

## IV

MAY, 1851

(ÆT. 33)

May 1. Observed the *Nuphar advena*, yellow water-lily, in blossom; also the *Laurus Benzoin*, or fever-bush, spice-wood, near William Wheeler's in Lincoln, resembling the witch-hazel. It is remarkable that this aromatic shrub, though it grows by the roadside and does not hide itself, may be, as it were, effectually concealed, though it blossoms every spring. It may be observed only once in many years.

The blossom-buds of the peach have expanded just enough to give a slight peach tint to the orchards.

In regard to purity, I do not know whether I am much worse or better than my acquaintances. If I confine my thought to myself, I appear, whether by constitution or by education, irrevocably impure, as if I should be shunned by my fellow-men if they knew me better, as if I were of two inconsistent natures; but again, when I observe how the mass of men speak of woman and of chastity, — with how little love and reverence, — I feel that so far I am unaccountably better than they. I think that none of my acquaintances has a greater love and admiration for chastity than I have. Perhaps it is necessary that one should actually stand low himself in order to reverence what is high in others.

All distant landscapes seen from hilltops are veritable pictures, which will be found to have no actual existence to him who travels to them. "Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." It is the bare landscape without this depth of atmosphere to glass it. The distant river-reach seen in the north from the Lincoln Hill, high in the horizon, like the ocean stream flowing round Homer's shield, the rippling waves reflecting the light, is unlike the same seen near at hand. Heaven intervenes between me and the object. By what license do I call it Concord River. It redeems the character of rivers to see them thus. They were worthy then of a place on Homer's shield.

As I looked to-day from Mt. Tabor in Lincoln to the Waltham hill, I saw the same deceptive slope, the near hill melting into the further inseparably, indistinguishably; it was one gradual slope from the base of the near hill to the summit of the further one, a succession of copse-woods, but I knew that there intervened a valley two or three miles wide, studded with houses and orchards and drained by a considerable stream. When the shadow of a cloud passed over the nearer hill, I could distinguish its shaded summit against the side of the other.

I had in my mind's eye a silent gray tarn which I had seen the summer before high up on the side of a mountain, Bald Mountain, where the half-dead spruce trees stood far in the water draped with wreatly mist as with usnea moss, made of dews, where the mountain spirit bathed; whose bottom was high above the sur-

face of other lakes. Spruces whose dead limbs were more in harmony with the mists which draped them.

The forenoon that I moved to my house, a poor old lame fellow who had formerly frozen his feet hobbled off the road, came and stood before my door with one hand on each door-post, looking into the house, and asked for a drink of water. I knew that rum or something like it was the only drink he loved, but I gave him a dish of warm pond water, which was all I had, nevertheless, which to my astonishment he drank, being used to drinking.

Nations! What are nations? Tartars! and Huns! and Chinamen! Like insects they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a man that there are so many men. It is individuals that populate the world.

#### THE SPIRIT OF LODIN

"I look down from my height on nations,  
And they become ashes before me;  
Calm is my dwelling in the clouds;  
Pleasant are the great fields of my rest."<sup>1</sup>

Man is as singular as God.

There is a certain class of unbelievers who sometimes ask me such questions as, if I think that I can live on vegetable food alone; and to strike at the root of the matter at once, I am accustomed to answer such, "Yes, I can live on board nails." If they cannot understand that, they cannot understand much that I

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 473; *Misc.*, Riv. 275, 276.]

have to say. That cuts the matter short with them. For my own part, I am glad to hear of experiments of this kind being tried; as that a young man tried for a fortnight to see if he could live on hard, raw corn on the ear, using his tooth for his only mortar. The squirrel tribe tried the same and succeeded. The human race is interested in these experiments, though a few old women may be alarmed, who own their thirds in mills.<sup>1</sup>

Khaled would have his weary soldiers vigilant still; apprehending a midnight sally from the enemy, "Let no man sleep," said he. "We shall have rest enough after death." Would such an exhortation be understood by Yankee soldiers?

Omar answered the dying Abu Beker: "O successor to the apostle of God! spare me from this burden. I have no need of the Caliphat." "But the Caliphat has need of you!" replied the dying Abu Beker.

"Heraclius had heard of the mean attire of the Caliph Omar, and asked why, having gained so much wealth by his conquests, he did not go richly clad like other princes? They replied, that he cared not for this world, but for the world to come, and sought favor in the eyes of God alone. 'In what kind of a palace does he reside?' asked the emperor. 'In a house built of mud.' 'Who are his attendants?' 'Beggars and the poor.' 'What tapestry does he sit upon?' 'Justice and equity.'

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 72; Riv. 103.]

'What is his throne?' 'Abstinence and true knowledge.' 'What is his treasure?' 'Trust in God.' 'And who are his guard?' 'The bravest of the Unitarians.'"

It was the custom of Ziyad, once governor of Bassora, "wherever he held sway, to order the inhabitants to leave their doors open at night, with merely a hurdle at the entrance to exclude cattle, engaging to replace any thing that should be stolen: and so effective was his police, that no robberies were committed."

Abdallah was "so fixed and immovable in prayer, that a pigeon once perched upon his head mistaking him for a statue."

*May 6. Monday.* The Harivansa describes a "substance called *Poroucha*, a spiritual substance known also under the name of Mahat, spirit united to the five elements, soul of being, now enclosing itself in a body like ours, now returning to the eternal body; it is mysterious wisdom, the perpetual sacrifice made by the virtue of the *Yoga*, the fire which animates animals, shines in the sun, and is mingled with all bodies. Its nature is to be born and to die, to pass from repose to movement. The spirit led astray by the senses, in the midst of the creation of Brahma, engages itself in works and knows birth, as well as death. The organs of the senses are its paths, and its work manifests itself in this creation of Brahma. Thought tormented by desires, is like the sea agitated by the wind. Brahma has said: the heart filled with strange affections is to be here below purified by wisdom. Here below even, clothed already as it were in a luminous form, let the spirit,

though clogged by the bonds of the body, prepare for itself an abode sure and permanent.

"He who would obtain final emancipation must abstain from every exterior action. The operation which conducts the pious and penitent Brahman to the knowledge of the truth, is all interior, intellectual, mental. They are not ordinary practices which can bring light into the soul.

"The Mouni who desires his final emancipation will have care evening and morning to subdue his senses, to fix his mind on the divine essence, and to transport himself by the force of his soul to the eternal abode of Vichnou. Although he may have engaged in works, he does not wear the clog of them, because his soul is not attached to them. A being returns to life in consequence of the affection which he has borne for terrestrial things: he finds himself emancipated, when he has felt only indifference for them.

"The Richis mingle with nature, which remains strange to their senses. Luminous and brilliant they cover themselves with a humid vapor, under which they seem no more to exist, although existing always, like the thread which is lost and confounded in the woof.

"Free in this world, as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chain.

"Thus the Yogin, absorbed in contemplation, contributes for his part to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts, as animating original matter."

Like some other preachers, I have added my texts — derived from the Chinese and Hindoo scriptures — long after my discourse was written.

A commentary on the Sankhya Karika says, “By external knowledge worldly distinction is acquired; by internal knowledge, liberation.”

The Sankhya Karika says, “By attainment of perfect knowledge, virtue and the rest become causeless; yet soul remains awhile invested with body, as the potter’s wheel continues whirling from the effect of the impulse previously given to it.”

I rejoice that horses and steers have to [be] *broken* before they can be made the slaves of men, and that men themselves have some wild oats still left to sow before they become submissive members of society. Undoubtedly all men are not equally fit subjects for civilization, and because the majority, like dogs and sheep, are tame by inherited disposition, is no reason why the others should have their natures broken, that they may be reduced to the same level. Men are in the main alike, but they were made several in order that [they] might be various. If a low use is to be served, one man will do nearly or quite as well as another; if a high one, individual excellence is to be regarded. Any man can stop a hole to keep the wind away, but no other man can serve that use which the author of this illustration did. Confucius says, “The skins of the tiger and the leopard when they are tanned, are as the skins of the dog and the

sheep tanned.” But it is not the part of a true culture to tame tigers, any more than it is to make sheep ferocious. It is evident, then, that tanning their skins for shoes and the like is not the best use to which they can be put.<sup>1</sup>

How important is a constant intercourse with nature and the contemplation of natural phenomena to the preservation of moral and intellectual health! The discipline of the schools or of business can never impart such serenity to the mind. The philosopher contemplates human affairs as calmly and from as great a remoteness as he does natural phenomena. The ethical philosopher needs the discipline of the natural philosopher. He approaches the study of mankind with great advantages who is accustomed to the study of nature.

The Brahman Saradwata, says the Dharma Sacontala, was at first confounded on entering the city, “but now,” says he, “I look on it as the freeman on the captive, as a man just bathed in pure water on a man smeared with oil and dust.”

*May 10.* Heard the snipe over the meadows this evening.

*May 12.* Heard the golden robin and the bobolink.

But where she has her seat, — whether in Westford or in Boxboro, — not even the assessors know. Inquire perchance of that dusky family on the cross-road, which is said to have Indian blood in their veins. Or perchance where this old cellar-hole now grassed over is faintly

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 235, 236; Riv. 288, 289.]

visible, Nature once had her dwelling. Ask the crazy old woman who brings huckleberries to the village, but who lives nobody knows where.

If I have got false teeth, I trust that I have not got a false conscience. It is safer to employ the dentist than the priest to repair the deficiencies of nature.

By taking the ether the other day I was convinced how far asunder a man could be separated from his senses. You are told that it will make you unconscious, but no one can imagine what it is to be unconscious — how far removed from the state of consciousness and all that we call “this world” — until he has experienced it. The value of the experiment is that it does give you experience of an interval as between one life and another, — a greater space than you ever travelled. You are a sane mind without organs, — groping for organs, — which if it did not soon recover its old senses would get new ones. You expand like a seed in the ground. You exist in your roots, like a tree in the winter. If you have an inclination to travel, take the ether; you go beyond the furthest star.

It is not necessary for them to take ether, who in their sane and waking hours are ever translated by a thought; nor for them to see with their hindheads, who sometimes see from their foreheads; nor listen to the spiritual knockings, who attend to the intimations of reason and conscience.

May 16. Heard the whip-poor-will this evening. A splendid full moon to-night. Walked from 6.30 to

10 P. M. Lay on a rock near a meadow, which had absorbed and retained much heat, so that I could warm my back on it, it being a cold night. I found that the side of the sand-hill was cold on the surface, but warm two or three inches beneath.<sup>1</sup>

If there is a more splendid moonlight than usual, only the belated traveller observes it. When I am outside, on the outskirts of the town, enjoying the still majesty of the moon, I am wont to think that all men are aware of this miracle, that they too are silently worshipping this manifestation of divinity elsewhere. But when I go into the house I am undeceived; they are absorbed in checkers or chess or novel, though they may have been advertised of the brightness through the shutters.

In the moonlight night what intervals are created! The rising moon is related to the near pine tree which rises above the forest, and we get a juster notion of distance. The moon is only somewhat further off and on one side. There may be only three objects, — myself, a pine tree, and the moon, nearly equidistant.

Talk of demonstrating the rotation of the earth on its axis, — see the moon rise, or the sun!

The moonlight reveals the beauty of trees. By day it is so light and in this climate so *cold* commonly, that we do not perceive their shade. We do not know when we are beneath them.

According to Michaux, the canoe birch (*Betula papyracea*) ceases below the forty-third degree of latitude. Sections of the wood from just below the first

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 328; Riv. 403.]

ramification are used to inlay mahogany, in these parts. It is brought from Maine for fuel.

Common white birch (*B. populifolia*) not found south of Virginia. Its epidermis incapable of being divided like the canoe birch and the European white.

The common alder (*Alnus serrulata*) blooms in January.

The locust (*Robinia Pseudacacia*) was one of the earliest trees introduced into Europe from America (by one Robin, about 1601); now extensively propagated in England, France, and Germany. Used for trunnels to the exclusion of all others in the Middle and Southern States. Instead of decaying, acquire hardness with time.

May 18. Sunday. Lady's-slipper almost fully blossomed. The log of a canoe birch on Fair Haven, cut down the last winter, more than a foot in diameter at the stump; one foot in diameter at ten feet from the ground. I observed that all parts of the epidermis exposed to the air and light were white, but the inner surfaces, freshly exposed, were a buff or salmon-color. Sinclair says that in winter it is white throughout. But this was cut before the sap flowed ??? Was there any sap in the log? I counted about fifty rings. The shrub oaks are now blossoming. The scarlet tanagers are come. The oak leaves of all colors are just expanding, and are more beautiful than most flowers. The hickory buds are almost leaves. The landscape has a new life and light infused into it. The deciduous trees are springing, to countenance the pines, which are evergreen. It seems to take but one summer day to fetch the summer in. The turning-point between

winter and summer is reached. The birds are in full blast. There is a peculiar freshness about the landscape; you scent the fragrance of new leaves, of hickory and sassafras, etc. And to the eye the forest presents the tenderest green. The blooming of the apple trees is becoming general.

I think that I have made out two kinds of poplar, — the *Populus tremuloides*, or American aspen, and the *P. grandidentata*, or large American aspen, whose young leaves are downy.

Michaux says that the locust begins to convert its sap into perfect wood from the third year; which is not done by the oak, the chestnut, the beech, and the elm till after the tenth or the fifteenth year.

He quotes the saying, "The foot of the owner is the best manure for his land." "He" is Augustus L. Hillhouse, who writes the account of the olive at the request of Michaux.

The elder Michaux found the balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*) very abundant on Lake St. John and the Saguenay River, where it is eighty feet high and three feet in diameter. This, however, is distinct from the *P. candicans*, heart-leaved balsam poplar, which M. finds hereabouts, though never in the woods, and does not know where it came from.

He praises the Lombardy poplar because, its limbs being compressed about the trunk, it does not interfere with the walls of a house nor obstruct the windows.

No wood equal to our black ash for oars, so pliant and

elastic and strong, second only to hickory for hand-spiques; used also for chair-bottoms and riddles.

The French call the nettle-tree *bois inconnu*.

Our white elm (*Ulmus Americana*) "the most magnificent vegetable of the temperate zone."

The *Pinus mitis*, yellow pine, or spruce pine, or short-leaved pine. A two-leaved pine widely diffused, but not found northward beyond certain districts of Connecticut and Massachusetts. In New Jersey fifty or sixty feet high and fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter. Sometimes three leaves on fresh shoots; smallest of pine cones; seeds cast first year. Very excellent wood for houses, masts, decks, yards, beams, and cabins, next in durability to the long-leaved pine. Called at Liverpool New York pine. Its regular branches make it to be called spruce pine sometimes.

*Pinus australis*, or long-leaved pine, an invaluable tree, called yellow pine, pitch pine, and broom pine where it grows; in the North, Southern pine and red pine; in England, Georgia pitch pine. First appears at Norfolk, Virginia; thence stretches six hundred miles southwest. Sixty or seventy feet high, by fifteen to eighteen inches; leaves a foot long, three in a sheath; negroes use them for brooms. Being stronger, more compact and durable, because the resin is equally distributed, and also fine-grained and susceptible of a bright polish, it is preferred to every other pine. In naval architecture, most esteemed of all pines, — keels, beams, side-planks, trunnels, etc. For decks preferred to yellow pine, — and flooring houses. Sold for more at Liverpool than any other pine. Moreover it supplies

nearly all the resinous matter used and exported. Others which contain much pitch are more dispersed. At present (1819) this business is confined to North Carolina.

M. says the branches of resinous trees consist almost wholly of *wood*, of which the organization is even more perfect than in the body of the tree. They use dead wood for the tar, etc., in which it has accumulated.

Says the vicinity of Brunswick, Me., and Burlington, Vt., are the most northerly limits of the pitch pine or *P. rigida*. (I saw what I should have called a pitch pine at Montmorency.)

White pine (*P. Strobus*) most abundant between forty-third and forty-seventh degrees, one hundred and eighty feet by seven and eight twelfths the largest. "The loftiest and most valuable" of the productions of the New Hampshire forest.

The black spruce is called *épinette noire* and *épinette à la bière* in Canada. From its strength best substitute for oak and larch. Used here for rafters and preferred to hemlock; tougher than white pine, but more liable to crack.

The white spruce (*Abies alba*) called *épinette blanche* in Canada. Not so large as the last and wood inferior.

Hemlock spruce (*Abies Canadensis*) called *pérusse* in Canada. In Maine, Vermont, and upper New Hampshire, three fourths of the evergreen woods, the rest being black spruce. Belongs to cold regions; begins to appear about Hudson's Bay. Its fibre makes the circuit of stocks fifteen or twenty inches in diameter in ascending five or six feet. Old trees have their circles separated, and the boards are *shaky*. Decays

rapidly when exposed to the air. It is firmer, though coarser, than the white pine; affords tighter hold to nails. Used in Maine for threshing-floors, resisting indentation. Most common use sheathing of houses, to be covered with clapboards. Used for laths.

White cedar (*Cupressus thyoides*). "The perfect wood resists the succession of dryness and moisture longer than that of any other species;" hence for shingles.

Larch (*Larix Americana*); in Canada *épinette rouge*; *tamarack* by the Dutch. Male aments appear before the leaves. Wood superior to any pine or spruce in strength and durability. Used in Maine for knees.

Cedar of Lebanon (*Larix cedrus*) largest and most majestic of resinous trees of the Old World and one of the finest vegetable productions of the globe.

Cedar Island in Lake Champlain northern limit of red cedar (*Juniperus Virginiana*). Eastward, not beyond Wiscasset. Seeds mature at beginning of fall and *sown at once*; shoot next spring. Gin made from them.

Arbor-vitæ (*Thuja occidentalis*), the only species of *Thuja* in the New World. Lake St. John in Canada its northern limit; abounds between 48° 50' and 45°. The posts last thirty-five or forty years, and the rails sixty, or three or four times as long as those of any other species. In northern New England States the best for fences; last longer in clay than sand.

The superiority of mahogany in the fineness of its grain and its hardness, which make it susceptible of a brilliant polish. Native trees in Northern States used in cabinet making are black, yellow, and canoe birches,

red-flowering curled maple, bird's-eye maple, wild cherry, and sumach.

The circle[s] of peck and other measures made at Hingham of black, red, or gray oak are "always of a dull blue color, produced by the gallic acid of the wood acting upon the iron vessel in which it is boiled."

White ash used for sieve rims, rake heads and handles, scythe handles, pulleys, etc. Rake teeth of the mockernut hickory.

In New York and Philadelphia "the price [of wood for fuel]<sup>1</sup> nearly equals and sometimes exceeds that of the best wood in Paris, though this immense capital annually requires more than 300,000 cords, and is surrounded to the distance of 300 miles by cultivated plains." Said in book of 1819.

May 19. Found the *Arum triphyllum* and the nodding trillium, or wake-robin, in Conant's Swamp. An ash also in bloom there, and the sassafras quite striking. Also the fringed polygala by Conantum wood.

Sinclair says the hornbeam is called "swamp beech" in Vermont.

May 20. Tuesday. There is, no doubt, a perfect analogy between the life of the human being and that of the vegetable, both of the body and the mind. The botanist Gray says:—

"The organs of plants are of two sorts:— 1. Those of *Vegetation*, which are concerned in growth,— by

<sup>1</sup> [Supplied by Thoreau.]

which the plant takes in the ærial and earthy matters on which it lives, and elaborates them into the materials of its own organized substance; 2. Those of *Fructification* or *Reproduction*, which are concerned with the propagation of the species."

So is it with the human being. I am concerned first to come to my *Growth*, intellectually and morally (and physically, of course, as a means to this, for the body is the symbol of the soul), and then to bear my *Fruit*, do my *Work*, *propagate* my kind, not only physically but *morally*, not only in body but in mind.

"The organs of vegetation are the *Root*, *Stem*, and *Leaves*. The *Stem* is the axis and original basis of the plant."

"The first point of the stem preëxists in the embryo (*i. e.* in the rudimentary plantlet contained within the seed): it is here called the radicle." Such is the rudiment of mind, already partially developed, more than a bud, but pale, having never been exposed to the light, and slumbering coiled up, packed away in the seed, unfolded [*sic*].

Consider the still pale, rudimentary, infantine, radicle-like thoughts of some students, which who knows what they might expand to, if they should ever come to the light and air, if they do not become rancid and perish in the seed. It is not every seed that will survive a thousand years. Other thoughts further developed, but yet pale and languid, like shoots grown in a cellar.

"The plant . . . develops from the first in two opposite directions, *viz.* upwards [to expand in the light and air] to produce and continue the stem (or

*ascending axis*), and downwards [avoiding the light]<sup>1</sup> to form the root (or *descending axis*). The former is ordinarily or in great part ærial, the latter subterranean."

So the mind develops from the first in two opposite directions: upwards to expand in the light and air; and downwards avoiding the light to form the root. One half is ærial, the other subterranean. The mind is not well balanced and firmly planted, like the oak, which has not as much root as branch, whose roots like those of the white pine are slight and near the surface. One half of the mind's development must still be root, — in the embryonic state, in the womb of nature, more unborn than at first. For each successive new idea or bud, a new rootlet in the earth. The growing man penetrates yet deeper by his roots into the womb of things. The infant is comparatively near the surface, just covered from the light; but the man sends down a tap-root to the centre of things.

The mere logician, the mere reasoner, who weaves his arguments as a tree its branches in the sky, — nothing equally developed in the roots, — is overthrown by the first wind.

As with the roots of the plant, so with the roots of the mind, the branches and branchlets of the root "are mere repetitions for the purpose of multiplying the absorbing points, which are chiefly the growing or newly formed extremities, sometimes termed *spongelets*. It bears no other organs."

So this organ of the mind's development, the *Root*, bears no organs but spongelets or absorbing points.

<sup>1</sup> [The bracketed portions in both cases are Thoreau's.]

Annuals, which perish root and all the first season, especially have slender and thread-like fibrous roots. But biennials are particularly characterized by distended, fleshy roots containing starch, a stock for future growth, to be consumed during their second or flowering season, — as carrots, radishes, turnips. Perennials frequently have many thickened roots clustered together, tuberous or palmate roots, fasciculated or clustered as in the dahlia, pæony, etc.

Roots may spring from any part of the stem under favorable circumstances; “that is to say in darkness and moisture, as when covered by the soil or resting on its surface.”

That is, the most clear and ethereal ideas (Antæus-like) readily ally themselves to the earth, to the primal womb of things. They put forth roots as soon as branches; they are eager to be *soiled*. No thought soars so high that it sunders these apron-strings of its mother. The thought that comes to light, that pierces the empyrean on the other side, is wombed and rooted in darkness, a moist and fertile darkness, — its roots in Hades like the tree of life. No idea is so soaring but it will readily put forth roots. Wherever there is an air-and-light-seeking bud about to expand, it may become in the earth a darkness-seeking root. Even swallows and birds-of-paradise *can* walk on the ground. To quote the sentence from Gray entire: “Roots not only spring from the root-end of the primary stem in germination, but also from any subsequent part of the stem under favorable circumstances, that is to say, in darkness and moisture, as when covered by the soil or resting on its surface.”

No thought but is connected as strictly as a flower, with the earth. The mind flashes not so far on one side but its rootlets, its spongelets, find their way instantly on the other side into a moist darkness, uterine, — a low bottom in the heavens, even miasma-exhaling to such immigrants as are not acclimated. A cloud is uplifted to sustain its roots. Imbosomed in clouds as in a chariot, the mind drives through the boundless fields of space. Even there is the dwelling of Indra.

I might here quote the following, with the last — of roots: “They may even strike in the open air and light, as is seen in the copious aerial rootlets by which the Ivy, the Poison Ivy, and the Trumpet Creeper climb and adhere to the trunks of trees or other bodies; and also in Epiphytes or Air-plants, of most warm regions, which have no connection whatever with the soil, but germinate and grow high in air on the trunks or branches of trees, etc.; as well as in some terrestrial plants, such as the Banian and Mangrove, that send off aerial roots from their trunks or branches, which finally reach the ground.”

So, if our light-and-air-seeking tendencies extend too widely for our original root or stem, we must send downward new roots to ally us to the earth.

Also there are parasitic plants which have their roots in the branches or roots of other trees, as the mistletoe, the beech-drops, etc. There are minds which so have their roots in other minds as in the womb of nature, — if, indeed, most are not such?!

May 21. *Wednesday*. Yesterday I made out the black

and the white ashes. A double male white ash in Miles's Swamp, and two black ashes with sessile leaflets. A female white ash near railroad, in Stow's land. The white ashes by Mr. Pritchard's have no blossoms, at least as yet.

If I am right, the *black* ash is improperly so called, from the color of its bark being lighter than the white. Though it answers to the description in other respects, even to the elder-like odor of the leaves, I should like still to see a description of the yellow ash which grows in made [*sic*].

The day before yesterday I found the male sassafras in abundance but no female.

The leaves of my new pine on Merriam's or Pine Hill are of intermediate length between those of the yellow pine and the Norway pine. I can find no cone to distinguish the tree by; but, as the leaves are *semicylindrical* and not *hollowed* I think it must be the red or Norway Pine, though it does not look very red, and is *spruce*! answering perhaps to the description of the yellow pine, which is sometimes called spruce pine.

To-day examined the flowers of the *Nemopanthes Canadensis*, — a genus of a single species, says Emerson. It bears the beautiful crimson velvety berry of the swamps, and is what I have heard called the cornel. Common name wild holly.

I have heard now within a few days that peculiar dreaming sound of the frogs<sup>1</sup> which belongs to the summer, — their midsummer night's dream.

<sup>1</sup> [Toads. See p. 250.]

Only that thought and that expression are good which are musical.

I think that we are not commonly aware that man is our contemporary, — that in this strange, outlandish world, so barren, so prosaic, fit not to live in but merely to pass through, that even here so divine a creature as man does actually live. Man, the crowning fact, the god we know. While the earth supports so rare an inhabitant, there is somewhat to cheer us. Who shall say that there is no God, if there is a *just* man. It is only within a year that it has occurred to me that there is such a being actually existing on the globe. Now that I perceive that it is so, many questions assume a new aspect. We have not only the idea and vision of the divine ourselves, but we have brothers, it seems, who have this idea also. Methinks my neighbor is better than I, and his thought is better than mine. There is a representative of the divinity on earth, of [whom] all things fair and noble are to be expected. We have the material of heaven here. I think that the standing miracle to man is man. Behind the paling yonder, come rain or shine, hope or doubt, there dwells a man, an actual being who can sympathize with our sublimest thoughts.

The revelations of nature are infinitely glorious and cheering, hinting to us of a remote future, of possibilities untold; but startlingly near to us some day we find a fellow-man.

The frog had eyed the heavens from his marsh, until his mind was filled with visions, and he saw more than belongs to this fenny earth. He mistrusted that he was become a dreamer and visionary. Leaping across the

swamp to his fellow, what was his joy and consolation to find that he too had seen the same sights in the heavens, he too had dreamed the same dreams!

From nature we turn astonished to this *near* but supernatural fact.

I think that the existence of man in nature is the divinest and most startling of all facts. It is a fact which few have realized.

I can go to my neighbors and meet on ground as elevated as we could expect to meet upon if we were now in heaven.

“And we live,

We of this mortal mixture, in the same law

As the pure colorless intelligence

Which dwells in Heaven, and the dead Hadean shades.”

I do not think that man can understand the *importance* of man's existence, its bearing on the other phenomena of life, until it shall become a remembrance to him the survivor that such a being or such a race once existed on the earth. Imagine yourself alone in the world, a musing, wondering, reflecting spirit, *lost* in thought, and imagine thereafter the creation of man!—man made in the image of God!

Looking into a book on dentistry the other day, I observed a list of authors who had written on this subject. There were Ran and Tan and Yungerman, and I was impressed by the fact that there was nothing in a name. It was as if they had been named by the child's rigma-role of *Iery* [*wicry*] *ichery van, tittle-tol-tan*, etc. I saw in my mind a herd of wild creatures swarming over the earth, and to each one its own herdsman had affixed

some barbarous name, or sound, or syllables, in his own dialect, — so in a thousand languages. Their names were seen to be as meaningless exactly as Bose or Tray, the names of dogs.<sup>1</sup> Men get named no better.

We seem to be distinct ourselves, never repeated, and yet we bear no names which express a proportionate distinctness; they are quite accidental. Take away their names, and you leave men a wild herd, distinguished only by their individual qualities. It is as if you were to give names in the Caffre dialect to the individuals in a herd of spring-boks or gnus.

We have but few patronymics, but few Christian names, in proportion to the number of us. Is it that men ceased to be original when genuine and original names ceased to be given. Have we not enough character to establish a new patronymic.

Methinks it would be some advantage to philosophy if men were *named* merely in the gross, as they are known. It would only be necessary to know the genus and, perchance, the species and variety, to know the individual.

I will not allow *mere names* to make distinctions for me, but still see men in herds for all *them*. A familiar name cannot make a man less strange to me. It may be given to a savage who retains in secret his own wild title earned in the woods. I see that the neighbor who wears the familiar epithet of William or Edwin takes it off with his jacket. It does not adhere to him when asleep or when in anger, or aroused by any passion or inspiration. I seem to hear pronounced by some of his

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 236; Riv. 289.]

kin at such a time his original wild name in some jaw-breaking or else melodious tongue. As the names of the Poles and Russians are to us, so are ours to them.

Our names are as cheap as the names given to dogs. We know what are dogs' names; we know what are men's names. Sometimes it would be significant and truer, it would lead to generalization, it would avoid exaggeration, to say, "*There was a man* who said or did —," instead of designating him by some familiar, but perchance delusive, name.

We hardly believe that every private soldier in a Roman army had a name of his own.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to see how the names of famous men are repeated, — even of great poets and philosophers. The poet is not known to-day even by his neighbors to be more than a common man. He is perchance the butt of many. The proud farmer looks down [on] and boorishly ignores him, or regards him as a loafer who treads down his grass, but perchance in course of time the poet will have so succeeded that some of the farmer's posterity, though equally boorish with their ancestor, will bear the poet's name. The boor names his boy Homer, and so succumbs unknowingly to the bard's victorious fame. Anything so fine as poetic genius he cannot more directly recognize. The unpoetic farmer names his child Homer.

You have a wild savage in you, and a savage name is perchance somewhere recorded as yours.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 236, 237; Riv. 289-291.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 237; Riv. 290.]

*May 23. Friday.* And wilder still there grows elsewhere, I hear, a native and aboriginal crab-apple, *Malus* (as Michaux, or, as Emerson has it, *Pyrus*) *coronaria* in Southern States, and also *angustifolia* in the Middle States; whose young leaves "have a bitter and slightly aromatic taste" (Michaux), whose beautiful flowers perfume the air to a great distance. "The apples . . . are small, green, intensely acid, and very odoriferous. Some farmers make cider of them, which is said to be excellent: they make very fine sweet-meats also, by the addition of a large quantity of sugar" (Michaux). Celebrated for "the beauty of its flowers, and for the sweetness of its perfume" (Michaux).<sup>1</sup>

Michaux says that the wild apple of Europe has yielded to cultivation nearly three hundred species in France alone. Emerson says, referring to Loudon, "In 1836, the catalogue and the gardens of the London Horticultural Society contained upwards of 1400 distinct sorts, and new ones are every year added."

But here are species which they have not in their catalogue, not to mention the varieties which the crab might yield to cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

This genus, so kind to the human race, the *Malus* or *Pyrus*; *Rosaceæ* the family, or others say *Pomaceæ*. Its flowers are perhaps the most beautiful of any tree. I am frequently compelled to turn and linger by some more than usually beautiful two-thirds-expanded blossoms.<sup>3</sup> If such were not so common, its fame would be

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 301; Riv. 370.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 316; Riv. 388.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 294; Riv. 361.]

loud as well as wide. Its most copious and delicious blossoms.

But our wild apple is wild perchance like myself, who belong not to the aboriginal race here, but have strayed into the woods from the cultivated stock,<sup>1</sup>—where the birds, where winged thoughts or agents, have planted or are planting me. Even these at length furnish hardy stocks for the orchard.

You might call one *Malus oculata*; another *M. Iridis*; *M. cum parvuli dæmonis oculis*, or Imp-eyed; Blue-Jay Apple, or *M. corvi cristati*; Wood-Dell Apple (*M. silvestri-vallis*); Field-Dell Apple (*M. campestri-vallis*); Meadow Apple (*M. pratensis*); Rock Meadow Apple (*saxopratenensis*); Partridge or Grouse Apple or bud [*sic*]; Apple of the Hesperides (*Malus Hesperidum*); Woodside Apple; Wood Apple (*M. silvatica*); the Truant's Apple (*M. cessatoris*); Saunterer's Apple (*M. erronis vel vagabundi*); the Wayside Apple (*M. trivialis*); Beauty of the Air (*decus aëris*); December-eating; Frozen-thawed (*gelato-soluta* or *gelata regelata*); the Concord Apple (*M. Concordiensis*); the Brindled Apple; Wine of New England (*M. vinosa*); the Chickaree Apple; the Green Apple (*M. viridis*); the Dysentery or Cholera-morbus Apple.<sup>2</sup>

Distinctly related things are strangely near in *fact*, brush one another with their jackets. Perchance this window-seat in which we sit discoursing Transcendentalism, with only Germany and Greece stretching behind our minds, was made so deep because this was a few

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 301; Riv. 369.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 316; Riv. 388, 389.]

years ago a garrison-house, with thick log walls, bullet-proof, behind which men sat to escape the wild red man's bullet and the arrow and the tomahawk, and bullets fired by Indians are now buried in its walls. Pythagoras seems near compared with them.

*May 24. Saturday.* Our most glorious experiences are a kind of regret. Our regret is so sublime that we may mistake it for triumph. It is the painful, plaintively sad surprise of our Genius remembering our past lives and contemplating what is possible. It is remarkable that men commonly never refer to, never hint at, any crowning experiences when the common laws of their being were unsettled and the divine and eternal laws prevailed in them. Their lives are not revolutionary; they never recognize any other than the local and temporal authorities. It is a regret so divine and inspiring, so genuine, based on so true and distinct a contrast, that it surpasses our proudest boasts and the fairest expectations.

My most sacred and memorable life is commonly on awaking in the morning. I frequently awake with an atmosphere about me as if my unremembered dreams had been divine, as if my spirit had journeyed to its native place, and, in the act of reëntering its native body, had diffused an elysian fragrance around.

The Genius says: "Ah! That is what you were! That is what you may yet be!" It is glorious for us to be able to regret even such an existence.

A sane and growing man revolutionizes every day. What institutions of man can survive a morning experi-

ence? A single night's sleep, if we have indeed slumbered and forgotten anything and grown in our sleep, puts them behind us like the river Lethe. It is no unusual thing for him to see the kingdoms of this world pass away.<sup>1</sup>

It is an interesting inquiry to seek for the medicines which will cure our ails in the plants which grow around us. At first we are not disposed to believe that man and plants are so intimately related. Very few plants have been medically examined. And yet this is the extent of most men's botany; and it is more extensive than would at first be supposed. The botanist is startled by some countryman's familiarity with an obscure plant to him rare and strange. He, who has been an observer for some years, knows not what it is, but the unobserving countryman, who sees nothing but what is thrust upon him, or the old woman who rarely goes out of the house, shows an easy familiarity with it and can call it by name.

I am struck by the fact that, though any important individual experience is rare, though it is so rare that the individual is conscious of a relation to his maker transcending time and space and earth, though any knowledge of, or communication from, "Providence" is the rarest thing in the world, yet men very easily, regarding themselves in the gross, speak of carrying out the designs of Providence as nations. How often the Saxon man talks of carrying out the designs of Providence, as if he had some knowledge of Providence

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* [p. 286].

and His designs. Men allow themselves to associate Providence and designs of Providence with their dull, prosaic, every-day thoughts of things. That language is usurped by the stalest and deadest prose, which can only report the most choice poetic experience. This "Providence" is the stalest jest in the universe. The office-boy sweeps out his office "by the leave of Providence."

*May 25.* A fine, freshening air, a little hazy, that bathes and washes everything, saving the day from extreme heat. Walked to the hills south of Wayland by the road by Deacon Farrar's. First vista just beyond Merron's (?), looking west down a valley, with a verdant-columned elm at the extremity of the vale and the blue hills and horizon beyond. These are the resting-places in a walk. We love to see any part of the earth tinged with blue, cerulean, the color of the sky, the celestial color. I wonder that houses are not oftener located mainly that they may command particular rare prospects, every convenience yielding to this. The farmer would never suspect what it was you were buying, and such sites would be the cheapest of any. A site where you might avail yourself of the art of Nature for three thousand years, which could never be materially changed or taken from you, a noble inheritance for your children. The true sites for human dwellings are unimproved. They command no price in the market. Men will pay something to look into a travelling showman's box, but not to look upon the fairest prospects on the earth. A vista where you have the near green horizon contrasted with

the distant blue one, terrestrial with celestial earth. The prospect of a vast horizon must be accessible in our neighborhood. Where men of enlarged views may be educated. An unchangeable kind of wealth, a *real* estate.

There we found the celandine in blossom and the *Ranunculus bulbosus*, which we afterwards saw *double* in Wayland, having nine petals.

The *Pyrus arbutifolia*, variety *melanocarpa*. Gray makes also the variety *erythrocarpa*. Is this the late red choke-berry of the swamps? and is the former the earlier black one of the swamps?

By Farrar's the *Nepeta Glechoma*, a kind of mint. Linnæus calls it *Glechoma hederacea*. Looks somewhat like catnep.

The marsh-marigold, *Caltha palustris*, improperly called cowslip.

The white oak, *Quercus alba*. And the commonest scrub oak, the bear or black oak, *Q. ilicifolia*.

The chinquapin, or dwarf chestnut, oak, the smallest of our oaks, *Q. prinoides*.

The *Cratægus coccinea* (?), or scarlet-fruited thorn (?)

Another glorious vista with a wide horizon at the yellow Dutch house, just over the Wayland line, by the black spruce, heavy and dark as night, which we could see two or three miles as a landmark. Now at least, before the deciduous trees have fully expanded their leaves, it is remarkably black. It is more stoutly and irregularly branched than Holbrook's spruces — has a much darker foliage; but the cone scales of both are slightly waved or notched. Are they, then, both

black spruce? The cones are enough like, and the thickness of the leaves; their color enough unlike. Here is a view of the Jenkins house, the fish-pole house, and Wachusett beyond.

Noticed what I think must be a young poison sumach<sup>1</sup> abundant by the roadside in woods, with last year's berries, with small greenish-yellow flowers, but leaves not pinnatifid, three together; from one to two feet high. What is it?

*Alnus serrulata*, the common alder, with a grayish stem, leaves smooth on both sides.

*Alnus incana*, the speckled alder, downy on under side of leaves.

The hard-berried plant seems to be *Andromeda ligustrina* (?) of Gray, *A. paniculata* of Bigelow, *Lyonia paniculata* of Emerson.

Thyme-leaved veronica, little bluish-white, streak-petalled flower by road sides. *Silene Pennsylvanica*.

What is the orange-yellow aster-like flower of the meadows now in blossom with a sweet-smelling stem when bruised?<sup>2</sup>

What the delicate pinkish and yellowish flower with hoary-green stem and leaves, of rocky hills.<sup>3</sup>

Saw Bunker Hill Monument and Charlestown from the Wayland hills, and across the valleys to Milton Hill.<sup>4</sup> Westward, or west by south, an island in a pond or in the river (!which see!) A grand horizon. Probably saw the elm between Wayland and Weston which is seen so

<sup>1</sup> Ivy?

<sup>2</sup> Golden senecio.

<sup>3</sup> Corydalis.

<sup>4</sup> [Doubtless Blue Hill is meant, not the lower eminence known as Milton Hill.]

far in the horizon from the northwest part of Sudbury. A good, a rare place this must be to view the Sudbury or Wayland meadows a little earlier.

Came back across lots to the black spruce.

Now, at 8.30 o'clock P. M., I hear the dreaming of the frogs.<sup>1</sup> So it seems to me, and so significantly passes my life away. It is like the dreaming of frogs in a summer evening.

*May 27.* I saw an organ-grinder this morning before a rich man's house, thrilling the street with harmony, loosening the very paving-stones and tearing the routine of life to rags and tatters, when the lady of the house shoved up a window and in a semiphilanthropic tone inquired if he wanted anything to eat. But he, very properly it seemed to me, kept on grinding and paid no attention to her question, feeding her ears with melody unasked for. So the world shoves up its window and interrogates the poet, and sets him to gauging ale casks in return. It seemed to me that the music suggested that the recompense should be as fine as the gift. It would be much nobler to enjoy the music, though you paid no money for it, than to presume always a beggarly relation. It is after all, perhaps, the best instrumental music that we have.

*May 28.* The trees now begin to shade the streets. When the sun gets high in the sky the trees give shade. With oppressive heats come refreshing shadows.

The buttercups spot the churchyard.

<sup>1</sup> [Toads. See p. 250.]

*May 29.* It is evident that the virtues of plants are almost completely unknown to us, and we esteem the few with which we are better acquainted unreasonably above the many which are comparatively unknown to us. Bigelow says: "It is a subject of some curiosity to consider, if the knowledge of the present *Materia Medica* were by any means to be lost, how many of the same articles would again rise into notice and use. Doubtless a variety of new substances would develop unexpected powers, while perhaps the poppy would be shunned as a deleterious plant, and the cinchona might grow unmolested upon the mountains of Quito." Sawyer regards *Nux vomica* among the most valuable. B. says (1817): "We have yet to discover our anodynes and our emetics, although we abound in bitters, astringents, aromatics, and demulcents. In the present state of our knowledge we could not well dispense with opium and ipecacuanha, yet a great number of foreign drugs, such as gentian, columbo, chamomile, kino, catechu, cascarilla, canella, etc., for which we pay a large annual tax to other countries, might in all probability be superseded by the indigenous products of our own. It is certainly better that our own country people should have the benefit of collecting such articles, than that we should pay for them to the Moors of Africa, or the Indians of Brazil."

The thorn-apple (*Datura Stramonium*) (apple of Peru, devil's-apple, Jamestown-weed) "emigrates with great facility, and often springs up in the ballast of ships, and in earth carried from one country to another." It secretes itself in the hold of vessels and migrates. It

is a sort of cosmopolitan weed, a roving weed. What adventures! What historian knows when first it came into a country! He quotes Beverly's "History of Virginia" as saying that some soldiers in the days of Bacon's rebellion, having eaten some of this plant, which was boiled for salad by mistake, were made natural fools and buffoons by it for eleven days, without injury to their bodies (? ?).

The root of a biennial or perennial will accumulate the virtues of the plant more than any other part.

B. says that Pursh states that the sweet-scented goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) "has for some time [*i. e.* before 1817]<sup>1</sup> been an article of exportation to China, where it fetches a high price." And yet it is known to very few New-Englanders.

"No botanist," says B., "even if in danger of starving in a wilderness, would indulge his hunger on a root or fruit taken from an unknown plant of the natural order *Lurida*, of the *Multisiliqua*, or the *umbelliferous aquatics*. On the contrary he would not feel a moment's hesitation in regard to any of the *Gramina*, the fruit of the *Pomaceae*, and several other natural families of plants, which are known to be uniformly innocent in their effects."

The aromatic flavor of the checkerberry is also perceived in the *Gaultheria hispidula*, in *Spiraea ulmaria* and the root of *Spiraea lobata*, and in the birches.

He says ginseng, spigelia, snake-root, etc., form considerable articles of exportation.

The odor of skunk-cabbage is perceived in some

<sup>1</sup> [Supplied by Thoreau.]

North American currants, as *Ribes rigens* of Michaux on high mountains.

At one time the Indians about Quebec and Montreal were so taken up with searching for ginseng that they could not be hired for any other purpose. It is said that both the Chinese and the Indians named this plant from its resemblance to the figure of a man.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians use the bark of *Dirca palustris*, or leather-wood, for their cordage. It was after the long-continued search of many generations that these qualities were discovered.

Of tobacco (*Nicotiana Tabacum*) B. says, after speaking of its poisonous qualities: "Yet the first person who had courage and patience enough to persevere in its use, until habit had overcome his original disgust, eventually found in it a pleasing sedative, a soother of care, and a material addition to the pleasures of life. Its use, which originated among savages, has spread into every civilized country; it has made its way against the declamations of the learned, and the prohibitions of civil and religious authority, and it now gives rise to an extensive branch of agriculture, or of commerce, in every part of the globe." Soon after its introduction into Europe, "the rich indulged in it as a luxury of the highest kind; and the poor gave themselves up to it, as a solace for the miseries of life." Several varieties are cultivated.

In return for many foreign weeds, we have sent abroad, says B., "the *Erigeron Canadensis* and the prolific families of *Ambrosia* and *Amaranthus*."

<sup>1</sup> Bigelow got this from Kalm. *Vide* extract from Kalm.

"The Indians were acquainted with the medicinal properties of more than one species of Euphorbia."

I noticed the button-bush, May 25th, around an elevated pond or mud-hole, its leaves just beginning to expand. This slight amount of green contrasted with its dark, craggly [*sic*], naked-looking stem and branches — as if subsiding waters had left them bare — looked Dantesque and infernal. It is not a handsome bush at this season, it is so slow to put out its leaves and hide its naked and unsightly stems.

The *Andromeda ligustrina* is late to leave out.

*Malus excelsa*; *amara*; *florida*; *palustris*; *gratis-sima*; *ramosa*; *spinosa*; *ferruginea*; *aromatica*; *aurea*; *rubiginosa*; *odorata*; *tristis*; *officinalis*!! *herbacea*; *vulgaris*; *æstivalis*; *autumnalis*; *riparia*; *versicolor*; *communis*; *farinosa*; *super septa pendens*;<sup>1</sup> *Malus sepium*; *vinum Novæ-Angliæ*; *succosa*; *sæpe formicis præoccupata*; *vermiculosa aut verminosa aut a vermibus corrupta vel crosa*; *Malus semper virens et viridis*; *cholera-morbifera* or *dysenterifera*; *M. sylvestripaludosa, excelsa et ramosa superne, difficilis conscendere, (fructus difficillimus stringere, parvus et durus)*; *Cortex picis perforata* or *perterebata*; *rupestris*; *agrestis*; *arcensis*; *Assabettia*; *Railroad Apple*; *Musketaquidensis*; *Dew Apple (rorifera)*; the apple whose fruit we tasted in our youth which grows *passim et nusquam, (Malus cujus fructum ineunte atate gustavi quæ passim et nusquam viget)*; our own particular apple; *Malus nunquam legata vel stricta*; *cortice muscosà*; *Malus viæ-ferreæ*; *sylvatica in sylvis densissimis*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Parietes, scpes, sepimenta* [alternatives for *septa*].

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 316; Riv. 388, 389.]

May 30. *Friday*. There was a Concord man once who had a foxhound named Burgoyne. He called him Bugine. A good name.<sup>1</sup>

May 31. *Pedestrium solatium in apricis locis; nodosa*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 308; Riv. 432.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 316; Riv. 389.]