II

AUGUST, 1858

(ÆT. 41)

Aug. 1. P. M. — Up Assabet.

The radical or immersed leaves of the pontederia are linear and grass-like, and I see that I have mistaken them for vallisneria just springing from the bottom. The leaves of new plants are just reaching and leaving the surface now, like spoons on the end of long handles.

Edward Bartlett and another brought me a green bittern, this year's bird, apparently full grown but not full plumaged, which they caught near the pool on A. Heywood's land behind Sleepy Hollow. They caught it in the woods on the hillside. It had not yet acquired the long feathers of the neck. The neck was bent back on itself an inch or more, — that part being bare of feathers and covered by the long feathers from above, — so that it did not appear very long until stretched out. This doubling was the usual condition and not apparent, but could be felt by the hand. So the green bitterns are leaving the nest now.

Aug. 2. P. M. — Up Assabet.

Landed at the Bath-Place and walked the length of Shad-bush Meadow. I noticed meandering down that meadow, which is now quite dry, a very broad and distinct musquash-trail, where they went and came con-

tinually when it was wet or under water in the winter or spring. These trails are often nine or ten inches wide and half a dozen deep, passing under a root and the lowest overhanging shrubs, where they glided along on their bellies underneath everything. I traced one such trail forty rods, till it ended in a large cabin three feet high, with blueberry bushes springing still from the top; and other similar trails led off from it on opposite sides. Near the cabin they had burrowed or worn them out nine or ten inches deep, as if this now deserted castle had been a place of great resort. Their skins used to be worth fifty cents apiece.

I see there what I take to be a marsh hawk of this year, hunting by itself. It has not learned to be very shy yet, so that we repeatedly get near it. What a rich brown bird! almost, methinks, with purple reflections.

What I have called the *Panicum latifolium* has now its broad leaves, striped with red, abundant under Turtle Bank, above Bath-Place.

Aug. 3. Savory-leaved aster.

Aug. 5. *Thursday.* 9.30 A. M. — Up river to Pantry Brook.

It clears up this morning after several cool, cloudy, and rainy dog-days. The wind is westerly and will probably blow us part way back. The river is unusually full for the season, and now quite smooth. The pontederia is apparently in its prime; the button-bush perhaps a little past, the upper halves of its balls in the sun looking brown generally. The late rose is still conspicuous, in

clumps advanced into the meadow here and there. See the mikania only in one or two places beginning. The white lilies are less abundant than usual, methinks, perhaps on account of the high water. The water milkweed flower is an interesting red, here and there, like roses along the shore. The gratiola begins to yellow the shore in some places, and I notice the unobtrusive red of dense fields of stachys on the flat shores. The sium has begun to lift its umbels of white flowers above most other plants. The purple utricularia tinges the pools in many places, the most common of all its tribe.

The best show of lilies is on the west side of the bay, in Cyrus Hosmer's meadow, above the willow-row. Many of them are not open at 10 o'clock A. M. I noticed one with the sepals perfectly spread flat on the water, but the petals still held together in a sharp cone, being held by the concave, slightly hooked points. Touching this with an oar, it opens quickly with a spring. The same with many others, whose sepals were less spread. Under the influence of the light and warmth, the petals elevate or expand themselves in the middle, becoming more and more convex, till at last, being released at their overlapping points, they spring open and quickly spread themselves equally, revealing their yellow stamens. How satisfactory is the fragrance of this flower! It is the emblem of purity. It reminds me of a young country maiden. It is just so simple and unproved. Wholesome as the odor of the cow. It is not a highly refined odor, but merely a fresh youthful morning sweetness. It is merely the unalloyed sweetness of the earth and the water; a fair opportunity and field for

life; like its petals, uncolored by any experience; a simple maiden on her way to school, her face surrounded by a white ruff. But how quickly it becomes the prey of insects!

As we paddle slowly along the edge of the pads, we can see the weeds and the bottom distinctly in the sun, in this still August air, even five or six feet deep, — the countless utricularias, potamogetons, etc., etc., and hornwort standing erect with its reddish stems. Countless schools of little minnows of various species, chubby little breams not an inch long, and lighter-colored banded minnows are steadily passing, partly concealed by the pads, and ever and anon we see the dimple where some larger pickerel has darted away, for they lie just on the outer edge of the pads.

The foliage is apparently now in the height of its beauty, this wet year, now dense enough to hide the trunks and stems. The black willows are perhaps in their best condition, — airy, rounded masses of light green rising one above another, with a few slender black stems, like umbrella handles, seen here and there in their midst, low spreading cumuli of slender falcate leaves, buttressed by smaller sallows, button-bushes, cornels, and pontederias, — like long green clouds or wreaths of vapor resting on the riverside. They scarcely leave the impression of leaves, but rather of a low, swelling, rounded bank, even as the heaviest particles of alluvium are deposited nearest the channel. It is a peculiarity of this, which I think is our most interesting willow, that you rarely see the trunk and yet the foliage is never dense. They generally line one side of the river

only, and that is the meadow, a concave, passive, female side.[1] They resound still with the sprightly twitter of the kingbird, that aerial and spirited bird hovering over them, swallow-like, which loves best, methinks, to fly where the sky is reflected beneath him. Also now from time to time you hear the chattering of young blackbirds or the *link* of bobolinks there, or see the great bittern flap slowly away. The kingbird, by his activity and lively note and his white breast, keeps the air sweet. He sits now on a dead willow twig, akin to the flecks of mackerel sky, or its reflection in the water, or the white clamshell, wrong side out, opened by a musquash, or the fine particles of white quartz that may be found in the muddy river's sand. He is here to give a voice to all these. The willow's dead twig is aerial perch enough for him. Even the swallows deign to perch on it. These willows appear to grow best on elevated sand-bars or deep sandy banks, which the stream has brought down, leaving a little meadow behind them, at some bend, often mixed with sawdust from a mill. They root themselves firmly here, and spread entirely over the sand.

The rose, which grows along with the willows and button-bushes, has a late and rare look now.

From off Rainbow Rush Shore I pluck a lily more than five inches in diameter. Its sepals and petals are long and slender or narrow (others are often short, broad, and rounded); the thin white edges of the four sepals are, as usual, or often, tinged with red. There are some twenty-five petals in about four rows. Four alternate ones of the outmost row have a reddish or

[1] *Vide* Aug. 7th and 15th.

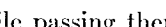
rosaceous line along the middle between the sepals, and both the sepals and the outmost row of petals have seven or eight parallel darkish lines from base to tip. As you look down on the lily, it is a pure white star centred with yellow, — with its short central anthers orange-yellow.

The *Scirpus lacustris* and rainbow rush are still in bloom and going to seed. The first is the tule of California.

Landed at Fair Haven Pond to smell the *Aster macrophyllus*. It has a slight fragrance, somewhat like that of the Maine and northern New Hampshire one. Why has it no more in this latitude? When I first plucked it on Webster Stream I did not know but it was some fragrant garden herb. Here I can detect some faint relationship only by perseveringly smelling it.

The purple utricularia is *the* flower of the river to-day, apparently in its prime. It is very abundant, far more than any other utricularia, especially from Fair Haven Pond upward. That peculiar little bay in the pads, just below the inlet of the river, I will call Purple Utricularia Bay, from its prevalence there. I count a dozen within a square foot, one or two inches above the water, and they tinge the pads with purple for more than a dozen rods. I can distinguish their color thus far. The buds are the darkest or deepest purple. Methinks it is more abundant than usual this year.

I notice a commotion in the pads there, as of a musquash making its way along, close beneath the surface, and at its usual rate, when suddenly a snapping turtle puts its snout out, only up to the eyes. It

looks exactly like a sharp stake with two small knots on it, thus: 

While passing there, I heard what I should call my night-warbler's note, and, looking up, saw the bird dropping to a bush on the hillside. Looking through the glass, I saw that it was the Maryland yellow-throat!! and it afterward flew to the button-bushes in the meadow.

I notice no polygonum out, or a little of the front-rank only. Some of the polygonums not only have leaves like a willow, especially like the *S. lucida*, but I see that their submerged leaves turn, or give place, to fibrous pink roots which might be mistaken for those of the willow.

Lily Bay is on the left, just above the narrow place in the river, which is just above Bound Rock. There are but few lilies this year, however; but if you wish to see how many there are, you must be on the side toward the sun.

Just opposite this bay, I heard a peculiar note which I thought at first might be that of a kingbird, but soon saw for the first time a wren within two or three rods perched on the tall sedge or the wool-grass and making it, — probably the short-billed marsh wren. It was peculiarly brisk and rasping, not at all musical, the rhythm something like *shar te dittle ittle ittle ittle ittle*, but the last part was drier or less liquid than this implies. It was a small bird, quite dark above and apparently plain ashy-white beneath, and held its head up when it sang, and also commonly its tail. It dropped into the deep sedge on our approach, but did not go off, as we saw by the motion of the grass; then reappeared and uttered its brisk notes quite near us, and, flying off, was lost in the sedge again.

We ate our dinner on the hill by Rice's. This forenoon there were no hayers in the meadow, but before we returned we saw many at work, for they had already cut some grass next to the upland, on the drier sides of the meadow, and we noticed where they had stuck up green bushes near the riverside to mow to.

While bathing at Rice's landing, I noticed under my arm, amid the potamogeton, a little pickerel between two and a half and three inches long, with a little silvery minnow about one inch long in his mouth. He held it by the tail, as it was jerking to and fro, and was slowly taking it in by jerks. I watched to see if he turned it, but to my surprise he at length swallowed it tail foremost, the minnow struggling to the last and going alive into his maw. Perhaps the pickerel learn by experience to turn them head downward. Thus early do these minnows fall on fate, and the pickerel too fulfill his destiny.

Several times on our return we scared up apparently two summer ducks, probably of this year, from the side of the river, first, in each case, seeing them swimming about in the pads; also, once, a great bittern, — I suspect also a this year's bird, for they are probably weaned at the same time with the green one.

Though the river was high, we pushed through many beds of potamogeton, long leafy masses, slanting downward and waving steadily in the stream, ten feet or more in length by a foot wide. In some places it looked as if the new sparganium would fairly choke up the stream.

Huckleberries are not quite yet in their prime.

Aug. 6. P. M. — Walk to Boulder Field.

The broom is quite out of bloom; probably a week or ten days. It is almost ripe, indeed. I should like to see how rapidly it spreads. The dense roundish masses, side by side, are three or four feet over and fifteen inches high. They have grown from near the ground this year. The whole clump is now about eighteen feet from north to south by twelve wide. Within a foot or two of its edge, I detect many slender little plants springing up in the grass, only three inches high, but, on digging, am surprised to find that they are two years old. They have large roots, running down straight as well as branching, much stouter than the part above ground. Thus it appears to spread slowly by the seed falling from its edge, for I detected no runners. It is associated there with indigo, which is still abundantly in bloom.

I then looked for the little groves of barberries which some two months ago I saw in the cow-dung thereabouts, but to my surprise I found some only in one spot after a long search. They appear to have generally died, perhaps dried up. These few were some two inches high; the roots yet longer, having penetrated to the soil beneath. Thus, no doubt, some of those barberry clumps are formed; but I noticed many more small barberry plants standing single, most commonly protected by a rock.

Cut a couple of those low scrub apple bushes, and found that those a foot high and as wide as high, being clipped by the cows, as a hedge with shears, were about twelve years old, but quite sound and thrifty.[1]

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 304, 305; Riv. 374.]

If our sluggish river, choked with potamogeton, might seem to have the slow-flying bittern for its peculiar genius, it has also the sprightly and aerial kingbird to twitter over and lift our thoughts to clouds as white as its own breast.

Emerson is gone to the Adirondack country with a hunting party. Eddy says he has carried a double-barrelled gun, one side for shot, the other for ball, for Lowell killed a bear there last year. But the story on the Mill-Dam is that he has taken a gun which throws shot from one end and ball from the other!

I think that I speak impartially when I say that I have never met with a stream so suitable for boating and botanizing as the Concord, and fortunately nobody knows it. I know of reaches which a single country-seat would spoil beyond remedy, but there has not been any important change here since I can remember. The willows slumber along its shore, piled in light but low masses, even like the cumuli clouds above. We pass haymakers in every meadow, who may think that we are idlers. But Nature takes care that every nook and crevice is explored by some one. While they look after the open meadows, we farm the tract between the river's brinks and behold the shores from that side. We, too, are harvesting an annual crop with our eyes, and think you Nature is not glad to display her beauty to us?

Early in the day we see the dewdrops thickly sprinkled over the broad leaves of the potamogeton. These cover the stream so densely in some places that a web-footed bird can almost walk across on them.

Nowadays we hear the *squealing* notes of young

hawks. The kingfisher is seen hovering steadily over one spot, or hurrying away with a small fish in his mouth, sounding his alarum nevertheless. The note of the wood pewee is now more prominent, while birds generally are silent.

This is pure summer; no signs of fall in this, though I have seen some maples, as above the Assabet Spring, already prematurely reddening, owing to the water, and for some time the *Cornus sericea* has looked brownish-red.

Every board and chip cast into the river is soon occupied by one or more turtles of various sizes. The sternothærus oftenest climbs up the black willows, even three or more feet.

I hear of pickers ordered out of the huckleberry-fields, and I see stakes set up with written notices forbidding any to pick there. Some let their fields, or allow so much for the picking. *Sic transit gloria ruris.* We are not grateful enough that we have lived part of our lives before these evil days came. What becomes of the true value of country life? What if you must go to market for it? Shall things come to such a pass that the butcher commonly brings round huckleberries in his cart? It is as if the hangman were to perform the marriage ceremony, or were to preside at the communion table. Such is the inevitable tendency of *our* civilization, — to reduce huckleberries to a level with beef-steak. The butcher's item on the door is now "calf's head and huckleberries." I suspect that the inhabitants of England and of the Continent of Europe have thus lost their natural rights with the increase of population and of

monopolies. The wild fruits of the earth disappear before civilization, or are only to be found in large markets. The whole country becomes, as it were, a town or beaten common, and the fruits left are a few hips and haws.

Aug. 7. *Saturday.* P. M. — Up Assabet.

The most luxuriant groves of black willow, *as I recall them*, are on the inside curves, or on sandy capes between the river and a bay, or sandy banks parallel with the firmer shore, *e. g.* between Lee's and Fair Haven on north side, point of Fair Haven Island, opposite Clamshell and above, *just below stone bridge*, Lee Meadow or opposite house, below Nathan Barrett's at Bay, sandy bank below Dove Rock. They also grow on both sides sometimes, where the river runs straight through stagnant meadows or swamps, — *e. g.* above Hollowell Bridge, — or on one side, though straight, along the edge of a swamp, — as above Assabet Spring, — but rarely ever against a firm bank or hillside, the positive male shore, *e. g.* east shore of Fair Haven Pond, east side above railroad bridge, etc.[1] Measured the two largest of three below Dove Rock. The southernmost is three feet nine inches in circumference at ground, and it branches there. The westernmost is four feet two inches in circumference at ground and three feet two inches at three feet above ground. Or the largest is one foot and four inches in diameter at ground. They all branch at the ground, dividing within four or five feet into three or four main stems. The three here have the effect of

[1] *Vide* Aug. 15.

one tree, seen from the water, and are twenty-five feet high or more, and, all together, broader than high. They are none of them upright, but in this case, close under a higher wood of maples and swamp white oak, slant over the stream, and, taken separately or viewed from the land side, are very imperfect trees. If you stand at their base and look upward or outward, you see a great proportion of naked trunk but thinly invested with foliage even at the summit, and they are among the most unsightly trees. The lower branches slant downward from the main divisions so as commonly to rest on the water. But seen from the water side no tree of its height, methinks, so completely conceals its trunk. They meet with many hard rubs from the ice and from driftwood in freshets in the course of their lives, and whole trees are bent aside or half broken off by these causes, but they soon conceal their injuries.

The *Sternothærus odoratus* knows them well, for it climbs highest up their stems, three or four feet or more nowadays, sometimes seven or eight along the slanting branches, and is frequently caught and hung by the neck in its forks. They do not so much jump as tumble off when disturbed by a passer. The small black mud tortoise, with its muddy shell, eyes you motionless from its resting-place in a fork of the black willow. They will climb four feet up a stem not more than two inches in diameter, and yet undo all their work in an instant by tumbling off when your boat goes by. The trunk is covered with coarse, long, and thick upraised scales. It is this turtle's castle and path to heaven. He is on the upward road along the stem of the willow, and by its

dark stem it is partially concealed. Yes, the musquash and the mud tortoise and the bittern know it well.

But not these sights alone are now seen on our river, but the sprightly kingbird glances and twitters above the glossy leaves of the swamp white oak. Perchance this tree, with its leaves glossy above and whitish beneath, best expresses the life of the kingbird and is its own tree.

How long will it be after we have passed before the mud tortoise has climbed to its perch again?

The author of the Chinese novel "Ju-Kiao-Li," some eight hundred years ago, appears to have appreciated the beauty of willows. Pe, his principal character, moved out of the city late in life, to a stream bordered with willows, about twenty miles distant, in order to spend the rest of his days drinking wine and writing verses there. He describes the eyebrow of his heroine as like a willow leaf floating on the surface of the water.

In the upper part of J. Farmer's lane I find huckleberries which are distinctly pear-shaped, all of them. These and also other roundish ones near by, and apparently huckleberries generally, are dotted or apparently dusted over with a yellow dust or meal, which looks as if it could be rubbed off. Through a glass it looks like a resin which has exuded, and on the small green fruit is of a bright orange or lemon-color, like small specks of yellow lichens. It is apparently the same as that on the leaves.

Monarda fistula is now apparently in prime, four and more, eight or ten rods behind red oak on Emerson's Assabet field.

Aug. 8. P. M. — To Ledum Swamp.

I see at Clamshell Hill a yellow-browed sparrow sitting quite near on a haycock, pluming itself. Observe it a long time in all positions with my glass, within two rods. It is probably a this year's bird. I think it must be the *Fringilla passerina*, for its breast and beneath is the clear pale ochreous white which Wilson speaks of, and its wing-shoulder is distinctly yellow when not concealed in the feathers of the side. Its legs and bill, except the upper side of the upper mandible, are quite a reddish flesh-color. The yellow on its temple is quite bright, and the pale-brownish cheeks. The crown is blackish with a distinct white line along the midst. I see what I call chestnut with the black and whitish on the back and wings. It stands very upright, so that I can see all beneath. It utters no note, *i. e.* song, only a faint, short, somewhat cricket-like or *trilled* chip.

I see that handsome fine purple grass now, on Hosmer's hillside, above where he has mowed; not yet in perfection.

You see now in the meadows where the mower's scythe has cut in two the great oval and already black fruit of the skunk-cabbage, rough as a nutmeg-grater, exposing its numerous nuts. I had quite forgotten the promise of this earliest spring flower, which, deep in the grass which has sprung up around it, its own leaves for the most part decayed, unremembered by us, has been steadily maturing its fruit. How far we have wandered, in our thoughts at least, since we heard the bee humming in its spathe! I can hardly recall or believe now that for every such black and rather unsightly (?) capsule there

was a pretty freckled horn which attracted our attention in the spring. However, most of them lie so low that they escape or are not touched by the scythe.[1]

Saw yesterday a this year's (?) marsh hawk, female, flying low across the road near Hildreth's. I took it to be a young bird, it came so near and looked so fresh. It is a fine rich-brown, full-breasted bird, with a long tail. Some hens in the grass beneath were greatly alarmed and began to run and fly with a cackling to the shelter of a corn-field. They which did not see the hawk and were the last to stir expressed the most alarm. Meanwhile, the hawk sails low and steadily over the field away, not thinking of disturbing them.

I find at Ledum Swamp, near the pool, the white fringed orchis, quite abundant but past prime, only a few, yet quite fresh. It seems to belong to this sphagnous swamp and is some fifteen to twenty inches high, quite conspicuous, its white spike, amid the prevailing green. The leaves are narrow, half folded, and almost insignificant. It loves, then, these cold bogs.

The rusty wool-grass is in bloom there with very short wool. Is it ever long? The *Gaylussacia dumosa* var. *hirtella* is the prevailing low shrub, perhaps. I see one ripe berry. This is the only inedible species of *Vaccinieæ* that I know in this town.

The peculiar plants of this swamp are, then, as I re-

[1] My friends can rarely guess what fruit it is, but think of pine-apples and the like. After lying in the house a week, and being wilted and softened, on breaking it open it has an agreeable sweetish scent, perchance like a banana, and suggests that it may be edible. But a long while after slightly tasting it, it bites my palate.

member, these nine: spruce, *Andromeda Polifolia*, *Kalmia glauca*, *Ledum latifolium*, *Gaylussacia dumosa* var. *hirtella*, *Vaccinium Oxycoccus*, *Platanthera blephariglottis*, *Scheuchzeria palustris*, *Eriophorum vaginatum*.[1]

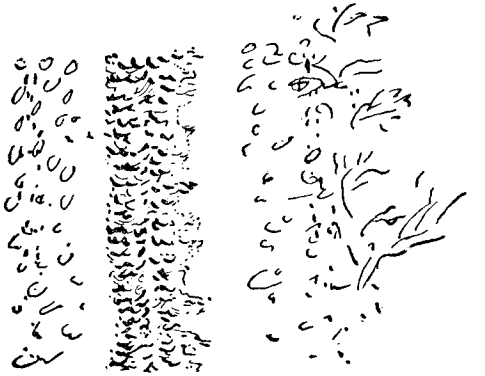
I see there, especially near the pool, tall and slender huckleberry bushes of a peculiar kind. Some are seven feet high. They are, for the most part, three or four feet high, very slender and drooping, bent like grass to one side. The berries are round and glossy-black, with resinous dots, as usual, and in flattish-topped racemes, sometimes ten or twelve in a raceme, but generally more scattered. Call it, perhaps, the tall swamp huckleberry.

The nesæa is fairly begun.

Looking north from Hubbard's Bridge about 4 P. M., the wind being southeasterly, I am struck by the varied lights of the river. The wind, which is a considerable breeze, strikes the water by a very irregular serrated edge about mid-channel, and then abruptly leaves it on a distinct and regular meandering line, about eight feet from the outer edge of the pads on the west side. The rippled portion of the river is blue, the rest smooth, silvery. Thus to my eye the river is divided into five portions, — first the weedy and padded borders, then a smooth, silvery stripe, eight or ten feet wide, and next the blue rippled portion, succeeded by the broader silver, and the pads of the eastern side. How many aspects the river wears, depending on the height of the water, the season of the year and state of vegetation, the wind, the position of the sun and condition of the heavens, etc., etc.! Apparently such is the angle at which the

[1] *Woodsia Virginica*. *Vide* Sept. 6th.

wind strikes the river from over the bushes that it falls about mid-channel, and then it is either obliged to leave



it at a nearly similar angle on account of the opposite shore and bushes, or, perchance, the smoothing influence of the pads is felt to some distance beyond their edges. The line which separates the smooth from the rippled portion is as distinct and continuous as that which marks the edge of the pads. I think that there is more oily matter floating on the stiller sides of the river, and this too may have something to do with the above phenomenon. Then there is the watered appearance of the surface in a shower.

Aug. 9. Edward Bartlett shows me this morning a nest which he found yesterday. It is saddled on the lowest horizontal branch of an apple tree in Abel Heywood's orchard, against a small twig, and answers to Nuttall's description of the goldfinch's nest, which it probably is. The eggs were five, pure white or with a

faint bluish-green tinge, just begun to be developed. I did not see the bird.[1]

It is but little you learn of a bird in this irregular way, — having its nest and eggs shown you. How much more suggestive the sight of the goldfinch going off on a jaunt over the hills, twittering to its plainer consort by its side!

It is surprising to what extent the world is ruled by cliques. They who constitute, or at least lead, New England or New York society, in the eyes of the world, are but a clique, a few "men of the age" and of the town, who work best in the harness provided for them. The institutions of almost all kinds are thus of a sectarian or party character. Newspapers, magazines, colleges, and all forms of government and religion express the superficial activity of a few, the mass either conforming or not attending. The newspapers have just got over that eating-fullness or dropsy which takes place with the annual commencements and addresses before the Philomathean or Alpha Beta Gamma societies. Neither they who make these addresses nor they who attend to them are representative of the latest age. The boys think that these annual recurrences are part and parcel of the annual revolution of the system. There are also regattas and fireworks and "surprise parties" and horse-shows. So that I am glad when I see or hear of a man anywhere who does not know of these things nor recognizes these particular fuglers. I was pleased to hear the other day that there were two men in Tamworth, N. H., who had been fishing for trout there ever since May; but it was a

[1] *Vide* next page but one.

serious drawback to be told that they sent their fish to Boston and so catered for the few. The editors of newspapers, the popular clergy, politicians and orators of the day and office-holders, though they may be thought to be of very different politics and religion, are essentially one and homogeneous, inasmuch as they are only the various ingredients of the froth which ever floats on the surface of society.

I see a pout this afternoon in the Assabet, lying on the bottom near the shore, evidently diseased. He permits the boat [to] come within two feet of him. Nearly half the head, from the snout backward diagonally, is covered with an inky-black kind of leprosy, like a crustaceous lichen. The long feeler on that side appears to be wasting, and there stands up straight in it, about an inch high, a little black tree-like thorn or feeler, branched at top. It moves with difficulty.

Edith Emerson gives me an *Asclepias tuberosa* from Naushon, which she thinks is now in its prime there.

It is surprising what a tissue of trifles and crudities make the daily news. For one event of interest there are nine hundred and ninety-nine insignificant, but about the same stress is laid on the last as on the first. The newspapers have just told me that the transatlantic telegraph-cable is laid. That is important, but they instantly proceed to inform me how the news was received in every larger town in the United States, — how many guns they fired, or how high they jumped, — in New York, and Milwaukee, and Sheboygan; and the boys and girls, old and young, at the corners of the streets are reading it all with glistening eyes, down to the very last

scrap, not omitting what they did at New Rochelle and Evansville. And all the speeches are reported, and some think of collecting them into a volume ! ! !

You say that you have travelled far and wide. How many men have you seen that did not belong to any sect, or party, or clique? Did you go further than letters of introduction would avail?

The goldfinch nest of this forenoon is saddled on a horizontal twig of an apple, some seven feet from ground and one third of an inch in diameter, supported on one side by a yet smaller branch, also slightly attached to another small branch. It measures three and one half inches from outside to outside, one and three quarters inside, two and one half from top to bottom, or to a little below the twig, and one and one half inside. It is a very compact, thick, and warmly lined nest, slightly incurving on the edge within. It is composed of fine shreds of bark — grape-vine and other — and one piece of twine, with, more externally, an abundance of pale-brown slender catkins of oak (?) or hickory (?), mixed with effete apple blossoms and their peduncles, showing little apples, and the petioles of apple leaves, sometimes with half-decayed leaves of this year attached, last year's heads of lespedeza, and some other heads of weeds, with a little grass stem or weed stem, all more or less disguised by a web of white spider or caterpillar silk, spread over the outside. It is thickly and very warmly lined with (apparently) short thistle-down, mixed with which you see some grape-vine bark, and the rim is composed of the same shreds of bark, catkins, and some fine fibrous stems, and two or three hairs (of horse) mixed with wool (?); for only the hollow is lined with the looser or less tenacious thistle-down. This nest shows a good deal of art.

The mind tastes but few flavors in the course of a year. We are visited by but few thoughts which are worth entertaining, and we chew the cud of these unceasingly. What ruminant spirits we are! I remember well the flavor of that rusk which I bought in New York two or three months ago and ate in the cars for my supper. A fellow-passenger, too, pretended to praise it, and yet, O man of little faith! he took a regular supper at Springfield. They cannot make such in Boston. The mere fragrance, rumor, and reminiscence of life is all that we get, for the most part. If I am visited by a thought, I chew that cud each successive morning, as long as there is any flavor in it. Until my keepers shake down some fresh fodder. Our genius is like a brush which only once in many months is freshly dipped into the paint-pot. It becomes so dry that though we apply it incessantly, it fails to tinge our earth and sky. Applied to the same spot incessantly, it at length imparts no color to it.

Aug. 10. P. M. — To yew, etc.

It is cloudy and misty dog-day weather, with a good deal of wind, and thickening to occasional rain this afternoon. This rustling wind is agreeable, reminding me, by its unusual sound, of other and ruder seasons. The most of a storm you can get now is rather exhilarating. The grass and bushes are quite wet, and the pickers are driven from the berry-field. The rabbit's-foot clover is

very wet to walk through, holding so much water. The fine grass falls over from each side into the middle of the woodland paths and wets me through knee-high.

I see many tobacco-pipes, now perhaps in their prime, if not a little late, and hear of pine-sap. The Indian-pipe, though coming with the fungi and suggesting, no doubt, a close relation to them, — a sort of connecting link between flowers and fungi, — is a very interesting flower, and will bear a close inspection when fresh. The whole plant has a sweetish, earthy odor, though Gray says it is inodorous. I see them now on the leafy floor of this oak wood, in families of twelve to thirty sisters of various heights, — from two to eight inches, — as close together as they can stand, the youngest standing close up to the others, all with faces yet modestly turned downwards under their long hoods. Here is a family of about twenty-five within a diameter of little more than two inches, lifting the dry leaves for half their height in a cylinder about them. They generally appear bursting up through the dry leaves, which, elevated around, may serve to prop them. Springing up in the shade with so little color, they look the more fragile and delicate. They have very delicate pinkish half-naked stems with a few semitransparent crystalline-white scales for leaves, and from the sinuses at the base of the petals without (when their heads are drooping) more or less dark purple is reflected, like the purple of the arteries seen on a nude body. They appear not to flower only when upright. Gray says they are upright in fruit. They soon become black-specked, even before flowering.

Am surprised to find the yew with ripe fruit (how

long?), — though there is a little still small and green, — where I had not detected fertile flowers. It fruits very sparingly, the berries growing singly here and there, on last year's wood, and hence four to six inches below the extremities of the upturned twigs. It is the most surprising berry that we have: first, since it is borne by an evergreen, hemlock-like bush with which we do not associate a soft and bright-colored berry, and hence its deep scarlet contrasts the more strangely with the pure, dark evergreen needles; and secondly, because of its form, so like art, and which could be easily imitated in wax, a very thick scarlet cup or mortar with a dark-purple (?) bead set at the bottom. My neighbors are not prepared to believe that such a berry grows in Concord.

I notice several of the hylodes hopping through the woods like wood frogs, far from water, this mizzling [day]. They are probably common in the woods, but not noticed, on account of their size, or not distinguished from the wood frog. I also saw a young wood frog, with the dark line through the eye, no bigger than the others. One hylodes which I bring home has a perfect cross on its back, — except one arm of it.

The wood thrush's was a peculiarly woodland nest, made solely of such materials as that unfrequented grove afforded, the refuse of the wood or shore of the pond. There was no horsehair, no twine nor paper nor other relics of art in it.

Aug. 11. P. M. — To Beck Stow's.

I see of late a good many young sparrows (and old) of

different species flitting about. That blackberry-field of Gowing's in the Great Fields, this side of his swamp, is a famous place for them. I see a dozen or more, old and young, perched on the wall. As I walk along, they fly up from the grass and alight on the wall, where they sit on the alert with outstretched necks. Nearest and unalarmed sit the huckleberry-birds; next, quite on the alert, the bay-wings, with which and further off the yellow-browed sparrows, of whom one at least has a clear yellowish breast; add to which that I heard thereabouts the seringo note. If made by this particular bird, I should infer it was *Fringilla passerina* I still hear there at intervals the bay-wing, huckleberry-bird, and seringo.

Now is our rainy season. It has rained half the days for ten days past. Instead of dog-day clouds and mists, we have a rainy season. You must walk armed with an umbrella. It is wettest in the woods, where the air has had no chance to dry the bushes at all.

The *Myriophyllum ambiguum*, apparently variety *natans*, is now apparently in its prime. Some buds have gone to seed; others are not yet open. It is floating all over the surface of the pool, by the road, at the swamp, — long utricularia-like masses without the bladders. The emersed part, of linear or pectinate leaves, rises only about half an inch; the rest, eighteen inches more or less in length, consists of an abundance of capillary pinnate leaves, covered with slime or conferva (?) as a web. Evidently the same plant, next the shore and creeping over the mud, only two or three inches long, is without the capillary leaves, having roots instead, and apparently is the variety *limosum* (?), I suspect erroneously so called.

Heard a fine, sprightly, richly warbled strain from a bird perched on the top of a bean-pole. It was at the same time novel yet familiar to me. I soon recognized it for the strain of the purple finch, which I have not heard lately. But though it appeared as large, it seemed a different-colored bird. With my glass, four rods off, I saw it to be a goldfinch. It kept repeating this warble of the purple finch for several minutes. A very surprising note to be heard now, when birds generally are so silent. Have not heard the purple finch of late. I conclude that the goldfinch is a very fine and powerful singer, and the most successful and remarkable mocking-bird that we have. In the spring I heard it imitate the thrasher exactly, before that bird had arrived, and now it imitates the purple finch as perfectly, after the latter bird has ceased to sing! It is a surprising vocalist. It did not cease singing till I disturbed it by my nearer approach, and then it went off with its usual *mew*, succeeded by its watery twitter in its *ricochet* flight. Have they not been more common all summer than formerly?

I go along plum path behind Adolphus Clark's. This is a peculiar locality for plants. The *Desmodium Canadense* is now apparently in its prime there and very common, with its rather rich spikes of purple flowers, — the most (?) conspicuous of the desmodiums. It might be called Desmodium Path. Also the small rough sunflower (now abundant) and the common apocynum (also in bloom as well as going and gone to seed) are very common. I smell the fragrant everlasting concealed in

the higher grass and weeds there, some distance off. It reminds me of the lateness of the season. Saw the clodea (not long) and a dangle-berry ripe (not long) at Beck Stow's.

See a small variety of helianthus growing with the *divaricatus*, on the north side of Peter's path, two rods east of bars southeast of his house. It is an imperfect flower, but apparently answers best to the *H. trachelii-folius*. There is evidently a great variety in respect to form, petiole, venation, roughness, thickness, and color of the leaves of helianthuses.

Saw yesterday the *Utricularia vulgaris*, apparently in its prime, yellowing those little pools in Lincoln at the town bound by Walden. Their stems and leaves seem to half fill them. Some pools, like that at bath-place by pond in R. W. E.'s wood, will have for all vegetation only the floating immersed stems and leaves, light-brown, of this plant, without a flower, perhaps on account of shade.

The great bullfrogs, of various colors from dark brown to greenish yellow, lie out on the surface of these slimy pools or in the shallow water by the shore, motionless and philosophic. Toss a chip to one, and he will instantly leap and seize and drop it as quick. Motionless and indifferent as they appear, they are ready to leap upon their prey at any instant.

Aug. 12. When I came down-stairs this morning, it raining hard and steadily, I found an Irishman sitting with his coat on his arm in the kitchen, waiting to see me. He wanted to inquire what I thought the weather

would be to-day! I sometimes ask my aunt, and she consults the almanac. So we shirk the responsibility.

P. M. — To the Miles blueberry swamp and White Pond.

It clears up before noon and is now very warm and clear. When I look at the sparrows on the fences, yellow-browed and bay-wings, they all have their bills open and are panting with heat. Apparently the end of the very wet weather we have had about a fortnight.

At Clamshell I see more of, I think, the same clear-breasted, yellow-browed sparrows which I saw there the other day and thought the *Fringilla passerina*, and now I hear, from some thereabouts, the seringo note.

As I stand on the bank there, I find suddenly that I hear, low and steady, under all other sounds, the creak of the mole cricket by the riverside. It has a peculiarly late sound, suggestive of the progress of the year. It is the voice which comes up steadily at this season from that narrow sandy strip between the meadow and the water's edge. You might think it issued from that small frog, the only living thing you see, which sits so motionless on the sand. But the singer is wholly out of sight in his gallery under the surface. *Creak creak, creak creak, creak creak, creak creak.* It is a sound associated with the declining year and recalls the moods of that season. It is so unobtrusive yet universal a sound, so underlying the other sounds which fill the air, — the song of birds, rustling of leaves, dry hopping sound of grasshoppers, etc., — that now, in my chamber, I can hardly be sure whether I hear it still, or remember it, it so rings in my ears.

It is surprising how young birds, especially sparrows of all kinds, abound now, and bobolinks and wood pewees and kingbirds. All weeds and fences and bare trees are alive with them. The sparrows and bobolinks are seen surging over or falling behind the weeds and fences, even as grasshoppers now skip from the grass and leaves in your path.

That very handsome high-colored fine purple grass grows particularly on dry and rather unproductive soil just above the edge of the meadows, on the base of the hills, where the hayer does not deign to swing his scythe. He carefully gets the meadow-hay and the richer grass that borders it, but leaves this fine purple mist for the walker's harvest. Higher up the hill, perchance, grow blackberries and johnswort and neglected and withered and wiry June-grass. Twenty or thirty rods off it appears as a high-colored purple border above the meadow, like a berry's stain laid on close and thick, but if you pluck one plant you will be surprised to find how thin it is and how little color it has. What puny causes combine to produce such decided effects! There is ripeness in its color as in the poke stem. It grows in waste places, perhaps on the edge of blackberry-fields, a thin, fine, spreading grass, left by the mower. It oftenest grows in scattered rounded tufts a foot in diameter, especially on gentle slopes.[1]

I see a hen-harrier (female) pursued by a red-wing, etc., circling low and far off over the meadow. She is a peculiar and distinct reddish brown on the body beneath.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 252, 253; Riv. 309, 310.]

All farmers are complaining of the catching weather. I see some of their hay, which is spread, afloat in the meadow.

This year the fields have not yet worn a parched and withered look.

I perceive that some high blueberries have a peculiar and decided bitter taste, which makes them almost inedible. Some of the blueberries growing sparingly on recent sprouts are very large. I eat the blueberry, but I am also interested in the rich-looking glossy black choke-berries which nobody eats, but which bend down the bushes on every side, — sweetish berries with a dry, and so choking, taste. Some of the bushes are more than a dozen feet high.

The note of the wood pewee is a prominent and common one now. You see old and young together.

As I sit on the high bank overlooking White Pond, I am surprised at the number of birds about me, — wood pewees, singing so sweetly on a pine; chickadees, uttering their *phebe* notes, apparently with their young too; the pine warbler, singing; robins, restless and peeping; and a Maryland yellow-throat, hopping within a bush closely. Some boys bathing shake the whole pond. I see the undulations a third across it though they are out of sight, and, if it were smooth, might perhaps see them quite across.

Hear what I have called the alder locust (?) as I return over the causeway, and probably before this.

It is pleasant enough, for a change, to walk in the woods without a path in a wet and mizzling afternoon, as we did the 10th, winding amid the wet bushes, which

wet our legs through, and seeing ever and anon a wood frog skip over the dead and wet leaves, and the various-colored fungi, — rejoicing in fungi. (I saw some large ones, green, that afternoon.) We are glad to come to more open spaces where we can walk dry on a carpet of pine leaves.

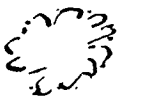
Saw a *Viola pedata* blooming again.

Aug. 13. This month thus far has been quite rainy. It has rained more or less at least half the days. You have had to consider each afternoon whether you must not take an umbrella. It has about half the time either been dogdayish or mizzling or decided rain. It would rain five minutes and be fair the next five, and so on, alternately, a whole afternoon. The farmers have not been able to get much of their hay. On the whole it has been rather cool. It has been still decidedly summer, with some reminiscences of autumn. The last week has been the heart of the huckleberry season.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

The dullish-blue or lead-colored *Viburnum dentatum* berries are now seen, not long, overhanging the side of the river, amid cornels and willows and button-bushes. They make a dull impression, yet held close in some lights they are glossy. The umbelled fruits — viburnums and cornels, aralias, etc. — have begun.

As I am paddling up the north side above the Hemlocks, I am attracted by the singular shadows of the white lily pads on the rich-brown muddy bottom. It is remarkable how light tends to prevail over shadow there. It steals in under the densest curtain of pads

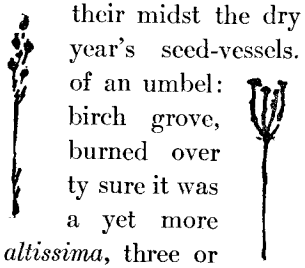
and illustrates the bottom. The shadows of these pads, seen (now at 3 P. M.) a little one side, where the water is eighteen inches or two feet deep, are rarely orbicular or entire-edged or resembling the leaf, but are more or less perfect rosettes, generally of an oval form, with five to fifteen or more regularly rounded petals, open half-way to the centre:  or  You cannot commonly refer the shadow to its substance but by touching the leaf with your paddle. Light knows a thousand tricks by which it prevails. Light is the rule, shadow the exception. The leaf fails to cast a shadow equal in area to itself. While it is a regular and almost solid disk, the shadow is a rosette or palmate, as if the sun, in its haste [to] illustrate every nook, shone round the shortest corner. Often if you connect the extremities of the petals, you have the general outline and size of the leaf, and the shadow is less than the substance by the amount of the openings. These petals seem to depend for their existence on the somewhat scalloped, waved, or undulating edge of the pad, and the manner in which the light is reflected from it. Generally the two sharp angles of the pad are almost entirely eroded in the shadow. The shadows, too, have a slight halo about them. Such endless and varied play of light and shadow is on the river bottom! It is protean and somewhat weird even. The shadow of the leaf might be mistaken for that of the flower. The sun playing with a lily leaf draws the outline of a lily on the bottom with its shadow.

The broad-leaved helianthus on bank opposite Assa-

bet Spring is not nearly out, though the *H. divaricatus* was abundantly out on the 11th.

I landed to get the wood pewee nest in the Lee Wood. Perhaps those woods might be called Mantatukwet's, for he says he lived at the foot of Nawshawtuct about fifty years before 1684.[1]

Hypopytis abundantly out (how long?), apparently a good while, in that long wood-path on the left side, under the oak wood, before you begin to rise, going from the river end. Very little indeed is yet erect, and that which is not is apparently as forward as the rest. Not generally quite so high as the *Monotropa uniflora* which grows with it. I see still in their midst the dry upright brown spikes of last year's seed-vessels. The chimaphila is more of an umbel: Where that dense young birch grove, four to eight feet high, was burned over in the spring, — I am pretty sure it was early in May, — I see now a yet more dense green crop of *Solidago altissima*, three or four feet high and budded to bloom. Where did all the seed come from? I think the burning was too late for any seed to have blown on since. Did it, then, lie in the ground so low as to escape the fire? The seed may have come from plants which grow in the old path along the fence on the west side. It is a singular fact, at any rate, that a dense grove of young white birches, covering half a dozen acres, may be burned over in May, so as to kill nearly all, and now, amid the dead brown trees, you see [a] dense green crop of *Solidago*



[1] Call it Woodis Park.

altissima covering the ground like grass, four feet high. Nature practices a rotation of crops, and always has some seed ready in the ground.

Young white maples below Dove Rock are an inch and a half high, and red maples elsewhere about one inch high.

I come to get the now empty nests of the wood pewees found June 27th. In each case, on approaching the spot, I hear the sweet note of a pewee lingering about, and this alone would have guided me within four or five rods. I do not know why they should linger near the empty nest, but perhaps they have built again near there or intend to use the same nest again (?). Their full strain is *pe-ah-ee'* (perhaps repeated), rising on the last syllable and emphasizing that, then *pe'-ee*, emphasizing the first and falling on the last, all very sweet and rather plaintive, suggesting innocence and confidence in you. In this case the bird uttered only its last strain, regularly at intervals.

These two pewee nests are remarkably alike in their position and composition and form, though half a mile apart. They are both placed on a horizontal branch of a young oak (one about fourteen, the other about eighteen, feet from ground) and three to five feet from main trunk, in a young oak wood. Both rest directly on a horizontal fork, and such is their form and composition that they have almost precisely the same color and aspect from below and from above.

The first is on a dead limb, very much exposed, is three inches in diameter outside to outside, and two inches in diameter within, the rim being about a quarter

of an inch thick, and it is now one inch deep within. Its framework is white pine needles, especially in the rim, and a very little fine grass stem, covered on the rim and all without closely with small bits of lichen (cetraria?), slate-colored without and blackish beneath, and some brown caterpillar (?) or cocoon (?) silk with small seed-vessels in it. They are both now thin and partially open at the bottom, so that I am not sure they contain all the original lining. This one has no distinct lining, unless it is a very little green usnea amid the loose pine-needles. The lichens of the nest would readily be confounded with the lichens of the limb. Looking down on it, it is a remarkably round and neat nest.

The second nest is rather more shallow now and half an inch wider without, is lined with much more usnea (the willow down which I saw in it June 27 is gone; perhaps they cast it out in warm weather!), and shows a little of some slender brown catkin (oak?) beneath, without.

These nests remind me of what I suppose to be the yellow-throat vireo's and hummingbird's. The lining of a nest is not in good condition — perhaps is partly gone — when the birds have done with it.

The remarkable difference between the two branches of our river, kept up down to the very junction, indicates a different geological region for their channels.

Aug. 14. P. M. — To the one-arched bridge.

Hardhacks are probably a little past prime.

Stopped by the culvert opposite the centaurea, to look at the sagittaria leaves. Perhaps this plant is in its

prime (?). Its leaves vary remarkably in form. I see, in a thick patch six or eight feet in diameter, leaves nearly a foot long of this form:

and others, as long or longer, of this form:

intermediate ones, perhaps, around the edge of the patch, being also of a darker green, are not distinguished at first, but mistaken for grass.

Suggesting to C. an Indian name for one of our localities, he thought it had too many syllables for a place so near the middle of the town, — as if the more distant and less frequented place might have a longer name, less understood and less alive in its syllables.

The Canada thistle down is now begun to fly, and I see the goldfinch upon it. *Carduelis.* Often when I watch one go off, he flies at first one way, rising and falling, as if skimming close over unseen billows, but directly makes a great circuit as if he had changed his mind, and disappears in the opposite direction, or is seen to be joined there by his mate.

We walked a little way down the bank this side the Assabet bridge. The broad-leaved panic grass, with its hairy sheaths or collars, attracts the eye now there by its perfectly fresh broad leaf. We see from time to time many bubbles rising from the sandy bottom, where it is two or more feet deep, which I suspect to come from clams there letting off air. I think I see the clams, and it is often noticed there.

I see a pickerel nearly a foot long in the deep pool under the wooden bridge this side the stone one, where it has been landlocked how long?

There is brought me this afternoon *Thalictrum Cornuti*, of which the club-shaped filaments (and sepals?) and seed-vessels are a bright purple and quite showy.

To speak from recollection, the birds which I *have chanced to hear* of late are (running over the whole list): —

The squealing notes of young hawks.
Occasionally a red-wing's *tchuck*.
The *link* of bobolinks.
The *chickadee* and *phebe* note of the chickadees, five or six together occasionally.
The *fine* note of the cherry-bird, pretty often.
The twitter of the kingbird, pretty often.
The wood pewee, with its young, peculiarly common and prominent.
Only the *peep* of the robin.
The pine warbler, occasionally.
The bay-wing, pretty often.
The seringo, pretty often.
The song sparrow, often.
The field sparrow, often.
The goldfinch, a prevailing note, with variations into a fine song.
The ground-robin, *once* of late.
The flicker's cackle, *once* of late.
The nighthawk, as usual.

I have not been out early nor late, nor attended particularly to the birds. The more characteristic notes would appear to be the wood pewee's and the goldfinch's, with the squeal of young hawks. These might be called the pewee-days.[1]

[1] *Vide* [p. 107].

Aug. 15. P. M. — Down river to Abner Buttrick's.

Rain in the night and dog-day weather again, after two clear days. I do not like the name "dog-days." Can we not have a new name for this season? It is the season of mould and mildew, and foggy, muggy, often rainy weather.

The front-rank polygonum is apparently in prime, or perhaps not quite.[1] Wild oats, apparently in prime. This is quite interesting and handsome, so tall and loose. The lower, spreading and loosely drooping, dangling or blown one side like a flag, staminate branches of its ample panicle are of a lively yellowish green, contrasting with the very distant upright pistillate branches, suggesting a spear with a small flag at the base of its head. It is our wild grain, unharvested.

The black willows are already being imbrowned. It must be the effect of the water, for we have had no drought.

The smaller white maples are very generally turned a dull red, and their long row, seen against the fresh green of Ball's Hill, is very surprising. The leaves evidently come to maturity or die sooner in water and wet weather. They are redder now than in autumn, and set off the landscape wonderfully. The Great Meadows are not a quarter shorn yet. The swamp white oaks, ash trees, etc., which stand along the shore have horizontal lines and furrows at different heights on their trunks, where the ice of past winters has rubbed against them.

Might not the potamogeton be called *waving weed?*

[1] *Vide* 19th.

I notice the black willows from my boat's place to Abner Buttrick's, to see where they grow, distinguishing ten places. In seven instances they are on the concave or female side distinctly. Then there is one clump just below mouth of Mill Brook on male side, one tree at Simmonds's boat-house, male side, and one by oak on Heywood Shore. The principal are on the sand-bars or points formed along the concave side. Almost the only exceptions to their growing on the concave side exclusively are a few mouths of brooks and edges of swamps, where, apparently, there is an eddy or slow current. Similar was my observation on the Assabet as far up as Woodis Park. The localities I noticed to-day were: mouth of Mill Brook (and up it); sand-bar along shore just below, opposite; opposite Simmonds's boat-house; one at boat-house; Hornbeam Cape; Flint's meadow, along opposite boys' bath-place; one by oak below bath-place on south side; at meadow fence, south side; point of the diving ash; south side opposite bath-place by wall. Up Assabet the places were (the 13th): south side above Rock; Willow Swamp; Willow Bay (below Dove Rock); Willow Island; swift place, south side; mouth of Spencer Brook.

Wars are not yet over. I hear one in the outskirts learning to drum every night; and think you there will be no field for him? He relies on his instincts. He is instinctively meeting a demand.

Aug. 16. Hear it raining again early when I awake, as it did yesterday, still and steady, as if the season were troubled with a diabetes.

P. M. — To Cardinal Ditch.

I hear these birds on my way thither, between two and three o'clock: goldfinches twitter over; the song sparrow sings several times; hear a low warble from bluebirds, with apparently their young, the *link* of many bobolinks (and see large flocks on the fences and weeds; they are largish-looking birds with yellow throats); a large flock of red-wings goes *tchucking* over; a lark twitters; crows caw; a robin peeps; kingbirds twitter, as ever.

At sunset I hear a low short warble from a golden robin, and the notes of the wood pewee.

In my boating of late I have several times scared up a couple of summer ducks of this year, bred in our meadows. They allowed me to come quite near, and helped to people the river. I have not seen them for some days. Would you know the end of our intercourse? Goodwin shot them, and Mrs. ——, who never sailed on the river, ate them. Of course, she knows not what she did. What if I should eat her canary? Thus we share each other's sins as well as burdens. The lady who watches admiringly the matador shares his deed. They belonged to me, as much as to any one, when they were alive, but it was considered of more importance that Mrs. —— should taste the flavor of them dead than that I should enjoy the beauty of them alive.

A three-ribbed goldenrod on railroad causeway, two to three feet high, abundantly out before *Solidago nemoralis*.

I notice that when a frog, a *Rana halecina*, jumps, it drops water at the same instant, as a turtle often when touched as she is preparing to lay. I see many frogs

jump from the side of the railroad causeway toward the ditch at its base, and each drops some water. They apparently have this supply of water with them in warm and dry weather, at least when they leave the water, and, returning to it, leave it behind as of no further use.

Thalictrum Cornuti is now generally done.

The hardhack commonly grows in low meadow-pastures which are uneven with grassy clods or hummocks, such as the almshouse pasture by Cardinal Ditch.

I am surprised to find that where of late years there have been so many cardinal-flowers, there are now very few. So much does a plant fluctuate from season to season. Here I found nearly white ones once. Channing tells me that he saw a white bobolink in a large flock of them to-day. Almost all flowers and animals may be found white. As in a large number of cardinal-flowers you may find a white one, so in a large flock of bobolinks, also, it seems, you may find a white one.

Talked with Minott, who sits in his wood-shed, having, as I notice, several seats there for visitors, — one a block on the sawhorse, another a patchwork mat on a wheelbarrow, etc., etc. His half-grown chickens, which roost overhead, perch on his shoulder or knee. According to him, the Holt is at the "diving ash," where is some of the deepest water in the river. He tells me some of his hunting stories again. He always lays a good deal of stress on the kind of gun he used, as if he had bought a new one every year, when probably he never had more than two or three in his life. In this case it was a "half-stocked" one, a little "cocking-piece," and whenever he finished his game he used the word

"gavel," I think in this way, "gave him gavel," *i. e.* made him bite the dust, or settled him. Speaking of foxes, he said: "As soon as the nights get to be cool, if you step outdoors at nine or ten o'clock when all is still, you'll hear them bark out on the flat behind the houses, half a mile off, or sometimes *whistle* through their noses. I can tell 'em. I know what that means. I know all about that. They are out after something to eat, I suppose." He used to love to hear the goldfinches sing on the hemp which grew near his gate.

At sunset paddled to Hill.

Goodwin has come again to fish, with three poles, hoping to catch some more of those large eels.

A blue heron, with its great undulating wings, prominent cutwater, and leisurely flight, goes over southwest, cutting off the bend of the river west of our house. Goodwin says he saw one two or three days ago, and also that he saw some black ducks. A muskrat is swimming up the stream, betrayed by two long diverging ripples, or ripple-lines, two or three rods long each, and inclosing about seventy-five degrees, methinks. The rat generally dives just before reaching the shore and is not seen again, probably entering some burrow in the bank.

Am surprised to see that the snapping turtle which I found floating dead June 16th, and placed to rot in the cleft of a rock, has been all cleaned, so that there is no smell of carrion. The scales have nearly all fallen off, and the sternum fallen apart, and the bony frame of the back is loose and dropping to pieces, as if it were many years old. It is a wonderful piece of dovetailing, the

ends of the ribs (which are narrow and rib-like) set into sockets in the middle of the marginal bones, whose joints are in each case *between* the ribs. There are many large fish-bones within the shell. Was it killed by the fish it swallowed? The bones not being dispersed, I suppose it was cleaned by insects.

Aug. 17. Still hear the chip-bird early in the morning, though not so generally as earlier in the season.

Minott has only lately been reading Shattuck's "History of Concord," and he says that his account is not right by a jugful, that he does not come within half a mile of the truth, not as he has heard tell.

Some days ago I saw a kingbird twice stoop to the water from an overhanging oak and pick an insect from the surface.

C. saw pigeons to-day.

P. M. — To Annursnack *via* swimming-ford.

The river is twelve to eighteen inches deeper there than usual at this season. Even the slough this side is two feet deep.

There has been so much rain of late that there is no curling or drying of the leaves and grass this year. The foliage is a pure fresh green. The aftermath on early-mown fields is a very beautiful green.

Being overtaken by a shower, we took refuge in the basement of Sam Barrett's sawmill, where we spent an hour, and at length came home with a rainbow overarching the road before us.

The dog-days, the foggy and mouldy days, are not over yet. The clouds are like a mildew which overspreads the sky. It is sticky weather, and the air is filled with the scent of decaying fungi.

Aug. 18. P. M. — To Fair Haven Hill.

Miss Caroline Pratt saw the white bobolink yesterday where Channing saw it the day before, in the midst of a large flock.[1] I go by the place this afternoon and see very large flocks of them, certainly several hundreds in all, and one has a little white on his back, but I do not see *the* white one. Almost every bush along this brook is now alive with these birds. You wonder where they were all hatched, for you may have failed to find a single nest. I know eight or ten active boys who have been searching for these nests the past season quite busily, and they have found but two at most. Surely but a small fraction of these birds will ever return from the South. Have they so many foes there? Hawks must fare well at present. They go off in a straggling flock, and it is a long time before the last loiterer has left the bushes near you.

I also see large flocks of blackbirds, blackish birds with chattering notes. It is a fine sight when you can look down on them just as they are settling on the ground with outspread wings, — a hovering flock.

Having left my note-book at home, I strip off a piece of birch bark for paper. It begins at once to curl up, yellow side out, but I hold that side to the sun, and as soon as it is dry it gives me no more trouble.

[1] I hear also of a swallow (probably barn swallow), perfectly white, killed by John Flint's son this year and set up by some one in the North Quarter.

I sit under the oaks at the east end of Hubbard's Grove, and hear two wood pewees singing close by. They are perched on dead oak twigs four or five rods apart, and their notes are so exactly alike that at first I thought there was but one. One appeared to answer the other, and sometimes they both sung together, — even as if the old were teaching her young. It was not the usual spring note of this bird, but a simple, clear *pe-e-eet*, rising steadily with one impulse to the end.[1] They were undistinguishable in tone and rhythm, though one which I thought might be the young was feebler. In the meanwhile, as it was perched on the twig, it was incessantly turning its head about, looking for insects, and suddenly would dart aside or downward a rod or two, and I could hear its bill snap as it caught one. Then it returned to the same or another perch.

Heard a nuthatch.[2]

Last evening one of our neighbors, who has just completed a costly house and front yard, the most showy in the village, illuminated in honor of the Atlantic telegraph. I read in great letters before the house the sentence "Glory to God in the highest." But it seemed to me that that was not a sentiment to be illuminated, but to keep dark about. A simple and genuine sentiment of reverence would not emblazon these words as on a signboard in the streets. They were exploding countless crackers beneath it, and gay company, passing in and out, made it a kind of housewarming. I felt a kind of shame for [it], and was inclined to pass quickly by,

[1] Not heard for a long time, Oct. 15, 1859.

[2] And a week later. Not heard since spring.

the ideas of indecent exposure and cant being suggested. What is religion? That which is never spoken.

Aug. 19. P. M. — Sail to Baker Farm shore.

It is cool with a considerable northwesterly wind, so that we can sail to Fair Haven. The dog-day weather is suddenly gone and here is a cool, clear, and elastic air. You may say it is the first day of autumn. You notice the louder and clearer ring of crickets, and the large, handsome red spikes of the *Polygonum amphibium* are now generally conspicuous along the shore. The *P. hydropiperoides* fairly begins to show. The front-rank polygonum is now in prime.

We scare up a stake-driver several times. The blue heron has within a week reappeared in our meadows, and the stake-driver begins to be seen oftener, and as early as the 5th I noticed young summer ducks about; the same of hawks, owls, etc. This occurs as soon as the young birds can take care of themselves, and some appear to be very early on the return southward, with the very earliest prospect of fall. Such birds are not only more abundant but, methinks, more at leisure now, having reared their family, and perhaps they are less shy. Yes, bitterns are more frequently seen now to lift themselves from amid the pontederia or flags, and take their sluggish flight to a new resting-place, — bitterns which either have got through the labors of breeding or are now first able to shift for themselves. And likewise blue herons, which have bred or been bred not far from us (plainly), are now at leisure, or are impelled to revisit our slow stream. I have not seen the last since spring.

When I see the first heron, like a dusky blue wave undulating over our meadows again, I think, since I saw them going northward the other day, how many of these forms have been added to the landscape, complete from bill to toe, while, perhaps, I have idled! I see two herons. A small bird is pursuing the heron as it does a hawk. Perhaps it is a blackbird and the herons gobble up their young!

I see thistle-down, grayish-white, floating low quite across Fair Haven Pond. There is wont to be just water [*sic*] enough above the surface to drive it along. The heads of the wool-grass are now brown and, in many meadows, lodged. The button-bush is about done. Can hardly see a blossom. The mikania not yet quite in prime. Pontederia has already begun to wane; *i. e.*, the fields of them are not so dense, many seed-vessels having turned down; and some leaves are already withered and black, but the remaining spikes are as fair as ever. It chances that I see no yellow lilies. They must be scarce now. The water is high for the season. Water cool to bather.

We have our first green corn to-day, but it is late. The saw-grass (*Paspalum ?*) of mown fields, not long.

I noticed the localities of black willows as far up as the mouth of the river in Fair Haven Pond, but not so carefully as elsewhere, and from the last observations I infer that the willow grows especially and almost exclusively in places where the drift is most likely to lodge, as on capes and points and concave sides of the river, though I noticed a few exceptions to my rule.

It is so cool, some apprehend a frost to-night.

Aug. 20. Edward Hoar has found in his garden two or three specimens of what appears to be the *Veronica Buxbaumii*, which blossomed at least a month ago. Yet I should say the pods were turgid, and, though obcordate enough, I do not know in what sense they are "obcordate-triangular." He found a *Viburnum dentatum* with leaves somewhat narrower than common and wedge-shaped at base. He has also the *Rudbeckia speciosa*, cultivated in a Concord garden.

Flannery tells me that at about four o'clock this morning he saw white frost on the grass in the low ground near Holbrook's meadow. Up early enough to see a frost in August!

P. M. — To Poplar Hill and the Great Fields.

It is still cool weather with a northwest wind. This weather is a preface to autumn. There is more shadow in the landscape than a week ago, methinks, and the creak of the cricket sounds cool and steady.

The grass and foliage and landscape generally are of a more thought-inspiring color, suggest what some perchance would call a pleasing melancholy. In some meadows, as I look southwesterly, the aftermath looks a bright yellowish-green in patches. Both willows and poplars have leaves of a light color, at least beneath, contrasting with most other trees.

Generally there has been no drought this year. Nothing in the landscape suggests it. Yet no doubt these leaves are, compared with themselves six or eight weeks ago, as usual, "horny and dry," as one remarks by my side.

You see them digging potatoes, with cart and barrels,

in the fields on all hands, before they are fairly ripe, for fear of rot or a fall in the price, and I see the empty barrels coming back from market already.

Polygonum dumetorum, how long?

Aug. 21. P. M. — A-berrying to Conantum.

I notice hardhacks clothing their stems now with their erected leaves, showing the whitish under sides. A pleasing evidence of the advancing season.

How yellow that kind of hedgehog (?) sedge,[1] in the toad pool by Cyrus Hubbard's corner.

I still see the patch of epilobium on Bee Tree Hill as plainly as ever, though only the pink seed-vessels and stems are left.

Aug. 22. P. M. — I have spliced my old sail to a new one, and now go out to try it in a sail to Baker Farm. It is a "square sail," some five feet by six. I like it much. It pulls like an ox, and makes me think there 's more wind abroad than there is. The yard goes about with a pleasant force, almost enough, I would fain imagine, to knock me overboard. How sturdily it pulls, shooting us along, catching more wind than I knew to be wandering in this river valley! It suggests a new power in the sail, like a Grecian god. I can even worship it, after a heathen fashion. And then, how it becomes my boat and the river, — a simple homely square sail, all for use not show, so low and broad! *Ajacean*. The boat is like a plow drawn by a winged bull. If I had had this a dozen years ago, my voyages would have been performed more

[1] *Cyperus phymatodes*.

quickly and easily. But then probably I should have lived less in them. I land on a remote shore at an unexpectedly early hour, and have time for a long walk there. Before, my sail was so small that I was wont to raise the mast with the sail on it ready set, but now I have had to rig some tackling with which to haul up the sail.

As for the beauty of the river's brim: now that the mikania begins to prevail the button-bush has done, the pontederia is waning, and the willows are already somewhat crisped and imbrowned (though the last may be none the worse for it); lilies, too, are as good as gone. So perhaps I should say that the brim of the river was in its prime about the 1st of August this year, when the pontederia and button-bush and white lilies were in their glory. The cyperus (*phymatodes*, etc.) now yellows edges of pools and half-bare low grounds.

See one or two blue herons every day now, driving them far up or down the river before me. I see a mass of bur-reed, etc., which the wind and waves are sweeping down-stream. The higher water and wind thus clear the river for us.

At Baker Farm a large bird rose up near us, which at first I took for a hen-hawk, but it appeared larger. It screamed the same, and finally soared higher and higher till it was almost lost amid the clouds, or could scarcely be distinguished except when it was seen against some white and glowing cumulus. I think it was at least half a mile high, or three quarters, and yet I distinctly heard it scream up there each time it came round, and with my glass saw its head steadily bent toward the ground, looking for its prey. Its head, seen in a proper light, was dis-

tinctly whitish, and I suspect it may have been a white-headed eagle. It did not once flap its wings up there, as it circled and sailed, though I watched it for nearly a mile. How fit that these soaring birds should be haughty and fierce, not like doves to our race!

Aug. 23. Cooler than ever. Some must have fires, and I close my window.

P. M. — Britton's camp *via* Hubbard's Close.

The rhexia in the field west of Clintonia Swamp makes a great show now, though a little past prime. I go through the swamp, wading through the luxuriant cinnamon fern, which has complete possession of the swamp floor. Its great fronds, curving this way and that, remind me [of] a tropical vegetation. They are as high as my head and about a foot wide; may stand higher than my head without being stretched out. They grow in tufts of a dozen, so close that their fronds interlace and form one green waving mass. There in the swamp cellar under the maples. A forest of maples rises from a forest of ferns. My clothes are covered with the pale-brown wool which I have rubbed off their stems.[1]

See an abundance of pine-sap on the right of Pine-sap Path. It is almost all erect, some eight to nine inches high, and all effete there. Some stems are reddish. It lifts the leaves with it like the Indian-pipe, but is not so delicate as that. The Indian-pipe is still pushing up.

Everywhere in woods and swamps I am already reminded of the fall. I see the spotted sarsaparilla leaves

[1] *Vide* Sept. 24, 1859.

and brakes, and, in swamps, the withering and blackened skunk-cabbage and hellebore, and, by the river, the already blackening pontederias and pipes. There is no plateau on which Nature rests at midsummer, but she instantly commences the descent to winter.

I see a golden-crowned thrush, but it is silent except a chip; sitting low on a twig near the main stem of a tree, in these deep woods.

High blackberries now in their prime, their great racemes of shining black fruit, mixed with red and green, bent over amid the sweet-fern and sumach on sunny hillsides, or growing more rankly with larger fruit by rich roadsides and in lower ground.

The *chewink* note of a chewink (not common), also a cuckoo's note.

Smooth sumach berries all turned crimson. This fruit is now erect spear-heads, rising from the ample dark-green, unspotted leaves, pointing in various directions. I see dense patches of the pearly everlasting, maintaining their ground in the midst of dense green sweet-fern, a striking contrast of snow-white and green. *Viburnum nudum* berries, apparently but a day or two. *Epilobium angustifolium* is abundantly shedding its downy seed, — wands of white and pink.

Emerson says that he and Agassiz and Company broke some dozens of ale-bottles, one after another, with their bullets, in the Adirondack country, using them for marks! It sounds rather Cockneyish. He says that he shot a peetweet for Agassiz, and this, I think he said, was the first game he ever bagged. He carried a double-barrelled gun, — rifle and shotgun, — which he bought for

the purpose, which he says received much commendation, — all parties thought it a very pretty piece. Think of Emerson shooting a peetweet (with shot) for Agassiz, and cracking an ale-bottle (after emptying it) with his rifle at six rods! They cut several pounds of lead out of the tree. It is just what Mike Saunders, the merchant's clerk, did when he was there.

The writer needs the suggestion and correction that a correspondent or companion is. I sometimes remember something which I have told another as worth telling to myself, *i. e.* writing in my Journal.

Channing, thinking of walks and life in the country, says, "You don't want to discover anything new, but to discover something old," *i. e.* be reminded that such things still are.

Aug. 24. Edward Hoar brings *Cassia Chamæcrista* from Greenport, L. I., which must have been out a good while.

P. M. — Sail to Ball's (?) Hill.

It is a strong but fitful northwest wind, stronger than before. Under my new sail, the boat dashes off like a horse with the bits in his teeth. Coming into the main stream below the island, a sudden flaw strikes me, and in my efforts to keep the channel I run one side under, and so am compelled to beach my boat there and bail it.

They are haying still in the Great Meadows; indeed, not half the grass is cut, I think.

I am flattered because my stub sail frightens a haymakers' horse tied under a maple while his masters are loading. His nostrils dilate; he snorts and tries to break

loose. He eyes with terror this white wind steed. No wonder he is alarmed at my introducing such a competitor into the river meadows. Yet, large as my sail is, it being low I can scud down for miles through the very meadows in which dozens of haymakers are at work, and they may not detect me.

The zizania is the greater part out of bloom; *i. e.*, the yellowish-anthered (?) stamens are gone; the wind has blown them away. The *Bidens Beckii* has only begun a few days, it being rather high water. No hibiscus yet.

The white maples in a winding row along the river and the meadow's edge are rounded hoary-white masses, as if they showed only the under sides of their leaves. Those which have been changed by water are less bright than a week ago. They now from this point (Abner Buttrick's shore) are a pale lake, mingling very agreeably with the taller hoary-white ones. This little color in the hoary meadow edging is very exhilarating to behold and the most memorable phenomenon of the day. It is as when quarters of peach of this color are boiled with white apple-quarters. Is this anything like *murrey* color? In some other lights it is more red or scarlet.

Climbing the hill at the bend, I find *Gerardia Pedicularia*, apparently several days, or how long?

Looking up and down the river this sunny, breezy afternoon, I distinguish men busily haying in gangs of four or five, revealed by their white shirts, some two miles below, toward Carlisle Bridge, and others still, further up the stream. They are up to their shoulders in the grassy sea, almost lost in it. I can just discern a few white specks in the shiny grass, where the most distant

are at work. What an adventure, to get the hay from year to year from these miles on miles of river meadow! You see some carrying out the hay on poles, where it is too soft for cattle, and loaded carts are leaving the meadows for distant barns in the various towns that border on them.

I look down a straight reach of water to the hill by Carlisle Bridge, — and this I can do at any season, — the longest reach we have. It is worth the while to come here for this prospect, — to see a part of earth so far away over the water that it appears islanded between two skies. If that place is real, then the places of my imagination are real.

Desmodium Marylandicum apparently in prime along this Ball's (?) Hill low shore, and apparently another kind, *Dillenii* (??) or *rigidum* (??), the same. These and lespedezas now abound in dry places. Carrion-flower fruit is blue; how long? Squirrels have eaten hazelnuts and pitch pine cones for some days.

Now and of late we remember hazel bushes, — we become aware of such a fruit-bearing bush. They have their turn, and every clump and hedge seems composed of them. The burs begin to look red on their edges.

I notice, in the river, opposite the end of the meadow-path, great masses of ranunculus stems, etc., two or three feet through by a rod or more long, which look as if they had been washed or rolled aside by the wind and waves, amid the potamogeton.

I have just read of a woodchuck that came to a boat on Long Island Sound to be taken in!

Pipes (*Equisetum limosum*) are brown and half-withered along the river, where they have been injured by water.

Aug. 25. It has been cool and especially windy from the northwest since the 19th, inclusive, but is stiller now.

The note of a warbling vireo sounds very rare.

P. M. — To Lupine Hill and beyond.

I see a mouse on the dry hillside this side of Clamshell. It is evidently the short-tailed meadow mouse, or *Arvicola hirsuta*. Generally above, it is very dark brown, almost blackish, being browner forward. It is also dark beneath. Tail but little more than one inch long. Its legs must be very short, for I can hardly glimpse them. Its nose is not sharp. It endeavors to escape down the hill to the meadow, and at first glides along in a sort of path (?), methinks. It glides close to the ground under the stubble and tries to conceal itself.

I gather from Nut Meadow Brook, not far below the road, a potamogeton (perhaps *P. Claytoni* (*heterophyllus* of Gray), which Russell said was the one by road at Jenny Dugan's). It is still out. Has handsome broad, grassy immersed leaves and somewhat elliptic floating ones.

I distinguish these plants this afternoon: *Cyperus filiculmis* (*Mariscoides*, or tuberous cyperus of Bigelow) in arid, sandy pastures, with globular green heads and slender, commonly slanting culms, five to twelve inches long. It is perhaps getting stale. The prevalent grass in John Hosmer's meadow I take to be cut-grass?[1] Long since done, and the leaves now commonly purplish, re-

[1] No.

flecting that color in the sun from a distance. The *Paspalum setaceum* (*ciliatifolium*), my saw-grass, which I have seen for some time, commonly cut off by the mowers, apparently in prime or past. *Eragrostis capillaris* [1] (*Poa hirsuta*), hair spear-grass, perhaps not quite so bright as heretofore. Money-Diggers' Hollow has the most of it. Say a week in prime. *Fimbrystilis capillaris* (*Scirpus capillaris*), that little scirpus

turning yellowish in sandy soil, as our garden and Lupine Hill sand. Some time in prime. *Cyperus strigosus* under Clamshell Hill, that yellowish fuzzy-headed plant, five to twelve inches high, now apparently in prime. Also in Mrs. Hoar's garden. Also *Cyperus phymatodes*, very much like last, in Mrs. Hoar's garden, which has little tubers at a distance from the base; apparently in prime. *Cyperus dentatus* (?), with flat spikelets, under Solidago rigida Bank, apparently in prime; also [at] Pout's Nest, with round fascicles of leaves amid spikes. *Juncus scirpoides* [2] (?) (*polycephalus*, many-headed of Bigelow), at Alder Ditch and in Great Meadows, etc., perhaps some time. *Andropogon furcatus*, forked beard grass, Solidago rigida Bank, a slender grass three to seven feet high on dry soil, apparently in prime with digitate purple spikes, all over hillside behind Cæsar's. *Setaria glauca*, glaucous panic grass, bottle grass, sometimes called fox-tail, tawny yellow, going to seed, Mrs. Hoar's garden. *Setaria viridis*, green bottle grass, in garden, some going to seed, but later than the last. These two I have called millet grass. *Aristida*

[1] [*Capillaris* is crossed out in pencil and *pectinacea* substituted.]

[2] Is it not *paradoxus*? *Vide* Aug. 30.

dichotoma,[1] poverty grass, slender, curving, purplish, in tufts on sterile soil, looking white fuzzy as it goes to seed; apparently in prime.

Aug. 26. P. M. — To Great Meadows.

The *Solidago arguta* is apparently in its prime. Hips of moss rose not long scarlet. The *Juncus effusus*, a long [time] withered (the upper part). The liatris is about (or nearly) in prime. *Aster lævis*, how long?

Two interesting tall purplish grasses appear to be the prevailing ones now in dry and sterile neglected fields and hillsides, — *Andropogon furcatus*, forked beard grass, and apparently *Andropogon scoparius*,[2] purple wood grass, though the last appears to have three awns like an *Aristida*. The first is a very tall and slender-culmed grass, with four or five purple finger-like spikes, raying upward from the top. It is very abundant on the hillside behind Peter's. The other is also quite slender, two to three or four feet high, growing in tufts

and somewhat curving, also commonly purple and with pretty purple stigmas like the last, and it has purple anthers.[3] When out of bloom, its appressed spikes are recurving and have a whitish hairy or fuzzy look.

These are the prevailing conspicuous flowers where I walk this afternoon in dry ground. I have sympathy with them because they are despised by the farmer and

[1] *Andropogon scoparius*, purple wood grass?

[2] Put with this *Andropogon, i. e. Sorghum, nutans*. *Vide* Sept. 6th.

[3] Broom grass, perhaps.

occupy sterile and neglected soil. They also by their rich purple reflections or tinges seem to express the ripeness of the year. It is high-colored like ripe grapes, and expresses a maturity which the spring did not suggest. Only the August sun could have thus burnished these culms and leaves. The farmer has long since done his upland haying, and he will not deign to bring his scythe to where these slender wild grasses have at length flowered thinly. You often see the bare sand between them. I walk encouraged between the tufts of purple wood grass, over the sandy fields by the shrub oaks, glad to recognize these simple contemporaries. These two are almost the first grasses that I have learned to distinguish. I did not know by how many friends I was surrounded. The purple of their culms excites me like that of the pokeweed stems.

Think what refuge there is for me before August is over, from college commencements and society that isolates me! I can skulk amid the tufts of purple wood grass on the borders of the Great Fields! Wherever I walk this afternoon the purple-fingered grass stands like a guide-board and points my thoughts to more poetic paths than they have lately travelled.

A man shall, perchance, rush by and trample down plants as high as his head, and cannot be said to know that they exist, though he may have cut and cured many tons of them for his cattle. Yet, perchance, if he ever favorably attend to them, he may be overcome by their beauty.

Each humblest plant, or weed, as we call it, stands there to express some thought or mood of ours, and yet

how long it stands in vain! I have walked these Great Fields so many Augusts and never yet distinctly recognized these purple companions that I have there. I have brushed against them and trampled them down, forsooth, and now at last they have, as it were, risen up and blessed me. Beauty and true wealth are always thus cheap and despised. Heaven, or paradise, might be defined as the place which men avoid. Who can doubt that these grasses which the farmer says are of no account to him find some compensation in my appreciation of them? I may say that I never saw them before, or can only recall a dim vision of them, and now wherever I go I hardly see anything else. It is the reign and presidency only of the andropogons.[1]

I walk down the Great Meadows on the upland side. They are still mowing, but have not got more than half, and probably will not get nearly all. I see where the tufts of *Arum peltandrum* have been cut off by the mower, and the leaves are all gone, but the still green fruit, which had curved downward close to the ground on every side amid the stubble, was too low for his scythe, and so escaped. Thus this plant is perpetuated in such localities, though it may be cut before the seed is mature.

The wool-grass, black-bracted, of these meadows long since went out of bloom, and is now not merely withered at top but wasted half away, and is quite gray, while that which I examine in another meadow, green-bracted, has but recently ceased to bloom. Looking from this side, the meadow appears to be filled almost exclusively with wool-grass, yet very little has any culm or has blossomed

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 255–257; Riv. 313–316.]

this year. I notice, however, one tract, in the midst of the rest, an oblong square with perfectly straight sides, reaching from the upland toward the river, where it has quite generally blossomed and the culms still stand as high as my head. This, plainly, is because the land of a particular proprietor has been subjected to a peculiar treatment.

Minott tells me that once, one very dry summer, when but part of these meadows had been cut, Moore and Hosmer got the owners to agree to have them burnt over, in the expectation that it would improve the quality of the grass, and they made quite an affair of it, — had a chowder, cooked by Moore's boys, etc.; but the consequence was that this wool-grass came in next year more than ever.

Some come a good way for their meadow-grass, even from Lincoln. George Baker has some in this meadow and some in the Sudbury meadows. But Minott says they want to get rid of their river meadow now, since they can get more and very much better grass off their redeemed swamps, or meadows of their own making, near home. Hardhack, meadow-sweet, alders, maples, etc., etc., appear to be creeping into the meadow. M. says they used to mow clean up to the ditch by the hard land. He remembers how he used to suffer from the heat, working out in the sun on these broad meadows, and when they took their luncheon, how glad he was to lie along close to the water, on the wet ground under the white maples by the riverside. And then one would swim a horse over at the Holt,[1] go up to Jack Buttrick's

[1] Goodwin puts the "Holt" lower down, where I did.

(now Abner's), where there was a well of cool water, and get one or two great jugs full, with which he recrossed on the horse. He tells of one fellow who trod water across there with a jug in each hand!

He has seen young woodcocks in the nest there, *i. e.* on the ground where he had mowed, the middle of August; and used to see the summer ducks perched on the maples, on some large limb close up to the main stem, since they cannot cling to a small twig.

Aug. 27. P. M. — To Walden.

Dog-day weather again to-day, of which we had had none since the 18th, — *i. e.* clouds without rain. Wild carrot on railroad, apparently in prime. *Hieracium Canadense*, apparently in prime, and perhaps *H. scabrum*. Lactuca, apparently much past prime, or nearly done. The *Nabalus albus* has been out some ten days, but *N. Fraseri* at Walden road will not open, apparently, for some days yet.

I see round-leaved cornel fruit on Heywood Peak, now half China-blue and half white, each berry. *Rhus Toxicodendron* there is half of it turned scarlet and yellow, as if we had had a severe drought, when it has been remarkably wet. It seems, then, that in such situations some plants will always assume this prematurely withered autumnal aspect. *Orchis lacera*, probably done some time. Robins fly in flocks.

Apparently *Juncus tenuis*, some time out of bloom, by depot wood-piles, *i. e.* between south wood-shed and good apple tree; some fifteen inches high. More at my boat's shore.

Aug. 28. Soaking rain last night, straight down. When the wind stirs after the rain, leaves that were prematurely ripe or withered begin to strew the ground on the leeward side. Especially the scarlet leaves of the cultivated cherry are seen to have fallen. Their change, then, is not owing to drought, but commonly a portion of them ripens thus early, reminding us of October and November. When, as I go to the post-office this morning, I see these bright leaves strewing the moist ground on one side of the tree and blown several rods from it into a neighboring yard, I am reminded that I have crossed the summit ridge of the year and have begun to descend the other slope. The prospect is now toward winter. These are among the first-fruits of the leafy harvest.

The sharp whistling note of a downy woodpecker, which sounds rare; perhaps not heard since spring.

Aug. 29. I hear this morning one *eat it potter* from a golden robin. They are now rarely seen.

The ghost-horse (*Spectrum*) is seen nowadays, — several of them. All these high colors in the stems and leaves and other portions of plants answer to some maturity in us. I presume if I am the wiser for having lived this season through, such plants will emblazon the truth of my experience over the face of nature, and I shall be aware of a beauty and sweetness there.

Has not the mind, too, its harvest? Do not some scarlet leaves of thought come scatteringly down, though it may be prematurely, some which, perchance, the summer's drought has ripened, and the rain loosened? Are there

no purple reflections from the culms of thought in my mind?

I remember when boiled green corn was sold piping hot on a muster-field in this town, and my father says that he remembers when it used to be carried about the streets of Boston in large baskets on the bare heads of negro women, and gentlemen would stop, buy an ear, and eat it in the street.

Ah! what a voice was that hawk's or eagle's of the 22d! Think of hearing, as you walk the earth, as usual in leaden shoes, a fine, shrill scream from time to time, which you would vainly endeavor to refer to its true source if you had not watched the bird in its upward flight. It comes from yonder black spot on the bosom of a cloud. I should not have suspected that sound to have issued from the bosom of a cloud if I had not seen the bird. What motive can an eagle have for screaming among the clouds, unobserved by terrestrial creatures? We walk invested by sound, — the cricket in the grass and the eagle in the clouds. And so it circled over, and I strained my eyes to follow it, though my ears heard it without effort.

Almost the very sands confess the ripening influence of the August sun, and, methinks, with the slender grasses waving over them, reflect a purple tinge. The empurpled sands. Such is the consequence of all this sunshine absorbed into the pores of plants and of the earth. All sap or blood is wine-colored. The very bare sands, methinks, yield a purple reflection. At last we have not only the purple sea, but the purple land.[1]

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 257, 258; Riv. 316.]

P. M. — To J. Farmer's *via* Assabet.

As, standing up in my boat, I am watching some minnows at the Prichard bend steadily stemming the current in the sunny water between the waving potamogeton, right under my face, I see a musquash gliding along above the sand directly beneath them, a perfect denizen of the water as much as they. This rat was a pale brown, as light as pale-brown paper or perfectly withered white oak leaves. Its coat is never of this color out of water, and I suppose it was because it was completely coated with air. This makes it less visible on a sandy bottom.

Is not that *Eleocharis tenuis*, long since out of bloom, growing in the water along the Merrick shore, near the oak; round culms, fifteen inches to two feet high? A spiked rush, without a leaf, and round. I can hardly find a head left on it. Yet Flint says this blooms in August! It grows in dense fields like pipes. Did I find it before this year?

The mikania is apparently in prime or a little past. Perhaps the front-rank polygonum is in prime now, for there is apparently more than before.

I look along Mantatuket Field hedge to see if there are hazelnuts there, but am surprised to find that thereabouts the bushes have been completely stripped by squirrels already and the rich brown burs are strewn on the ground beneath. What a fine brown these dried burs have already acquired, — not chestnut nor hazel! I fear it is already too late for me, though I find some yet quite green in another place. They must have been very busy collecting these nuts and husking them for a

fortnight past, climbing to the extremities of the slender twigs. Who witnesses the gathering of the hazelnuts, the hazel harvest? Yet what a busy and important season to the striped squirrel! Now, if ever, he needs to get up a bee. Every nut that I could find left in that field was a poor one. By more frequented paths the squirrels have not worked yet. Take warning from the squirrel, which is already laying up his winter store.

I see some *Cornus sericea* berries turning. The Assabet helianthus (apparently variety of *decapetalus*), well out some days at least. Are not the petals peculiarly reflexed? Small botrychium in the bobolink meadow, not yet. *Gentiana Andrewsii*, one not quite shedding pollen.

Before bathing at the Pokelogan, I see and hear a school of large suckers, which have come into this narrow bay and are swiftly dashing about and rising to the surface, with a bubbling sound, as if to snatch something from the surface. They agitate the whole bay. They [are] great ruddy-looking fellows, limber with life. How intelligent of all watery knowledge! They seem to measure the length, breadth, and depth of that cove — which perhaps they never entered before — with every wave of their fins. They feel it all at once. With what superfluous vigor they seem to move about restlessly in their element! Lift them but six inches, and they would quirk their tails in vain. They are poor, soft fish, however, large as they are, and taste when cooked at present much like boiled brown paper.

The wild *Monarda fistulosa* is apparently nearly done. *Cicuta maculata*, apparently generally done.

J. Farmer shot a sharp-shinned hawk this morning,

which was endeavoring to catch one of his chickens. I bring it home and find that it measures seventeen inches in length and thirty in alar extent, and the tail extends four inches beyond the closed wings. It has a very large head, and the wing is six and a half inches wide at the secondaries. It is dark-brown above, skirted with ferruginous; scapulars, with white spots; legs, bright-yellow; iris, yellow. Has those peculiar pendulous lobes to the feet, which Farmer thinks are to enable it to hold a small bone of its prey between the nail and the lobe, as it feeds, while perching. The breast and belly feathers are shafted with dark-brown pointed spots. Vent white. There are three obvious slate-colored bars to tail, alternating with the black.[1]

F. says that he has seen the nest of a smaller hawk, the pigeon hawk, heretofore, on an oak (in Owl-Nest Swamp), made of sticks, some fifteen feet from ground. R. Rice says that he has found the nest of the pigeon hawk hereabouts.

We go to see a bittern nest by Spencer Brook. F. says they call the cardinal-flower "slink-weed," and say that the eating it will cause cows to miscarry. He calls the *Viburnum nudum* "withe-wood," and makes a withe by treading on one end and twisting by the other till he cracks it and makes it flexible so that it will bend without breaking. The bittern's nest was close to the edge of the brook, eighteen inches above the water, and was made of the withered sedge that had grown close by (*i. e.* wool-grass, etc.) and what I have called [two] pages back *Eleocharis tenuis*. It was quite a deep nest, like

[1] I have the wing, legs, and tail of this specimen. *Vide* next page.

and as big as a hen's nest, deep in the grass. He or his son saw the young about it a month ago.

He hears — heard a week ago — the sound of a bird flying over, like *cra-a-ack*, *cr-r-r-a-k*, only in the night, and thinks it may be a blue heron.[1]

We saw where many cranberries had been frost-bitten, F. thinks the night of the 23d. They are much injured. *Spiranthes cernua*, how long? Near the bittern-nest, grows what F. calls blue-joint grass; out of bloom.

Returning, rather late afternoon, we saw some forty martins sitting in a row and twittering on the ridge of his *old* house, apparently preparing to migrate. He had never seen it before. Soon they all took to flight and filled the air in the neighborhood.

The sharp-shinned hawk of to-day is much larger than that of July 21st, though the colors, etc., etc., appear to be essentially the same. Yet its leg is not so stout as that which Farrar[2] gave me, but is at least half an inch longer.[3] The toes, especially, are longer and more slender, but I am not sure whether Farrar's hawk has those pendulous lobes, the foot is so dry, nor if it had sharp-edged shin, it being eaten away by worms. The inner vanes of the primaries of Farrar's bird are brighter white with much narrower bars of blackish. The longest primary of Farrar's bird is about ten inches; that of to-day, about eight inches. I find the outside tail-feathers of to-day's bird much harder to pull than the inside ones![4]

[1] *Vide* three pages forward.

[2] *Vide* Oct. 11, 1856.

[3] Which makes me think Farrar's another species. He said it had not a white rump.

[4] *Vide* July 21st. *Vide* May 17, 1860.

Our black willow is of so peculiar and light a green, so ethereal, that, as I look back forty rods at those by the Heron Rock, their outlines are seen with perfect distinctness against the darker green of maples, etc., three or four rods behind them, as if they were a green cloud or smoke blown by. They are seen as distinctly against these other trees as they would be against the sky.

Rice tells me a queer story. Some twenty-five years ago he and his brother William took a journey in their wagon into the northwest part of Maine, carrying their guns and fishing-tackle with them. At Fryeburg they visited the scene of Lovewell's Fight, and, seeing some trout in the stream there, they tried to dig some fishworms for bait, but they could not find any. So they asked a boy where they got fishworms, but he did not know what they meant. "Long, slender worms, angleworms," said they; but he only answered that he had seen worms in their manure-heap (which were grubs). On inquiring further, they found that the inhabitants had never seen nor heard of angleworms, and one old settler, who had come from Massachusetts and had lived there thirty years, declared that there was no such worm in that neighborhood.

Mr. Farmer gave me a turtle-shaped bug found by Melvin on a board by the river, some time ago.

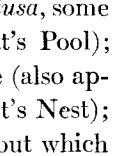
I hear A—— W—— complained of for overworking his cattle and hired men, but there is this to be said in his favor, that he does not spare himself. They say that he made his horse "Tom" draw twenty-nine hundred of hay to Boston the other day, — or night, — but then he

put his shoulder to the wheel at every hill. I hear that since then the horse has died, but W—— is alive and working.

How hard one must work in order to acquire his language, — words by which to express himself! I have known a particular rush, for instance, for at least twenty years, but have ever been prevented from describing some [of] its peculiarities, because I did not know its name nor any one in the neighborhood who could tell me it. With the knowledge of the name comes a distincter recognition and knowledge of the thing. That shore is now more describable, and poetic even. My knowledge was cramped and confined before, and grew rusty because not used, — for it could not be used. My knowledge now becomes communicable and grows by communication. I can now learn what others know about the same thing.

Aug. 30. P. M. — To bayonet rush by river.

Find at Dodd's shore: *Eleocharis obtusa*, some time out of bloom (fresh still at Pratt's Pool); also *Juncus acuminatus* (?), just done (also apparently *later* and yet in bloom at Pout's Nest); also what I called *Juncus scirpoides*, but which appears to be *Juncus paradoxus*, with seeds tailed at both ends, (it is fresher than what I have seen before, and smaller), not done. Some of it with few flowers! A terete leaf rises above the flower. It looks like a small bayonet rush.



The *Juncus militaris* has been long out of bloom. The leaf is three feet long; the whole plant, four or five.

It grows on edge of Grindstone Meadow and above. It would look more like a bayonet if the leaf were shorter than the flowering stem, which last is the bayonet part. This is my rainbow rush.

All over Ammannia Shore and on bare spots in meadows generally, *Fimbristylis autumnalis*, apparently in prime; minute, two to five inches high, with aspect of *F. capillaris*.

As I am now returning over Lily Bay, I hear behind me a singular loud stertorous sound which I thought might have been made by a cow out of order, twice sounded. Looking round, I saw a blue heron flying low, about forty rods distant, and have no doubt the sound was made by him. Probably this is the sound which Farmer hears.[1]

Aug. 31. P. M. — To Flint's Pond.

A hot afternoon. We have had but few warmer. I hear and see but few bobolinks or blackbirds for several days past. The former, at least, must be withdrawing. I have not heard a seringo of late, but I see to-day one golden robin. The birches have lately lost a great many of their lower leaves, which now cover and yellow the ground. Also some chestnut leaves have fallen. Many brakes in the woods are perfectly withered.

At the Pout's Nest, Walden, I find the *Scirpus debilis*, apparently in prime, generally aslant; also the *Cyperus dentatus*, with some spikes changed into leafy tufts; also here less advanced what I have called *Juncus acuminatus*.

[1] *Vide* three pages back.

Ludwigia alternifolia still. Sericocarpus about done.

High blackberries are abundant in Britton's field. At a little distance you would not suspect that there were any, — even vines, — for the racemes are bent down out of sight, amid the dense sweet-ferns and sumachs, etc. The berries still not more than half black or ripe, keeping fresh in the shade. Those in the sun are a little wilted and insipid.

The smooth sumach's lower leaves are bright-scarlet on dry hills. *Lobelia Dortmanna* is not quite done. Some ground-nuts are washed out.

The Flint's Pond rush appears to be *Cladium mariscoides*, twig rush, or, in Bigelow, water bog rush, a good while out of bloom; style three-cleft. It is about three feet high. This, with *Eleocharis palustris*, which is nearest the shore, forms the dense rushy border of the pond. It extends along the whole of this end, at least about four rods wide, and almost every one of the now dry and brown flower-heads has a cobweb on it. I perceive that the slender semicircular branchlets so fit to the grooved or flattened culm as still, when pressed against it, to make it cylindrical! — very neatly.

The monotropa is still pushing up. Red choke-berry, apparently not long.

At Goose Pond I scare up a small green bittern. It plods along low, a few feet over the surface, with limping flight, and alights on a slender water-killed stump, and voids its excrement just as it starts again, as if to lighten itself.

Edward Bartlett brings me a nest found three feet from the ground in an arbor-vitæ, in the New Burying-

Ground,[1] with one long-since addled egg in it. It is a very thick, substantial nest, five or six inches in diameter and rather deep; outwardly of much coarse stubble with its fine root-fibres attached, loose and dropping off, around a thin casing of withered leaves; then finer stubble within, and a lining of fine grass stems and horse-hair. The nest is most like that found on Cardinal Shore with an addled pale-bluish egg, which I thought a wood thrush's at first, except that that has no casing of leaves. It is somewhat like a very large purple finch's nest, or perchance some red-wing's with *a hair lining*. The egg is three quarters of an inch long, rather broad at one end (or for length), greenish-white with brown dashes or spots, becoming a large conspicuous purple-brown blotch at the large end; almost exactly like — but a little greener (or bluer) and a little smaller — the egg found on the ground in R. W. E.'s garden. Do the nest and egg belong together? Was not the egg dropped by a bird of passage in another's nest? Can it be an indigo-bird's nest? I take it to be too large.

[1] *Vide* the nest.