toward the shore in vain, in his greatcoat; but he soon retired in vain. We remained close under our umbrella by the tree, ever and anon looking through a peep-hole between the umbrella and the tree at the birds. On they came, sometimes in two, sometimes in three, squads, warily, till we could see the steel-blue and green reflections from their necks. We held the dog close the while, — C., lying on his back in the rain, had him in his arms, — and thus we gradually edged round on the ground in this cold, wet, windy storm, keeping our feet to the tree, and the great wet calf of a dog with his eyes shut so meekly in our arms. We laughed well at our adventure. They swam fast and warily, seeing our umbrella. Occasionally one expanded a gray wing. They showed white on breasts. And not till after half an hour, sitting cramped and cold and wet on the ground, did we leave them.

Ducks also were on the meadow. I have seen more ducks within a few days than ever before. They are apparently delayed here by the backwardness of the season. Yesterday the river was full of them. It proves a serious storm. The point of pines left by Britton on Hubbard's meadow looks very dark in the mist. We cannot see more than eighty rods before as we walk. Saw a sizable hawk in the meadow at N[ut] Meadow crossing, with a white rump, — the hen-harrier (?). The catkins of the *Alnus incana* at Jenny's Brook are longer than ever, — three or four inches. Somebody keeps his minnows there in a barrel. Observed a thistle just springing up in the meadow, a disk of

green a few inches in diameter in the midst of the old decayed leaves, which, now being covered with rain-drops, beaded and edged — the close-packed leaves — *with purple*, made a very rich sight, not to be seen in dry weather. The green leaves of the thistle in a dense disk, edged with purple and covered with bead-like rain-drops, just springing from the meadow. It reminded me of some delicious fruit, all ripe, quite flat. We sought the desert, it is so agreeable to cross the sand in wet weather. You might dig into the sand for dryness. I saw where somebody appeared to have dug there for turtles' eggs. The catkins of some willows, silvery and not yet blossomed, covered with rain-like dew, look like snow or frost, sleet, adhering to the twigs. The andromeda in Tarbell's Swamp does not look so fresh nor red now. Does it require a sunny day? The buds of the balm-of-Gilead, coated with a gummy substance, mahogany(?)-colored, have already a fragrant odor.

Heard the cackling of geese from over the Ministerial Swamp, and soon appeared twenty-eight geese that flew over our heads toward the other river we had left, we now near the black birches. With these great birds in it, the air seems for the first time inhabited. We detect holes in their wings. Their clank expresses anxiety.

The most interesting fact, perhaps, at present is these few tender yellow blossoms, these half-expanded sterile aments of the willow, seen through the rain and cold, — signs of the advancing year, pledges of the sun's return. Anything so delicate, both in struc-

ture, in color and in fragrance, contrasts strangely with surrounding nature and feeds the faith of man. The fields are acquiring a greenish tinge.

The birds which I see and hear in the midst of the storm are robins, song sparrows, blackbirds, and crows occasionally.

This is the spring of the year. Birds are migrating northward to their breeding-places; the melted snows are escaping to the sea. We have now the unspeakable rain of the Greek winter. The element of water prevails. The river has far overflowed its channel. What a conspicuous place Nature has assigned to the skunk-cabbage, first flower to show itself above the bare ground! What occult relation is implied between this plant and man? Most buds have expanded perceptibly, — show some greenness or yellowness. Universally Nature relaxes somewhat of her rigidity, yields to the influence of heat. Each day the grass springs and is greener. The skunk-cabbage is inclosed in its spathe, but the willow catkin expands its bright-yellow blossoms without fear at the end of its twigs, and the fertile flower of the hazel has elevated its almost invisible crimson star of stigmas above the sober and barren earth.

The sight of the sucker floating on the meadow at this season affects me singularly, as if it were a fabulous or mythological fish, realizing my *idea* of a fish. It reminds me of pictures of dolphins or of Proteus. I see it for what it is, — not an actual terrene fish, but the fair symbol of a divine idea, the design of an artist. Its color and form, its gills and fins and

scales, are perfectly beautiful, because they completely express to my mind what they were intended to express. It is as little fishy as a fossil fish. Such a form as is sculptured on ancient monuments and will be to the end of time; made to point a moral. I am serene and satisfied when the birds fly and the fishes swim as in fable, for the moral is not far off; when the migration of the goose is significant and has a moral to it; when the events of the day have a mythological character, and the most trivial is symbolical.

For the first time I perceive this spring that the year is a circle. I see distinctly the spring arc thus far. It is drawn with a firm line. Every incident is a parable of the Great Teacher. The cranberries washed up in the meadows and into the road on the causeways now yield a pleasant acid.

Why should just these sights and sounds accompany our life? Why should I hear the chattering of black-birds, why smell the skunk each year? I would fain explore the mysterious relation between myself and these things. I would at least know what these things unavoidably are, make a chart of our life, know how its shores trend, that butterflies reappear and when, know why just this circle of creatures completes the world. Can I not by expectation affect the revolutions of nature, make a day to bring forth something new?

As Cowley loved a garden, so I a forest.

Observe all kinds of coincidences, as what kinds of birds come with what flowers.

An east wind. I hear the clock strike plainly ten or eleven p. m.

April 19. 6 A. M. — Rain still, a fine rain. The robin sang early this morning over the bare ground, an hour ago, nevertheless, ushering in the day. Then the guns were fired and the bells rung to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of a nation's liberty. The birds must live on expectation now. There is nothing in nature to cheer them yet.

That last flock of geese yesterday is still in my eye. After hearing their clangor, looking southwest, we saw them just appearing over a dark pine wood, in an irregular waved line, one abreast of the other, as it were breasting the air and pushing it before them. It made you think of the streams of Cayster, etc., etc. They carry weight, such a weight of metal in the air. Their dark waved outline as they disappear. The grenadiers of the air. Man pygmifies himself at sight of these inhabitants of the air. These stormy days they do not love to fly; they alight in some retired marsh or river. From their lofty pathway they can easily spy out the most extensive and retired swamp. How many there must be, that one or more flocks are seen to go over almost every farm in New England in the spring.

That oak by Derby's is a grand object, seen from any side. It stands like an athlete and defies the tempests in every direction. It has not a weak point. It is an agony of strength. Its branches look like stereotyped gray lightning on the sky. But I fear a price is set upon its sturdy trunk and roots for ship-timber, for knees to make stiff the sides of ships against the Atlantic billows. Like an athlete, it shows its well-developed muscles.

I saw yesterday that the farmers had been out to save their fencing-stuff from the flood, and everywhere it was drawn above high-water mark. The North River had fallen nearly a foot, which I cannot account for, unless some of the dams above had broken away or been suddenly raised [*sic*]. This slight difference in the character of the tributaries of a river and their different histories and adventures is interesting, — all making one character at last.

The willow catkin might be the emblem of spring.

The buds of the lilac look ready to take advantage of the first warm day.

The skin of my nose has come off in consequence of that burning of the sun reflected from the snow.

A stormy day.

2 P. M. — With C. over Wood's Bridge to Lee's and back by Baker Farm.

It is a violent northeast storm, in which it is very difficult and almost useless to carry an umbrella. I am soon wet to my skin over half my body. At first, and for a long time, I feel cold and as if I had lost some vital heat by it, but at last the water in my clothes feels warm to me, and I know not but I am dry. It is a wind to turn umbrellas. The meadows are higher, more wild and angry, and the waves run higher with more white to their caps than before this year. I expect to hear of shipwrecks and of damage done by the tide. This wind, too, keeps the water in the river. It is worth the while to walk to-day to hear the rumbling roar of the wind, as if it echoed through the hollow chambers of the air. It even sounds like thunder some-

times, and when you pass under trees, oaks or elms, that overhang the road, the sound is more grand and stormy still. The wind sounds even in open fields as if on a roof over our heads. It sounds as if amid sails. The mists against the woods are seen driving by in upright columns or sections, as if separated by waves of air. Drifting by, they make a dimly mottled landscape.

What comes flapping low with heavy wing over the middle of the flood? Is it an eagle or a fish hawk? Ah, now he is betrayed, I know not by what motion, — a great gull, right in the eye of the storm. He holds not a steady course, but suddenly he dashes upward even like the surf of the sea which he frequents, showing the under sides of his long, pointed wings, on which do I not see two white spots? He suddenly beats upward thus as if to surmount the airy billows by a slanting course, as the teamster surmounts a slope. The swallow, too, plays thus fantastically and luxuriously and leisurely, doubling some unseen corners in the sky. Here is a gull, then, long after ice in the river. It is a fine sight to see this noble bird leisurely advancing right in the face of the storm.

How sweet is the perception of a new natural fact! suggesting what worlds remain to be unveiled. That phenomenon of the andromeda seen against the sun cheers me exceedingly. When the phenomenon was not observed, it was not at all. I think that no man ever takes an original [*sic*], or detects a principle, without experiencing an inexpressible, as quite infinite and sane, pleasure, which advertises him of the


dignity of that truth he has perceived. The thing that pleases me most within these three days is the discovery of the andromeda phenomenon. It makes all those parts of the country where it grows more attractive and elysian to me. It is a natural magic. These little leaves are the stained windows in the cathedral of my world. At sight of any redness I am excited like a cow.

To-day you can find arrowheads, for every stone is washed bright in the rain.

On the Miles road, the *Baomyces roseus* is now in perfection. Seen on the clay-like surface, amid the dark dead birch and pine leaves, it looks like a minute dull-pinkish bloom, a bloom on the earth, and passes for a terrene flower. It impresses me like a mildew passing into a higher type. It covers large tracts of ground there [with] a pink color. C. calls it flesh-colored, but it is high-colored for that.

Observed the thistle again covered with the beads of rain-drops and tinged with purple on the edges of the leaves. It impressed me again as some rich fruit of the tropics ready to be eaten with a spoon. It suggests pineapples, custard-apples, or what is it? The pasture thistle. All the farmers' cart-paths (for their meadow-hay) are now seen losing themselves in the water. In the midst of this storm I see and hear the robin still and the song sparrow, and see the bluebird also, and the crow, and a hawk a-hunting (a marsh hawk?), and a blue woodpecker. I thought about the size of the hairy. The meadow from Lee's causeway, looking northeast against the storm, looks dark

and, as C. says, slate-colored. I observe that, to get the dark color of the waves, you must not only look in the direction whence they come, but stand as low and nearly on a level with them as possible. If you are on the top of a hill, light is reflected upward to you from their surface. In all this storm and wet, see a muskrat's head in the meadow, as if some one thrust up a mop from below, — literally a drowned rat. Such independence of the moods of nature! He does not care, if he knows, when it rains. Saw a woodchuck out in the storm. The elder buds are forward. I stood by Clematis Brook, hearing the wind roar in the woods and the water in the brook; and, trying to distinguish between these sounds, I at last concluded that the first was a drier sound, the last a wetter. There is a slight dry hum to the wind blowing on the twigs of the forest, a softer and more liquid splashing sound to the water falling on rocks.

Scared up three blue herons in the little pond close by, quite near us. It was a grand sight to see them rise, so slow and stately, so long and limber, with an undulating motion from head to foot, undulating also their large wings, undulating in two directions, and looking warily about them. With this graceful, limber, undulating motion they arose, as if so they got under way, their  two legs trailing parallel far behind like an earthy residuum to be left behind. They are large, like birds of Syrian lands, and seemed to oppress the earth, and hush the hillside to silence, as they winged their way over it, looking back toward us. It would affect our

thoughts, deepen and perchance darken our reflections, if such huge birds flew in numbers in our sky. Have the effect of magnetic passes. They are few and rare. Among the birds of celebrated flight, storks, cranes, geese, and ducks. The legs hang down like a weight which they [?] raise, to pump up as it were with its [*sic*] wings and convey out of danger.

The mist to-day makes those near distances which Gilpin tells of. I saw, looking from the railroad to Fair Haven Hill soon after we started, four such, — the wood on E. Hubbard's meadow, dark but open; that of Hubbard's Grove, showing the branches of the trees; Potter's pitch pines, perhaps one solid black mass with outline only distinct; Brown's on the Cliff, but dimly seen through the mist, — one above and beyond the other, with vales of mist between.

To see the larger and wilder birds, you must go forth in the great storms like this. At such times they frequent our neighborhood and trust themselves in our midst. A life of fair-weather walks *might* never show you the goose sailing on our waters, or the great heron feeding here. When the storm increases, then these great birds that carry the mail of the seasons lay to. To see wild life you must go forth at a wild season. When it rains and blows, keeping men indoors, then the lover of Nature must forth. Then returns Nature to her wild estate. In pleasant sunny weather you may catch butterflies, but only when the storm rages that lays prostrate the forest and wrecks the mariner, do you come upon the feeding-grounds of wildest fowl, — of heron and geese.

The light buff(?) colored hazel catkins, some three inches long, are conspicuous now.

Beside the direct and steady rain, large drops fall from the trees and dimple the water.

Stopped in the barn on the Baker Farm. Sat in the dry meadow-hay, where the mice nest. To sit there, rustling the hay, just beyond reach of the rain while the storm roars without, it suggested an inexpressible dry stillness, the quiet of the haymow in a rainy day; such stacks of quiet and undisturbed thought, when there is not even a cricket to stir in the hay, but all without is wet and tumultuous, and all within is dry and quiet. Oh, what realms of thought one might have here! The crackling of the hay makes silence audible. It is so deep a bed, it makes one dream to sit on it, to think of it. The never-failing jay still screams. Standing in Pleasant Meadow, Conantum shore, seen through the mist and rain, looks dark and heavy and without perspective, like a perpendicular upon its edge.

Crossed by the chain of ponds to Walden. The first, looking back, appears elevated high above Fair Haven between the hills above the swamp, and the next higher yet. Each is distinct, a wild and interesting pond with its musquash house. The second the simplest perhaps, with decayed spruce (?) trees, rising out of the island of andromeda in its midst, draped with usnea, and the mists now driving between them. Saw the *Veratrum viride*, seven or eight inches high, in Well Meadow Swamp, — the greatest growth of the season, at least above water, if not above or below. I

doubt if there is so much recent vegetable matter pushed above ground elsewhere; certainly there is not unless of pads under water. Yet it did not start so early as it has grown fast. Walden is clear of ice. The ice left it yesterday, then, the 18th. Trillium Woods make a lee thirty or forty rods off, though you are raised twenty feet on the causeway.

April 20. Morning.—Storms still. The robin sings unfailingly each morning at the time the sun should rise, in spite of dreary rain. Some storms have much more wet in them than others, though they look the same to one in the house, and you cannot walk half an hour without being wet through, while in the others you may keep pretty dry a whole afternoon. Turned up the *Juniperus repens* on Conantum yesterday with my foot, which above had a reddish and rusty look; beneath it was of an unexpectedly fine glaucous tinge with a bright green inmixed. Like many things, it looks best in the rain.

They have many birds for sale in Quincy Market next the fish-market. I observe that one cage bears permanently the label "A good singer" tied to it. Every passer's eye rests on it, and he thinks if he were to buy a bird it would be the occupant of that cage. When I go to Boston the next year I perceive that this cage still wears its label, and I suppose that they put a new bird into this cage without changing the label, as fast as they sell the old one. Any bird that is without a home goes into the cage thus labelled, whatever may be his vocal powers. No deception, no falsehood

seems too stale to succeed. The bird-fancier who recommends his bird as "a good singer" finds customers by the means.

Saw yesterday apparently freshly broken shells of tortoise eggs.

April 21. The storm still continues. When I walked in the storm day before yesterday, I felt very cold when my clothes were first wet through, but at last they, being saturated with water, were tight and kept out the air and fresh wet like a thicker and closer garment, and, the water in them being warmed by my person, I felt warmer and even drier.

The color of the water changes with the sky. It is as dull and sober as the sky to-day.

The woodchuck has not far to go to his home. In foul weather, if he chooses, he can turn in anywhere. He lives on and in the earth. A little parasite on the skin of the earth, that knows the taste of clover and bean leaves and beetles.

2 P. M.—Another walk in the rain.

The river is remarkably high. Nobody remembers when the water came into so many cellars. The water is up to the top of the easternmost end of the easternmost iron truss on the south side of the stone bridge. It is over the Union Turnpike that was west of the bridge, so that it is impassable to a foot-traveller, and just over the road west of Wood's Bridge. Of eight carriage roads leading into Concord, the water to my knowledge is now over six, viz., Lee's Bridge, the Corner road, Wood's Bridge, Stone Bridge, Red

Bridge (on both sides, full half a mile in all, over the walls), and the Turnpike. All of these are impassable to foot-travellers except Wood's Bridge, where only a lady would be stopped. I should think that nine inches more would carry it over Flint's Bridge road. How it is at the East Quarter schoolhouse I don't know, nor at the further stone bridge and above, nor at Derby's Bridge. It is probably over the road near Miles's in the Corner, and in two places on the Turnpike, perhaps between J. P. Brown's and C. Miles's. This may suggest how low Concord is situated. Most of the cellars on both sides of the main street east of our house have water in them, and some that are on high ground. All this has been occasioned by the repeated storms of snow and rain for a month or six weeks past, especially the melting of the deep snow of April 13th, and, added to this, the steady rain from Sunday morning, April 18th, to this moment, 8 P. M., April 21st. The element of water is in the ascendant. From the Poplar Hill, the expanse of water looks about as large on the southwest as the northeast. Many new islands are made, — of grassy and sometimes rocky knolls, and clumps of trees and bushes where there is no dry land. Straight willow hedges rising above the water in some places, marking the boundaries of some man's improvements, look prettily. Some of the bushy islands on the Great Meadows are distinctly red at this distance, even a mile off, from the stems of some bush not red (distinctly) in fair weather, wet now. Is it cornel?

In front of Peter's. — The grass has been springing in spite of the snow and rain, and the earth has an

increased greenish tinge, though it is still decidedly tawny. Men are out in boats in the rain for muskrats, ducks, and geese. It appears to me, as I stand on this hill, that the white houses of the village, seen through the whitish misty storm and rain, are a very suitable color and harmonize well with the scenery, like concentrations of the mist. It is a cheerful color in stormy weather. A few patches of snow are still left. The robins sing through the ceaseless rain, and the song sparrows, and I hear a lark's plaintive strain. I am glad that men are so dispersed over the earth. The need of fuel causes woods to be left, and the use of cattle and horses requires pastures, and hence men live far apart and the walkers of every town have this wide range over forest and field. Sitting behind the wall on the height of the road beyond N. Barrett's (for we have come down the north bank of the river), I love in this weather to look abroad and let my eye fall on some sandy hill clothed with pitch pines on its sides, and covered on its top with the whitish cladonia lichen, usually so dry but now saturated with water. It reminds me of northern regions. I am thinking of the hill near Tarbell's, three quarters of a mile from me. They are agreeable colors to my eye, the green pine and, on the summit, the patches of whitish moss like mildew seen through the mist and rain, for I think, perhaps, how much moisture that soil can bear, how grateful it is to it.

Proceed toward Hubbard's black birch hill. The grass is greenest in the hollows where some snow and ice are still left melting, showing by its greenness how much space they recently covered.

On the east side of Ponkawtasset I hear a robin singing cheerily from some perch in the wood, in the midst of the rain, where the scenery is now wild and dreary. His song a singular antagonism and offset to the storm. As if Nature said, "Have faith, these *two* things I can do." It sings with power, like a bird of great faith that sees the bright future through the dark present, to reassure the race of man, like one to whom many talents were given and who will improve its talents. They are sounds to make a dying man live. They sing not their despair. It is a pure, immortal melody.

The side of the hill is covered first with tall birches rising from a reddish ground, just above a small swamp; then comes a white pine wood whose needles, covered with the fine rain-drops, have a light sheen on them. I see one pine that has been snapped off half-way up in the storm, and, seen against the misty background, it is a distinct yellow mark. The sky is not one homogeneous color, but somewhat mottled with darker clouds and white intervals, and anon it rains harder than before. (I saw the other day the rootlets which spring from the alder above the ground, so tenacious of the earth is it.) Was that a large shad-bush where Father's mill used to be? There is quite a waterfall beyond, where the old dam was. Where the rapids commence, at the outlet of the pond, the water is singularly creased as it rushes to the fall, like braided hair, as the poet has it. I did not see any inequalities in the rock it rushed over which could make it so plaited. Here is enough of that suds which in warm weather disperses such a sense of coolness through the

air. Sat under the dark hemlocks, gloomy hemlocks, on the hillside beyond. In a stormy day like this there is the gloom of night beneath them. The ground beneath them almost bare, with wet rocks and fine twigs, without leaves (but hemlock leaves) or grass.

The birds are singing in the rain about the small pond in front, the inquisitive chickadee that has flown at once to the alders to reconnoitre us, the blackbirds, the song sparrow, telling of expanding buds. But above all the robin sings here too, I know not at what distance in the wood. "Did he sing thus in Indian days?" I ask myself; for I have always associated this sound with the village and the clearing, but now I do detect the aboriginal wildness in his strain, and can imagine him a woodland bird, and that he sang thus when there was no civilized ear to hear him, a pure forest melody even like the wood thrush. Every genuine thing retains this wild tone, which no true culture displaces. I heard him even as he might have sounded to the Indian, singing at evening upon the elm above his wigwam, with which was associated in the red man's mind the events of an Indian's life, his childhood. Formerly I had heard in it only those strains which tell of the white man's village life; now I heard those strains which remembered the red man's life, such as fell on the ears of Indian children, — as he sang when these arrowheads, which the rain has made shine so on the lean stubble-field, were fastened to their shaft. Thus the birds sing round this piece of water, some on the alders which fringe, some farther off and higher up the hills; it is a centre to them. Here stand

buttonwoods, an uncommon tree in the woods, naked to look at, and now covered with little tufts of twigs on the sides of the branches in consequence of the disease which has attacked them. The singing of birds implies fair weather.

I see where some farmer has been at pains to knock to pieces the manure which his cattle have dropped in the pasture, so to spread it over the sward. The yellow birch is to me an interesting tree from its remarkable and peculiar color, like a silvery gold. In the pasture beyond the brook, where grow the barberries, huckleberries, — creeping juniper, etc., are half a dozen huge boulders, which look grandly now in the storm, covered with greenish-gray lichens, alternating with the slatish-colored rock. Slumbering, silent, like the exuviae of giants; some of their cattle left. From a height I look down on some of them as on the backs of oxen. A certain personality, or at least brute life, they seem to have. C. calls it Boulder Field. There is a good prospect southward over the pond, between the two hills, even to the *river meadows* now.

As we stand by the monument on the Battle-Ground, I see a white pine dimly in the horizon just north of Lee's Hill, at 5.30 p. m., its upright stem and straight horizontal feathered branches, while at the same time I hear a robin sing. Each enhances the other. That tree seems the emblem of my life; it stands for the west, the wild. The sight of it is grateful to me as to a bird whose perch it is to be at the end of a weary flight. I [am] not sure whether the music I hear is most in the robin's song or in its boughs. My wealth should

be all in pine-tree shillings. The pine tree that stands on the verge of the clearing, whose boughs point westward; which the village does not permit to grow on the common or by the roadside; which is banished from the village; in whose boughs the crow and the hawk have their nests.

We have heard enough nonsense about the Pyramids. If Congress should vote to rear such structures on the prairies to-day, I should not think it worth the while, nor be interested in the enterprise. It was the foolish undertaking of some tyrant. "But," says my neighbor, "when they were built, all men believed in them and were inspired to build them." Nonsense! nonsense! I believe that they were built essentially in the same spirit in which the public works of Egypt, of England, and America are built to-day, — the Mahmoudi Canal, the Tubular Bridge, Thames Tunnel, and the Washington Monument. The inspiring motive in the actual builders of these works is garlic, or beef, or potatoes. For meat and drink and the necessaries of life men can be hired to do many things. "Ah," says my neighbor, "but the stones are fitted with such nice joints!" But the joints were nicer yet before they were disjointed in the quarry. Men are wont to speak as if it were a noble work to build a pyramid, — to set, forsooth, a hundred thousand Irishmen at work at fifty cents a day to piling stone. As if the good joints could ennoble it, if a noble motive was wanting! To ramble round the world to see that pile of stones which ambitious Mr. Cheops, an Egyptian booby, like some Lord Timothy Dexter, caused a hundred thousand

poor devils to pile up for low wages, which contained for all treasure the thigh-bone of a cow. The tower of Babel has been a good deal laughed at. It was just as sensible an undertaking as the Pyramids, which, because they were completed and have stood to this day, are admired. I don't believe they made a better joint than Mr. Crab, the joiner, can.¹

I have not this season heard more robins sing than this rainy day.

April 22. It still rains. The water is over the road at Flint's Bridge, and, as I am told, has been for some time over the J. Miles road in the Corner, and near the further stone bridge. So that there is now only the Boston road open, unless we regard the Walden road as coming from Wayland and not from Lee's Bridge. At 9 A. M. it was five and one half inches higher than the east end of the eastern truss, horizontal part, on the south side of the stone bridge. Up to the top of the lowest stone step on the north side east end of railroad bridge. Mr. Stacy thinks it was higher thirty years ago, when a man, horse, and sleigh were washed off the Red Bridge road and lodged against a tree in the meadow. And Sam Barrett thinks it was about one foot higher some thirty-five years ago. Water a foot deep on Wood's Bridge road. Abel Hunt saw a flock of geese this morning.

This flood tempts men to build boats. I saw two on the stocks this morning. It is pleasant work to see progressing.

¹ [See *Walden*, p. 64; Riv. 93.]

P. M. — Up river on east side.

It takes this day to clear up gradually; successive sun-showers still make it foul. But the sun feels very warm after the storm. This makes five stormy days. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. The water, slightly agitated, looks bright when the sun shines. Saw four hawks soaring high in the heavens over the Swamp Bridge Brook. At first saw three; said to myself there must be four, and found the fourth. Glad are they, no doubt, to be out after being confined by the storm. I hear bees (?) humming near the brook, which reminded me of the telegraph harp.

I love to see the dull gravity, even stolidity, of the farmer opposed to the fluency of the lawyer or official person. The farmer sits silent, not making any pretensions nor feeling any responsibility even to apprehend the other, while the Judge or Governor talks glibly and with official dispatch, all lost on the farmer, who minds it not, but looks out for the main chance, with his great inexpressive face and his two small eyes, looking the first in the face and rolling a quid in the back part of his mouth. The lawyer is wise in deeds, but the farmer, who buys land, puts the pertinent questions respecting the title.

I observe the *Parmelia saxatilis* in many places, now turned a pinkish. The yellow lily leaves appear no more advanced than when I first observed them. A strange dog accompanied us to-day, a hunting dog, gyrating about us at a great distance, beating every bush and barking at the birds, with great speed, gyrat-

ing his tail too all the while. I thought of what Gilpin says, that he sailed and steered by means of his tail. Sat under Potter's oak, the ground thickly strewn with broken acorn shells and cups and twigs, the short, close-nibbled sward of last year. Our dog sends off a partridge with a whir, far across the open field and the river, like a winged bullet. From Cliffs see much snow on the mountains. The pine on Lee's shore of the pond, seen against the light water this cloudy weather from part way down the Cliff, is an agreeable object to me. When the outline and texture of white pine is thus seen against the water or the sky, it is an affecting sight. The shadow of the Cliff on Conantum in the semi-sunshine, with indistinct edge and a reddish tinge from bushes here and there!

I want things to be incredible, — too good to appear true. C. says, "After you have been to the post-office once you are damned!" But I answer that it depends somewhat on whether you get a letter or not. If you should not get a letter there is some hope for you. If you would be wise, learn science and then forget it. A boat on the river, on the white surface, looks black, and the boatman like Charon. I see swarms of gnats in the air. What is that grass with a yellow blossom which I find now on the Cliff?¹ It is the contrast between sunshine and storm that is most pleasing; the gleams of sunshine in the midst of the storm are the most memorable. Saw that winkle-like fungus, *fresh and green*, covering an oak stump to-day with concentric marks, spirally

¹ *Carex marginata* (?), early sedge, the earliest grass [sic] that flowers.

arranged, sometimes in a circle, very handsome. I love this apparent exuberance of nature.

The maples in the side swamp near Well Meadow are arranged nearly in a circle in the water. This stranger dog has good habits for a companion, he keeps so distant. He never trusts himself near us, though he accompanies us for miles. On the most retired, the wildest and craggiest, most precipitous hillside you will find some old road by which the teamster carted off the wood. It is pleasant sometimes looking thirty or forty rods into an open wood, where the trunks of the trees are plainly seen, and patches of soft light on the ground. The hylas peep now in full chorus, but are silent on my side of the pond. The water at 6 P. M. is one and a half inches higher than in the morning, *i. e.* seven inches above the iron truss. The strain of the red-wing on the willow spray over the water to-night is liquid, bubbling, watery, almost like a tinkling fountain, in perfect harmony with the meadow. It oozes, trickles, tinkles, bubbles from his throat, — *bob-y-lee-e-e*, and then its shrill, fine whistle.

The villagers walk the streets and talk of the great rise of waters.

At 10 P. M. the northern lights are flashing, like some grain sown broadcast in the sky. I hear the hylas peep on the meadow as I stand at the door.

The early sedge (?) grows on the side of the Cliffs in little tufts with small yellow blossoms, *i. e.* with yellow anthers, low in the grass.

Mr. Holbrook tells me he heard and saw martins (?) yesterday.¹

¹ Storm ends this evening.

April 23. The water has risen one and a half inches at six this morning since last night. It is now, then, eight and a half inches above the iron truss, *i. e.* the horizontal part of it.¹ There is absolutely no passing, in carriages or otherwise, over Hubbard's and the Red Bridge roads, and over *none* [*sic*] of the bridges for foot-travellers. Throughout this part of the country most people do not remember so great a flood, but, judging from some accounts, it was probably as high here thirty-five years ago. The willow catkins have made but little progress for a week. They have suffered from the cold rain and wind, and are partly blasted. It is a pleasant sight, among the pleasantest, at this season, to see the at first reddish anthers of the sterile catkins of our earliest willow bursting forth on their upper sides like rays of sunshine from amidst the *downy* fog, turning a more and more lively yellow as the pollen appears, — like a flash of sulphur. It is like the sun bursting out of a *downy* cloud or mists. I hear this morning, in the pine woods above the railroad bridge, for the first time, that delicious cool-sounding *wetter-wetter-wetter-wetter-wet'* from that small bird (pine warbler?) in the tops of the pines.² I associate it with the *cool, moist, evergreen spring* woods.

The wood pewee³ on an elm sings now *peer-r-weet peer-r-weet, peer-wee'*. It is not the simple *peer-r-wet*

¹ Greatest height. *Vide* Aug. 23d, when apparently it was as low as any time that year.

² *Vide* April 24 [p. 464].

³ [This is queried in pencil after the word "wood." The bird must have been a phoebe.]

peer-r-wee' that I heard at first. Will it not change next to that more tender strain?

Vegetation starts when the earth's axis is sufficiently inclined; *i. e.* it follows the sun. Insects and all the smaller animals (as well as many larger) follow vegetation. The fishes, the small fry, start probably for this reason; worms come out of the trees; buffaloes finally seek new pastures; water-bugs appear on the water, etc., etc. Next, the large fish and fish hawks, etc., follow the small fry; flycatchers follow the insects and worms. (The granivorous birds, who can depend on the supplies of dry seeds of last year, are to some extent independent of the seasons, and can remain through the winter or come early in the spring, and they furnish food for a few birds of prey at that season.) Indians follow the buffaloes; trout, suckers, etc., follow the water-bugs, etc.; reptiles follow vegetation, insects, and worms; birds of prey, the flycatchers, etc. Man follows all, and all follow the sun. The greater or less abundance of food determines migrations. If the buds are deceived and suffer from frost, then are the birds. The great necessary of life for the brute creation is food; next, perhaps, shelter, *i. e.* a suitable climate; thirdly, perhaps, security from foes.

The storm may be said to have fairly ended last night. I observed yesterday that it was drier in most fields, pastures, and even meadows that were not reached by the flood, *immediately* after this remarkable fall of water than at the beginning. The condition of the fields has been steadily improving for walkers.

I think one reason is that there was some frost in the ground which the rain melted, so that the ground soaked up the water. But no doubt it goes to prove the dryness of our sandy soil and absence of springs.

At 6 P. M. the water has fallen an inch and a half.

Heard the pigeon woodpecker to-day, that long-continued unmusical note, — somewhat like a robin's, heard afar, — yet pleasant to hear because associated with a more advanced stage of the season. Saw the *Fringilla hyemalis* to-day, lingering still.

April 24. 6 A. M. — Water has fallen an inch and a half since last night, — which is at a regular rate.

I know two species of men. The vast majority are men of society. They live on the surface; they are interested in the transient and fleeting; they are like driftwood on the flood. They ask forever and only the news, the froth and scum of the eternal sea. They use policy; they make up for want of matter with manner. They have many letters to write. Wealth and the approbation of men is to them success. The enterprises of society are something final and sufficing for them. The world advises them, and they listen to its advice. They live wholly an evanescent life, creatures of circumstance. It is of prime importance to them who is the president of the day. They have no knowledge of truth, but by an exceedingly dim and transient instinct, which stereotypes the church and some other institutions. They dwell, they are ever, right in my face and eyes like gnats; they are like motes, so near the eyes that, looking beyond, they appear like blurs;

they have their being between my eyes and the end of my nose. The *terra firma* of my existence lies far beyond, behind them and their improvements. If they write, the best of them deal in "elegant literature." Society, man, has no prize to offer me that can tempt me; not one. That which interests a town or city or any large number of men is always something trivial, as politics. It is impossible for me to be interested in what interests men generally. Their pursuits and interests seem to me frivolous. When I am most myself and see the clearest, men are least to be seen; they are like *muscae volitantes*, and that they are seen at all is the proof of imperfect vision. These affairs of men are so narrow as to afford no vista, no distance; it is a shallow foreground only, no large extended views to be taken. Men put to me frivolous questions: When did I come? where am I going? That was a more pertinent question, — what I lectured for? — which one auditor put once to another.¹ What an ordeal it were to make men pass through, to consider how many ever put to you a vital question! Their knowledge of something better gets no further than what is called religion and spiritual knockings.

Now that the sun shines and the sky is blue, the water is a dark blue which in the storm was light or whitish. It follows the sky's, though the sky is a lighter blue.

The lilac buds have looked as forward as any for many weeks.

2 P. M. — To Carlisle Bridge *via* Flint's Bridge, bank

¹ [Cape Cod, and Miscellanics, p. 470; Misc., Riv. 272.]

of river, rear of Joel Barrett's, returning by bridle-road.

The elms are now fairly in blossom. It is one of those clear, *washing* days, — though the air is cold, — such as succeed a storm, when the air is clear and flowing, and the cultivated ground and the roads shine. Passed Flint's road on the wall. Sorrel is well under weigh, and cinquefoil. White oaks still hold their leaves. The pitch pine is a cheerful tree at this season, with its lively yellow-green in the sunshine, while the landscape is still russet and dead-grass colored.

Sitting by the road beyond N. Barrett's, the colors of the world are: overhead a very light blue sky, darkest in the zenith, lightest in the horizon, with scattered white clouds *seeming* thickest in the horizon; all around the undulating earth a very light tawny color, from the dead grass, with the reddish and gray of forests mingled with evergreen; and, in the lap of earth, very dark blue rippled water, answering to the light blue above; the shadows of clouds flitting over all below; the spires of woods fringing the horizon on every side, and, nearer, single trees here and there seen with dark branches against the sky. This tawny ground divided by walls and houses, white, light slate, and red sprinkled here and there.

Ball's Hill and the rest are deep sunk in the flood. The level water-line appears to best advantage when it appears thus to cut the trees and hills. It looks as if the water were just poured into its basin and simply stood so high. No permanent shore gives you this pleasure.

Saw the honey-bees on the staminate flowers of the willow catkins by the roadside (such as I described April 23d), with little bottles of the yellow pollen, apparently, as big as pin-heads on their thighs. With these flowers, then, come bees. Is there honey in staminate flowers? The innocent odor of spring flowers, flavorless, as a breakfast. They will be more spiced by and by.

Went over the cladonia hills toward Tarbell's. A small tree, an oak for instance, looks large on a bare hilltop. The farmers, whom the storm has delayed, are busily plowing and overhauling their manure. Observed the ants at work on a large ant-heap. They plainly begin as soon as the snow is off and the ground thawed. Gold-thread, an evergreen, still bright in the swamps. The rattlesnake-plantain has fresh leaves. A wall running over the top of a rocky hill, with the light seen through its chinks, has a pretty effect. The sparrows, frogs, rabbits, etc., are made to resemble the ground for their protection; but so is the hawk that preys on them; but he is of a lighter color beneath, that creeping things over which he hovers may confound him with the sky. The marsh hawk is not easily distinguished from the meadow or the stems of the maples. The water is still over the causeway on both sides of Carlisle Bridge for a long distance. It is a straight flood now for about four miles. Fortunately for the bridge the wind has not been very high since the flood was at its height. The leaves of the hardhack, curled up, show their white under sides. On the bridle-road observed the interesting light-crim-

son star-like flowers of the hazel, the catkins being now more yellowish. This is a singular and interesting part of Concord, extensive and rather flat rocky pastures without houses or cultivated fields on any but this unused bridle-road, from which I hear the frogs peep. These are Channing's "moors." He went in on this road to chop, and this is the scene of his "Woodman."

Heard again (*in the village*) that *vetter-vetter-vetter-vetter-vet'*, or *tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi'* very rapidly repeated, which I heard April 23d,¹ and perhaps the same that I saw April 17th (described April 18th).² I am pretty sure it is the pine warbler, yellow beneath, with faint olivaceous marks on the sides, olivaceous above, tail forked, about the size of a yellow-bird.

I have not seen the fox-colored sparrow for some weeks. Thought I saw a loon on Walden yesterday.

April 25. It is related that Giorgio Barbarelli, Titian's friend, defending painting against the charge of being an incomplete art because it could exhibit but one side of a picture, laid a wager with some sculptor that he could represent the back, face, and both profiles of a man, without the spectator being obliged to walk round it as a statue. He painted "a warrior, who, having his back turned towards the spectator, stood looking at himself in a fountain, in whose limpid waters his full front figure was reflected. At the left

¹ [See p. 458.]

² [See p. 433, where the bird described would seem to be a yellow palm, or yellow redpoll, warbler.]

of the warrior was suspended his suit of polished steel armor, in which was mirrored, with exact fidelity, the whole of his left side. At the right was painted a looking-glass, which reflected that side;" and thus he won the wager. So I would fain represent some truths as roundly and solidly as a statue, or as completely and in all their relations as Barbarelli his warrior, — so that you may see round them.

1.30 P. M. — Up railroad, returning through Acton *via* powder-mills and Second Division.

The frogs peep at midday. The bees are on the pistillate flowers of the early willows, — the honey-bee, a smaller, fly-like bee with very transparent wings and bright-yellow marks on the abdomen, and also a still smaller bee, more like the honey-bee. They all hum like summer. The water in the meadow beyond J. Hosmer's is still and transparent, and I hear the more stertorous sound or croak of frogs from it, such as you associate with sunny, warmer, calm, placid spring weather. The tortoises are out sunning. The painted tortoise on a tussock. A spotted tortoise on the railroad *hisses* when I touch it with my foot and draws its [head] in. What is that bird on the willows, size of a vireo, yellow below, with darker lines, chestnut crown, whitish (?) line over eye, two white feathers in tail, yellow-olive back, darker tail? ¹ Yarrow is started. Saw the first kingfisher, and heard his most unmusical note. That warmer, placid pool and stertorous sound of frogs must not be forgotten, — beneath the railroad causeway. The bees hum on the early willows that

¹ It must have been the yellow redpoll warbler (*Sylvia ptechia*).

grow in the sand. They appear to have nearly stripped the sterile flowers of their pollen, and each has its little yellow parcel. The year is stretching itself, is waking up.

If a small oak on a bare hilltop looks large, a large one looks small. That one by Derby's stand, two rods off, looks no bigger than a corpulent man; go close up to it, and it dwarfs an ox, it is as broad as a cart or a wood-shed door. That is a handsome elm by Derby's Bridge, with nine branches springing from near the ground. Near the factory, a willow with small reddish catkins just beginning to expand looks like a peach tree with its blossom-buds.

Found in the midst of the woods in Acton, on the Concord line, a small shanty or shed, whitewashed, which I mistook at first, through the trees, for a white marble tomb with a slight clearing about it. Is it a bowling-alley? Is it a pigeon-place? What means this sign on the tree, "O. B. Trask"? that rocking-chair under a pine? Went through a kind of gate into a little green patch which had been *spaded* up the previous year, about a quarter of an acre cleared, and winter rye coming up on a part of it. The shed was locked; no trace of a recent inhabitant or visitor; window a bit of glass no bigger than your hand, flat against a joist; sign on the roof, "Any person who shall Burn or destroy this bilding is liable to 15 years imprisonment;" one or two herbs, catnip or balm, about the door, protected with sticks; a sunken barrel to catch the drip of the eaves; the stones picked up and thrown into heaps; a kind of small truck; another sign, "O. B. Trask T. line." cut on a board and nailed to a pine.

It makes a sad impression, like a poorhouse or hospital. Is he insane or of sound, serene mind? Is he weak, or is he strong? If I knew that the occupant was a cheerful, strong, serene man, how rejoiced I should be to see his shanty!

That steep hill west of the Concord line, from which the autumnal view is got, is covered on the top with that short moss now in fruit. The filaments, seen singly and close to, are of a varnished-mahogany color, but seen in dense masses, as you approach the summit in the ascent, with the sunlight on them, they are a light crimson surmounted with the whitish capsules. It has a very rich effect like a sort of crimson mould or mildew, flower-like. The bare top of the hill is covered with sere tufts of fine grass, this crimson moss, that reddish frosted (?) saxifrage (?) in patches, and with cladonias, with much bare pebbly earth.

In the rear of the Major Heywood house, lay on the sere grass in a long pasture bounded by a pitch pine wood and heard the robin sing. What different tints of blue in the same sky! It requires to be parted by white clouds that the delicacy and depth of each part may appear. Beyond a narrow wisp or feather of mist, how different the sky! Sometimes it is full of light, especially toward the horizon. The sky is never seen to be of so deep and delicate a blue as when it is seen between downy clouds.

The mayflower is well budded and ready to blossom, but not yet out; nor the andromeda, nor saxifrage, nor violet, that I can find. I am surprised to find the cowslip in full bloom at Second Division Meadow,

numerous flowers. Growing in the water, it is not, comparatively, so backward this year perhaps. Its heart or kidney shaped, crenate green leaves, which had not freshly grown when I was here before, have suddenly pushed up. The snows soon melted on this meadow. The horse-tail¹ too is in flower.² And what is that low, regular, red-leaved and red-rooted plant in the meadow with the cowslip?³ Yet we walk over snow and ice a long distance in the road here. I hear the first wood thrush singing faintly and at a distance. The hills are yet the color of a Roxbury russet, *i. e.* a russet without the red. Heard from a chickadee a note like one of the notes of a brown thrasher. Saw a dandelion in blossom at Jenny's in the water. Water over the road still, beyond J. P. Brown's, toward C. Miles.

We have reached the Clamshell Hill. The setting sun, which we do not see behind Loring's wood, which we have not seen for an hour or two behind dark dull clouds in the west, is falling bright and warm at last on the eastern hills and woods, and the windows of the village, which are as bright as itself. It is best to see it thus from the shade. Now the sun is set, and we have turned the point of Loring's wood and see a long, low gilded cloud just above the horizon; so low that the fluctuating, seething (?) over the fields produces a tremulous motion which the beholder refers to the gilded edge of that far-distant cloud. I do not remember to have seen this watery trembling in the horizon before.

¹ Field (?) [horse-tail].

² Sheds its pollen in the house the 27th, abundant and pea-green.

³ Meadow saxifrage.

April 26. Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), naturalized, shows its humble star-like white flowers now on rather dirty weather-worn branches in low, damp gardens. Also the smaller white flowers of the shepherd's-purse, which is already six or eight inches high, in the same places, *i. e.* Cheney's garden. Both, according to Dewey, introduced and naturalized.

What they call April weather, threatening rain notwithstanding the late long-continued rains.

P. M.—Rambled amid the shrub oak hills beyond Hayden's.

Lay on the dead grass in a cup-like hollow sprinkled with half-dead low shrub oaks. As I lie flat, looking close in among the roots of the grass, I perceive that its endless ribbon has pushed up about one inch and is green to that extent, — such is the length to which the spring has gone here, — though when you stand up the green is not perceptible. It is a dull, rain dropping and threatening afternoon, inclining to drowsiness. I feel as if I could go to sleep under a hedge. The landscape wears a subdued tone, quite soothing to the feelings; no glaring colors. I begin now to leave off my greatcoat.

The frogs at a distance are now so numerous that, instead of the distinct shrill peeps, it is one dreamy sound. It is not easy to tell where or how far off they are. When you have reached their pool, they seem to recede as you advance. As you squat by the side of the pool, you still see no motion in the water, though your ears ring with the sound, seemingly and probably within three feet. I sat for ten minutes on the watch,

waving my hand over the water that they might betray themselves, a tortoise, with his head out, a few feet off, watching me all the while, till at last I caught sight of a frog under a leaf, and caught and pocketed him; but when I looked afterward, he had escaped. The moment the dog stepped into the water they stopped. They are very shy. Hundreds filled the air with their shrill peep. Yet two or three could be distinguished by some peculiarity or variation in their note. Are these different?

The *Viola ovata* budded. Saw pollywogs two or three inches long.

April 27. Heard the field or rush sparrow this morning (*Fringilla junco*), George Minott's "huckle-berry-bird." It sits on a birch and sings at short intervals, apparently answered from a distance. It is clear and sonorous heard afar; but I found it quite impossible to tell from which side it came; sounding like *phe, phe, phe, pher-pher-tw-tw-tw-t-t-t*, — the first three slow and loud, the next two syllables quicker, and the last part quicker and quicker, becoming a clear, sonorous trill or rattle, like a spoon in a saucer. Heard also a clipping sparrow (*F. socialis*).

It has rained a little in the night. The landscape is still dark and wet. The hills look very dank, but I notice that some houses, one yellow one especially, look much better in this light.

The aments of the balm-of-Gilead are just beginning to appear (are they the male or female?),¹ with the

¹ [This is altered in pencil to read, "they are female."]

large leaf-bud in the centre. The leaves in the last are larger and more developed than those of any tree which I have noticed this season. The bud is filled with "a fragrant, viscid balsam," which is yellowish and difficult to wash from the fingers. It is an agreeable fragrance at this season. A nearer approach to leaves than in any tree?


Is that a golden willow by the stone bridge, with bright-yellow twigs (the most westerly on the south) and reddish-tipped catkins, five eighths of an inch long, just appearing before leaves (male or female?)?

The balsam of the balm-of-Gilead buds appears to protect the early expanding leaves from the wet.

Should I not have mentioned the butcher-bird, the downy woodpecker or sapsucker, and the white-breasted nuthatch among the winter birds? Also the quail and partridge, etc.

2.30 P. M. — To Conantum *via* railroad bridge.

The Corner road still impassable to foot-travellers. Water eighteen or twenty inches deep; must have been two feet deeper. Observed the spotted tortoise in the water of the meadow on J. Hosmer's land, by riverside. Bright-yellow spots on both shell and head, yet not regularly disposed, but as if, when they were finished in other respects, the maker had sprinkled them with a brush. This fact, that the yellow spots are common to the shell and the head, affected me considerably, as evincing the action of an artist from without; spotted with reference to my eyes. One, I suppose the male, was larger than the other, with a depressed and lighter-colored sternum.

That smallest willow, sage-like, and another, reddish osier-like, are just beginning to show their catkins in rather dry places. I see another similar to last, with female catkins already in bloom; also another, low and yellowish, with half-inch elliptical catkins showing red anthers within the down. *Baomyces roscus* does not show in dry weather. The *Viola pedata* is advancing. What is that weed the under side of whose radical leaves is now a claret-color, by a sandy path-side? ¹ At the spring by the Corner road,  the grass is now of [what] I must call a fiery green. It is an eye-salve, a collyrium, to behold it. Here, where the snow cannot lie long on the ground, vegetation has made great progress. The common angelica is a foot high, the skunk-cabbage leaves five inches broad, the wood anemone is budded, and a thimble-berry or rose leaved out; and several smaller green weeds there are. It is not only warmer for the water, but it is sheltered from the wind. Saw what I take to be the barn swallow. Some of the mosses bear now a green fruit.

On Conantum Cliffs, whose seams dip to the northwest at an angle of 50° (?) and run northeast and southwest, I find to-day for the first time the early saxifrage (*Saxifraga vernalis*) in blossom, growing high and dry in the narrow seams, where there is no soil for it but a little green moss. Following thus early after the bare rock, it is one of the first flowers, not only in the spring of the year, but in the spring of the world. It can take advantage of a perpendicular cliff where

¹ *Aster undulatus*?

the snow cannot lie and fronting the south. In exactly the same places grows the columbine, now well budded and seven or eight inches high. The higher up the rock and the more sheltered and sunny the location, the earlier they are. Also the first plantain-leaved everlasting (Gray's *Antennaria plantaginifolia*) is in blossom in a sheltered place in the grass at the top of the rock. The thimble-berry and the sweet-briar are partly leaved out in the crevices of the rock, and the latter emits its fragrance. The half-open buds of the saxifrage, showing the white of the petals in a corymb or cyme, on a short stem, surrounded by its new leaves mingled with the purplish tips of the calyx-leaves, is handsomer than when it is fully expanded. This is a place to look for early blossoms of the saxifrage, columbine, and plantain-leaved everlasting, — the first two especially. The crevices of the rock (cliff) make natural hothouses for them, affording dryness, warmth, and shelter.

It is astonishing how soon and unexpectedly flowers appear, when the fields are scarcely tinged with green. Yesterday, for instance, you observed only the radical leaves of some plants; to-day you pluck a flower.

See the first downy woodpecker, or sapsucker, tapping an elm. He taps very rapidly, then turns his head as if listening to hear the worm; plainly is not now making a hole. Do we see him in the winter? What is that alarmed, loud, short, whistling note that I hear? A woodpecker?

Found the first *Gnaphalium purpureum*, purplish cudweed, on Conantum by the edge of a rock. Its humble, woolly, purplish-white flower, close to the ground amid

its greenish leaves, downy and white on the under side, is the more interesting for appearing at this time, especially if it is seen with the dew on it, though it



bears transportation. A little purplish button, the larger central shoot or bud being surrounded by five others smaller. Its leaves have not three nerves. The hickory buds show a little yellow; the black birch buds and the bass-wood look fresh. There are large clouds and extensive shadows on land and the broad water, and a cheerful bright light on the russet grass (I am still on Conantum), which all together make our landscape appear larger-featured than usual. Gooseberry bushes in the garden have leaved out partly.

April 28. I scarcely know why I am excited when, in M. Huc's book, I read of the country of the Mongol Tartars as the "Land of Grass," but I am, as much as if I were a cow.¹

2.30 P. M. — To Cliffs and Heywood's Brook.

Are not the flowers which appear earliest in the spring the most primitive and simplest? They have been in this town thus far, as I have observed them this spring, putting them down in the order in which I think they should be named, using Gray's names: —

- [1] *Symplocarpus jctidus* (well advanced Feb. 13th, '51)²
 [2] *Alnus incana* April 11
 [3] " *scerrulata* 8

¹ Drive about the 10th of May to Ashburnham.

² N. B. Spring of '51 ten days or more earlier.

- [4] *Acer rubrum*¹ April 9 one by Red Bridge
 [5] *Salix*, willow, earliest 12
 [6] *Ulmus Americana*² 15 one, Cheney's (others ten days or fourteen later)
 [7] *Populus tremuloides* 15
 [8] *Corylus* " 16 perhaps before the last³
 [9] *Carex Pennsylvanica*⁴ 22
 [10] *Caltha palustris* 25 many
 [11] *Stellaria media*⁵ 26 Cheney's garden
 [12] *Capsella Bursa-pastoris* 26 " "
 [13] *Taraxacum Dens-leonis* 25 one in water (seen by another the 20th)
 [14] *Equisetum arvense* 25 in water
 [15] *Gnaphalium purpureum* 27 (about April 16th, '51)
 [16] *Saxifraga Virginicensis* 27 (April 22d, '51)
 [17] *Antennaria plantaginifolia* 27
 [18] *Ranunculus fascicularis* 28 only two (abundant April 22d, '51)

All but the 3d, 8th, 11th, 12th observed in the very best season, and these within a day (?) of their flowering.⁶

I observe that the first six are decidedly water or water-loving plants, and the 10th, 13th, and 14th were found in the water and are equally if not more confined to that element. The 7th and 8th belong to the cooler zones of the earth, the 7th, according to Emerson, as far north as 64° and comes up (is it this?) on burnt lands first and will grow in dry, cool, dreary places. The 9th on a dry, warm rocky hillside, — the earliest (?) grass to blossom, — also the 18th; the 11th and 12th in cold, damp gardens, like the earth first

¹ [*Rubrum* crossed out in pencil and *dasyarpum* substituted.]

² [Queried in pencil.]

³ *Corylus rostrata* when?

⁴ [Queried in pencil.]

⁵ [Queried in pencil.]

⁶ N. B. Is the *Hepatica triloba* found here?

made dry land; the 15th and 17th on dry (scantly clad with grass) fields and hills, hardy; the 16th, sunny bare rocks, in seams on moss, where also in a day or two the columbine will bloom. The 18th is also indebted to the warmth of the rocks.

This may, perhaps, be nearly the order of the world's creation. Thus we have in the spring of the year the spring of the world represented. — Such were the first localities afforded for plants,—water-bottoms, bare rocks, and scantily clad lands, and land recently bared of water.

The spotted tortoise is spotted on shell, head, tail, and legs. Fresh leaves of a neottia pale and not distinctly veined. Red Solomon's-seal berries on their short stems prostrate on the dead leaves, some of them plump still. One man has turned his cows out to pasture. Have not seen the slate-colored snowbird for a few days. I am getting my greatcoat off, but it is a cold and wintry day, with snow-clouds appearing to draw water, but cold water, surely, or out of the north side of the well; a few flakes in the air; drawing snow as well as water. From Fair Haven the landscape all in shadow, apparently to the base of the mountains, but the Peterboro hills are in sunshine and unexpectedly are white with snow (no snow here, unless in some hollows in the woods), reflecting the sun, more obvious for the sunshine. I never saw them appear so near. It is startling thus to look into winter.

How suddenly the flowers bloom! Two or three days ago I could not, or did not, find the leaves of the crow-foot. To-day, not knowing it well, I looked in vain, till

at length, in the very warmest nook in the grass above the rocks of the Cliff, I found two bright-yellow blossoms, which betrayed the inconspicuous leaves and all. The spring flowers wait not to perfect their leaves before they expand their blossoms. The blossom in so many cases precedes the leaf; so with poetry? They flash out. In the most favorable locality you will find flowers earlier than the May goers will believe. This year, at least, one flower (of several) hardly precedes another, but as soon as the storms were over and pleasant weather came, all blossomed at once, having been retarded so long. This *appears* to be particularly true of the herbaceous flowers. How much does this happen every year?

There is no important change in the color of the woods yet. There are fewer dry leaves; buds color the maples; and, perhaps, the bark on some last year's shoots, as the willows, is brighter; and some willows, covered with catkins, and even alders, maples, elms, and poplars show at a distance. The earth has now a greenish tinge, and the ice, of course, has universally given place to water for a long time past. These are general aspects. The *Veratrum viride* at Well Meadow is fifteen or sixteen inches high, the most of a growth this year. The angelica (?) at the Corner Spring is pretty near it.

I suppose the geese are all gone. And the ducks? Did the snowbirds go off with the pleasant weather?

Standing above the first little pond east of Fair Haven, this bright reflecting water surface is seen plainly at a higher level than the distant pond. It has a singu-

lar but pleasant effect on the beholder to see considerable sheets of water standing at different levels. Pleasant to see lakes like platters full of water. Found a large cockle(?) shell by the shore of this little pond. It reminds me that all the earth is seashore, — the sight of these little shells inland. It is a beach I stand on. Is the male willow on the east end of this pondlet — catkins about three quarters of an inch long and just bursting, commonly on the side and always before any leaves — the brittle gray willow (*Salix grisea*)? That small, flat, downy gnaphalium in sandy paths, — is it the fragrant life-everlasting? The andromeda requires the sun. It is now merely a dull reddish brown with light (grayish?) from the upper surface of the leaves. Frog-spawn a mass of transparent jelly bigger than the two fists, composed of contiguous globules or eyes, with each a little squirming pollywog (?) in the centre, a third of an inch long.

Walden is yellowish (apparently) next the shore, where you see the sand, then green in still shallow water, then, or generally, deep-blue.¹ This as well under the railroad, and now that the trees have not leaved out, as under pines.²

That last long storm brought down a coarse, elephantine sand foliage in the Cut. Slumbrous ornaments for a cave or subterranean temple, such as at Elephantium? I see no willow leaves yet. A maple by Heywood's meadow has opened its sterile blossoms.

¹ [A pencilled interrogation-point in parentheses follows the word "blue."]

² [*Walden*, p. 196: Riv. 276.]

Why is this (and maples generally) so much later than the Red Bridge one? ¹

A week or more ago I made this list of early willows in Massachusetts, according to Gray, putting Emerson in brackets: —

Salix tristis (sage willow).

S. humilis (low bush willow); *S. Muhlenbergiana*; *S. conifera*.

S. discolor (glaucous willow); [two-colored willow, bog willow]; *S. sensitiva*.

S. eriocephala (silky-headed willow); *S. prinoides* (?); *S. crassa*; "closely resembles the last," *i. e.* *S. discolor*; [woolly-headed swamp].

S. sericea (silky-leaved willow); *S. grisea*; [brittle gray].

April 29. Observed a fire yesterday on the railroad, — Emerson's Island that was. The leaves are dry enough to burn; and I see a smoke this afternoon in the west horizon. There is a slight haziness on the woods, as I go to Mayflower Road at 2.30 P. M., which advances me further into summer. Is that the arrow-head, so forward with its buds, in the Nut Meadow ditch? The ground is dry. I smell the dryness of the woods. Their shadows look more inviting, and I am reminded of the hum of bees. The pines have an appearance which they have not worn before, yet not easy to describe. The mottled light (sunlight) and shade, seen looking into the woods, is more like summer. But the season is most forward at the Second Division Brook, where the cowslip is in blossom, —

¹ [The Red Bridge one (see vol. iv of the *Journal*, p. 6, and list, p. 475 *ante*) was a white maple, which species regularly blooms earlier than the red.]

and nothing yet planted at home, — these bright-yellow *suns* of the meadow, in rich clusters, their flowers contrasting with the green leaves, from amidst the all-producing, dark-bottomed water. A flower-fire bursting up, as if through crevices in the meadow. They are very rich, seen in the meadow where they grow, and the most conspicuous flower at present, but held in the hand they are rather coarse. But their yellow and green are really rich, and in the meadow they are the most delicate objects. Their bright yellow is something incredible when first beheld. There is still considerable snow in the woods, where it has not melted since winter. Here is a small reddish-topped rush (is it the *Juncus effusus*, common or soft rush?¹), now a foot high, in the meadow with the cowslips. It is the greatest growth of the grass form I have seen. The butterflies are now more numerous, red and blue-black or dark velvety. The art of life, of a poet's life, is, not having anything to do, to do something. People are going to see Kossuth, but the same man does not attract me and George Loring. If he could come openly to Boston without the knowledge of Boston, it might be worth my while to go and see him.

The mayflower on the point of blossoming. I think I may say that it will blossom to-morrow. The blossoms of this plant are remarkably concealed beneath the leaves, perhaps for protection. It is singularly unpretending, not seeking to exhibit or display its simple beauty. It is the most delicate flower, both to eye and to scent, as yet. Its weather-worn leaves do not adorn

¹ No.

it. If it had fresh spring leaves it would be more famous and sought after. Observed two thrushes arrived which I do not know. I discover a hawk over my head by his shadow on the ground; also small birds. The acorns among the leaves have been sprouted for a week past, the shells open and the blushing (red) meat exposed at the sprout end, where the sprout is already turning toward the bowels of the earth, already thinking of the tempests which it is destined as an oak to withstand, if it escapes worm and squirrel. Pick these up and plant them, if you would make a forest.

Old Mr. Francis Wheeler thinks the river has not risen so high as recently for sixty-three years; that was in June!! that it was then higher. Noah Wheeler never saw it so high as lately. I think it doubtful if it was higher in 1817.

F. Wheeler, Jr., saw dandelions in bloom the 20th of April. Garfield's folks used them for greens. They grew in a springy place behind Brigham's in the Corner.

The *Fringilla hyemalis* still here, though apparently not so numerous as before. The *Populus grandidentata* in blossom, the sterile (?) flowers, though I cannot count, at most, more than five or six stamens. I observe the light-green leaves of a *pyrola* (?) standing high on the stem in the woods, with the last year's fruit; the "one-sided" or else the "oval-leaved," I think.

As I come home over the Corner road, the sun, now getting low, is reflected very bright and silvery from the water on the meadows, seen through the pines of Hubbard's Grove. The causeway will be passable on foot to-morrow.

April 30. 2 P. M. — Down the Boston road and across to Turnpike, etc., etc.

The elms are now generally in blossom and Cheney's elm still also. The last has leaf-buds which show the white. Now, before any leaves have appeared, their blossoms clothe the trees with a rich, warm brown color, which serves partially for foliage to the street-walker, and makes the tree more obvious. Held in the hand, the blossoms of some of the elms are quite rich and variegated, now purple and yellowish specked with the dark anthers and two light styles. I know not why some should be so much earlier than others. It is a beautiful day, — a mild air, — and all farmers and gardeners out and at work. Now is the time to set trees and consider what things you will plant in your garden. Yesterday I observed many fields newly plowed, the yellow soil looking very warm and dry in the sun; and one boy had fixed his handkerchief on a stick and elevated it on the yoke, where it flapped or streamed and rippled gayly in the wind, as he drove his oxen dragging a harrow over the plowed field. I see now what I should call a small-sized bullfrog in the brook in front of Alcott's house that was. The sweet-gale is in blossom. Its rich reddish-brown buds have expanded into yellowish and brown blossoms, all male blossoms that I see. Those handsome buds that I have observed are the male blossom buds then. This has undoubtedly been in bloom a day or two in some places. I saw yesterday a large-sized water-bug; to-day many in the brook; yesterday a trout; to-day shiners, I think. The huckleberry-bird sings. When I look

hence to the hills on the Boston road under which the inhabitants are beginning to plant in their gardens, the air is so fine and peculiar that I seem to see the hills and woods through a mirage. I am doubtful about their distance and exact form and elevation. The sound of a spade, too, sounds musical on the spring air. (To-night for the first time I sit without a fire.) One plowman in a red flannel shirt, who looks picturesquely under the hill, suggests that our dress is not commonly of such colors as to adorn the landscape. (To-night and last night the spearer's light is seen on the meadows; he has been delayed by the height of the water.) I like very well to walk here on the low ground on the meadow; to see the churches and houses in the horizon against the sky and the now very blue Mt. Wachusett seeming to rise from amid them. When you get still further off on the lowest ground, you see distant barns and houses against the horizon, and the mountain appears to preside over this vale alone, which the adjacent hills on right and left fence in.

The season advances by fits and starts; you would not believe that there could be so many degrees to it. If you have had foul and cold weather, still some advance has been made, as you find when the fair weather comes, — new *lieferungs* of warmth and summeriness, which make yesterday seem far off and the dog-days or midsummer incredibly nearer. Yesterday I would not have believed that there could have been such an improvement on that day as this is, short of midsummer or June.

My pocket being full of the flowers of the maple,

elm, etc., my handkerchief by its fragrance reminded me of some fruitful or flowery bank, I know not where.

A pleasant little green knoll north of the Turnpike near the Lincoln line. I thought that the greenness of the sward there on the highest ground was occasioned by the decay of the roots of two oaks, whose old stumps still remained. The greenness covered a circle about two rods in diameter. It was too late to feel the influence of the drip of the trees. We have had no such summer heat this year (unless when I was burned in the Deep Cut), yet there is an agreeable balmy wind. I see here, while looking for the first violet, those little heaps made by the mole cricket (?), or by worms (?). I observe to-day the bright-crimson (?) perfect flowers of the maple, — crimson styles, sepals, and petals (crimson or scarlet?), — whose leaves are not yet very handsome in the rain as you look to the sky; and the hum of small bees from them. So much color have they.

Crossing the Turnpike, we entered Smith's highlands. Dodging behind a swell of land to avoid the men who were plowing, I saw unexpectedly (when I looked to see if we were concealed by the field) the blue mountains' line in the west (the whole intermediate earth and towns being concealed), this greenish field for a foreground sloping upward a few rods, and then those grand mountains seen over it in the background, so blue, — seashore, earth-shore, — and, warm as it is, covered with snow which reflected the sun. Then when I turned, I saw in the east, just over the woods, the modest, pale, cloud-like moon, two-

thirds full, looking spirit-like on these daylight scenes. Such a sight excites me. The earth is worthy to inhabit. The far river-reach from this hill. It is not so placid a blue — as if with a film of azure over it — to-day, however. The more remote the water, the lighter the blue, perchance. It is like a lake in Tartary; there our camels will find water. Here is a rock made to sit on, — large and inviting, which you do not fear to crush. I hear the flicker and the huckleberry-bird. Yet no leaves apparent. This in some measure corresponds to the fine afternoon weather after the leaves have fallen, though there is a different kind of promise now than then. We are now going out into the field to work; then we were going into the house to think. I love to see alders and dogwood instead of peach trees. May we not see the melted snow lapsing over the rocks on the mountains in the sun, as well as snow? The white surfaces appear declivitous. While we sit here, I hear for the first time the flies buzz so dronishly in the air. I see travellers like mere dark objects in the yellow road afar, — the Turnpike. Hosmer's house and cottage under its elms and on the summit of green smooth slopes looks like a terrestrial paradise, the abode of peace and domestic happiness. Far over the woods westward, a shining vane, glimmering in the sun.

At Saw Mill Run the swamp (?) gooseberry (is it?) is partly leaved out.¹ This, being in the shade of the woods, and not, like the thimble-berry, in a warm and sunny place, methinks is the earliest shrub or tree that

¹ I think it is Gray's *Ribes hirtellum*, short-stalked wild gooseberry.

shows leaves.¹ The neatly and closely folded, plaited, leaves of the hellebore are rather handsome objects now. As you pull them apart, they emit a slight marshy scent, somewhat like the skunk-cabbage. They are tender and dewy within, folded fan-like.

I hear a wood thrush here, with a fine metallic ring to his note. This sound most adequately expresses the immortal beauty and wildness of the woods. I go in search of him. He sounds no nearer. On a low bough of a small maple near the brook in the swamp, he sits with ruffled feathers, singing more low or with less power, as it were ventriloquizing; for though I am scarcely more than a rod off, he seems further off than ever.

Caught three little peeping frogs. When I approached, and my shadow fell on the water, I heard a peculiarly trilled and more rapidly vibrated note, somewhat, in kind, like that which a hen makes to warn her chickens when a hawk goes over, and most stopped peeping; another trill, and all stopped. It seemed to be a note of alarm. I caught one. It proved to be two coupled. They remained together in my hand. This sound has connection with their loves probably. (I hear a trilled sound from a frog this evening. It is my dreaming midsummer frog, and he seems to be toward the depot.) I find them generally sitting on the dead leaves near the water's edge, from which they leap into the water.

On the hill behind Hosmer's, half an hour before

¹ The Missouri currant in gardens is equally forward; the cultivated gooseberry nearly so; the lilac not so.

sunset. — The hill on the Boston road is very handsome with its regular promontories, and the smokes now seen against it rising from the chimneys, what time the laborer takes his tea. The robins sing powerfully on the elms; the little frogs peep; the woodpecker's harsh and long-continued cry is heard from the woods; the huckleberry-bird's simple, sonorous trill. The plowed land shines where a drag has passed over it. It is a pleasant place for a house, because you overlook the road, and the near land seems to run into the meadow.

Saw male willow catkins in Tuttle's lane, now just out of bloom, about two inches long. The flower of some of the earliest elms is by no means to be despised at this season. It is conspicuous and rich in any nosegay that can now be made. The female plants of the sweet-gale are rare (?) here. The scales of the male catkins are "set with amber-colored resinous dots" (Emerson).

END OF VOLUME III