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MAY, 1859

(ÆT. 41)

May 1. Hear the ruby-crowned wren.

We accuse savages of worshipping only the bad spirit, or devil, though they may distinguish both a good and a bad; but they regard only that one which they fear and worship the devil only. We too are savages in this, doing precisely the same thing. This occurred to me yesterday as I sat in the woods admiring the beauty of the blue butterfly. We are not chiefly interested in birds and insects, for example, as they are ornamental to the earth and cheering to man, but we spare the lives of the former only on condition that they eat more grubs than they do cherries, and the only account of the insects which the State encourages is of the "*Insects Injurious to Vegetation.*" We too admit both a good and a bad spirit, but we worship chiefly the bad spirit, whom we fear. We do not think first of the good but of the harm things will do us.

The catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, which of course is applicable mainly to God as seen in his works. Yet the only account of its beautiful insects — butterflies, etc. — which God has made and set before us which the State ever thinks of spending any money on is the account of those which are injurious to vegetation!

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GLORIFYING GOD

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This is the way we glorify God and enjoy him forever. Come out here and behold a thousand painted butterflies and other beautiful insects which people the air, then go to the libraries and see what kind of prayer and glorification of God is there recorded. Massachusetts has published her report on "*Insects Injurious to Vegetation,*" and our neighbor the "*Noxious Insects of New York.*" We have attended to the evil and said nothing about the good. This is looking a gift horse in the mouth with a vengeance. Children are attracted by the beauty of butterflies, but their parents and legislators deem it an idle pursuit. The parents remind me of the devil, but the children of God. Though God may have pronounced his work good, we ask, "Is it not poisonous?"

Science is inhuman. Things seen with a microscope begin to be insignificant. So described, they are as monstrous as if they should be magnified a thousand diameters. Suppose I should see and describe men and houses and trees and birds as if they were a thousand times larger than they are! With our prying instruments we disturb the balance and harmony of nature.

P. M. — To Second Division.

Very warm. Looking from Clamshell over Hosmer's meadow, about half covered with water, see hundreds of turtles, chiefly *pieta*, now first lying out in numbers on the brown pieces of meadow which rise above the water. You see their black backs shine on these hummocks left by the ice, fifty to eighty rods off. They would rapidly tumble off if you went much nearer.

This heat and stillness draws them up. It is remarkable how surely they are advertised of the first warm and still days, and in an hour or two are sure to spread themselves over the hummocks. There is to-day a general resurrection of them, and there they bask in the sun. It is their sabbath. At this distance, if you are on the lookout, especially with a glass, you can discover what numbers of them there are, but they are shy and will drop into the water on a near approach. All up and down our river meadows their backs are shining in the sun to-day. It is a turtle day.

As we sat on the steep hillside south of Nut Meadow Brook Crossing, we noticed a remarkable whirlwind on a small scale, which carried up the oak leaves from that Island copse in the meadow. The oak leaves now hang thinly and are very dry and light, and these small whirlwinds, which seem to be occasioned by the sudden hot and calm weather (like whirlpools or dimples in a smooth stream), wrench them off, and up they go, somewhat spirally, in countless flocks like birds, with a rustling sound; and higher and higher into the clear blue deeps they rise above our heads, till they are fairly lost to sight, looking, when last seen, mere light specks against the blue, like stars by day, in fact. I could distinguish some, I have no doubt, five or six hundred feet high at least, but if I looked aside a moment they were lost. The largest oak leaves looked not bigger than a five-cent-piece. These were drifting eastward, — to descend where? Methought that, instead of decaying on the earth or being consumed by fire, these were being translated and would soon be taken in at

the windows of heaven. I had never observed this phenomenon so remarkable. The flight of the leaves. This was quite local, and it was comparatively still where we sat a few rods on one side. Thousands went up together in a rustling flock.

Many of the last oak leaves hang thus ready to go up. I noticed two or more similar whirlwinds in the woods elsewhere this afternoon. One took up small twigs and clusters of leaves from the ground, matted together. I could easily see where it ran along with its nose (or point of its tunnel) close to the ground, stirring up the leaves as it travelled, like the snout of some hunting or rooting animal.

See and hear chewink.

See a little snake on the dry twigs and chips in the sun, near the arbutus, uniformly brown (or reddish-brown) above except a yellowish ring on the occiput, the head also lighter than the body; beneath vermilion, with apparently a row of light dots along each side. It is apparently *Coluber amænus* (?), except that it has the yellowish ring.

Luzula campestris. Also the *Oryzopsis Canadensis* by the Major Heywood path-side, say a day, or April 30th, six inches high or more, with fine bristle-like leaves. See a thrasher.

What is that rush at Second Division? It now forms a dense and very conspicuous mass some four rods long and one foot high. The top for three inches is red, and the impression at a little distance is like that made by sorrel. Certainly no plant of this character exhibits such a growth now, *i. e.* in the mass. It

surprises you to see it, carries your thoughts on to June.

The climbing fern is persistent, *i. e.* retains its greenness still, though now partly brown and withered.

May 2. Small pewee and young lackey caterpillars.

I see on the *Salix rostrata* by railroad many honeybees laden with large and peculiarly orange-colored pellets of its pollen.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

Those swarms of small miller-like insects which fly low over the surface of the river, sometimes constantly falling to and touching the surface and then rising again. When at rest they are seen to be blackish-winged, but flying they look light-colored. They flutter low and continuously over the same place. Theirs is a sort of dance.

A peewee and its mate at Mantatuket Rock. The river seems really inhabited when the peewee is back and those little light-winged millers (?). This bird does not return to our stream until the weather is decidedly pleasant and warm. He is perched on the accustomed rock. Its note peoples the river, like the prattle of children once more in the yard of a house that has stood empty.

I am surprised by the tender yellowish green of the aspen leaf just expanded suddenly, even like a fire, seen in the sun, against the dark-brown twigs of the wood, though these leaflets are yet but thinly dispersed. It is very enlivening.

I heard yesterday, and perhaps for several days, the

soft purring sound of what I take to be the *Rana palustris*, breeding, though I did not this time see the frog.

I feel no desire to go to California or Pike's Peak, but I often think at night with inexpressible satisfaction and yearning of the *arrowheadiferous* sands of Concord. I have often spent whole afternoons, especially in the spring, pacing back and forth over a sandy field, looking for these relics of a race. This is the gold which our sands yield. The soil of that rocky spot on Simon Brown's land is quite ash-colored — now that the sod is turned up — by Indian fires, with numerous pieces of coal in it. There is a great deal of this ash-colored soil in the country. We do literally plow up the hearths of a people and plant in their ashes. The ashes of their fires color much of our soil.

May 3. Surveying the Bedford road.

Hear the *te-e-e* of a white-throat sparrow.

I hear of phœbes', robins', and bluebirds' nests and eggs. I have not heard any snipes boom for about a week, nor seen a tree sparrow *certainly* since April 30 (??), nor *F. hyemalis* for several days.

May 4. Wednesday. P. M. — To Lee's Cliff on foot.

This the fourth warm day.

The cassandra (in full bloom) swarms with little bees, and amid them is one bumblebee which they appear to molest from time to time, and afterward I see one flying high overhead at Holden Swamp.

Notice the white willows on Hubbard's Bridge cause-

way, — quite a mass of green when seen aslant from this side, and have been two or three days, but as yet no bloom there nor hum of bees. Also their freshest osiers are very bright, yet I think most of it is due to the height at which the sun runs. They are priests of the sun, report his brightness, — heliometers. We do not realize how much more light there is in the day than in winter. If the ground should be covered with snow, the reflection would dazzle us and blister our faces. This willow begins to be green before the aspens, — say five or six days ago.

It is now quite dry, especially the leaves in the woods, and this is the time for fires in the woods. I have seen the smoke of several within a week or ten days.

A small willow inside wall just beyond Conant's bars has begun to leaf two or three days. It is either *discolor* or *humilis*, having large and old fertile catkins.

Crossing that first Conantum field, I perceive a peculiar fragrance in the air (not *the* meadow fragrance), like that of vernal flowers or of expanding buds. The ground is covered with the mouse-ear in full bloom, and it may be that in part. It is a temperate southwest breeze, and this is a scent as of willows (flowers and leafets), bluets, violets, shad-bush, mouse-ear, etc., combined; or perhaps the last chiefly; at any rate it is very perceptible. The air is more genial, laden with the fragrance of spring flowers. I, sailing in the spring ocean, getting in from my winter voyage, begin to smell the land. Such a scent perceived by a mariner would be very exciting. I not only smell the land breeze, but I

perceive in it the fragrance of spring flowers. I draw near to the land; I begin to lie down and stretch myself on it. After my winter voyage I begin to smell the land.

I came out expecting to see the redstart or the parti-colored warbler, and as soon as I get within a dozen rods of the Holden wood I hear the screeper note of the tweezer-bird, *i. e.* parti-colored warbler, which also I see, but not distinctly. Two or three are flitting from tree-top to tree-top about the swamp there, and you have only to sit still on one side and wait for them to come round. The water has what you may call a summer ripple and sparkle on it; *i. e.*, the ripple does not suggest coldness in the breeze that raises it. It is a hazy day; the air is hazed, you might fancy, with a myriad expanding buds.

After crossing the Arrowhead Fields, we see a woodchuck run along and climb to the top of a wall and sit erect there, — our first. It is almost exactly the color of the ground and the wall and the bare brown twigs, all together. And when in the Miles Swamp Field we see two, one chasing the other, coming very fast down the lilac field hill straight toward [us], while we squat still in the middle of the field. The foremost is a small gray or slaty-colored one, the other two or three times as heavy and a warm tawny, decidedly yellowish in the sun, a very large and fat one, pursuing the first. I think this must be the male in pursuit of the female. Suddenly the foremost, when thirty or forty rods off, perceives us, and tries as it were to sink into the earth, and finally gets behind a low tuft of grass and peeps

out. Also the other (which at first appears to fondle the earth, inclining his cheek to it and dragging his body a little along it) tries to hide himself, and at length gets behind an apple tree and peeps out on one side in an amusing manner. This makes three that we see. They are clumsy runners, with their short legs and heavy bodies, — run with an undulating or wobbling motion, jerking up the hind quarters. Their tails were dark-tipped. They can run pretty fast, however. Their tails are low when running.

Looking up through this soft and warm southwest wind, I notice the conspicuous shadow of Middle Conantum Cliff, now at 3 P. M., and elsewhere the shade of a few apple trees, — their trunks and boughs. Through this warm and hazy air the sheeny surface of the hill, now considerably greened, looks soft as velvet, and June is suggested to my mind. It is remarkable that shadow should only be noticed now when decidedly warm weather comes, though before the leaves have expanded, *i. e.*, when it begins to be grateful to our senses. The shadow of the Cliff is like a dark pupil on the side of the hill. This first shadow is as noticeable and memorable as a flower. I observe annually the first shadow of this cliff. When we begin to pass from sunshine into shade for our refreshment; when we look on shade with yearning as on a friend. That cliff and its shade suggests dark eyes and eyelashes and overhanging brows. Few things are more suggestive of heat than this first shade, though now we see only the tracery of tree-boughs on the greening grass and the sandy street. This I notice at the same time with the first

bumblebee, when the *Rana palustris* purrs in the meadow generally, the white willow and aspen display their tender green full of yellow light, the parti-colored warbler is first heard over the swamp, the woodchuck, who loves warmth, is out on the hillsides in numbers, the jingle of the chip-bird is incessantly heard, the thrasher sings incessantly, the first cricket is heard in a warm rocky place, and that scent of vernal flowers is in the air. This is an intenser expression of that same influence or aspect of nature which I began to perceive ten days ago (*vide* 25th), — the same *lieferung*.

These days we begin to think in earnest of bathing in the river, and to sit at an open window. Life out of doors begins.

It would require a good deal of time and patience to study the habits of woodchucks, they are so shy and watchful. They hear the least sound of a footstep on the ground, and are quick to see also. One should go clad in a suit somewhat like their own, the warp of tawny and the woof of green, and then, with a painted or well-tanned face, he might lie out on a sunny bank till they appeared.

We hear a thrasher sing for half an hour steadily, — a very rich singer and heard a quarter of a mile off very distinctly. This is first heard commonly at planting-time. He sings as if conscious of his power.

See little apple trees just springing up in cow-dung. Under Lee's Cliff, a phoebe's nest and one egg, with apparently a cowbird's egg, — which is here, then, — but unusually long with a very broad ring of chestnut-

brown about the larger end, contrasting with the smaller flesh-colored egg of the phœbe.

The grass of the river meadows shooting up is now a glaucous green, while that of the uplands is dark-green. The former, or sedge, is [a] very erect and stiff spear, while the latter is an inclined and flexible blade.

Hear the exact note of the pe-pe once, but at the same time with the thrasher at Bittern Cliff. Could it have been the last??

A carex at Lee's, say May 1st, at least, with broadish flaccid glaucous leaves. Call it *C. laxiflora*-like. I can find but one tuft that has not been nibbled off by rabbits or woodchucks, so fond are they of this early grass. Two grasses are almost in flower there.¹ Gather an apparent *Viola cucullata* (*vide press*), but close under the rocks. Can it be a distinct variety?

May 5. Thursday. P. M.—To Melvin's Preserve.

Red-wings fly in flocks yet. Near the oak beyond Jarvis land, a yellow butterfly, — how hot! this meteor dancing through the air. Also see a *scaloped*-edge dark-colored butterfly resting on the trunk of a tree, where, both by its form and color, its wings being closed, it resembles a bit of bark, or rather a lichen. Evidently their forms and colors, especially of the under sides of their wings, are designed to conceal them when at rest with their wings closed.

Am surprised to find the *Viola Muhlenbergii* quite abundant beyond the bayberry and near the wall. According to my observation this year, it now stands thus

¹ Is one the sweet-scented vernal?

with the violets: the *V. ovata* is the commonest, but not abundant in one spot; the *V. Muhlenbergii* is most abundant in particular spots, coloring the hummocks with its small pale flowers; the *V. blanda* and *cucullata* are, equally, less abundant than the former, or rather rare; *V. pedata* and *lanceolata* rarer yet, or not seen.

I noticed lately where middle-sized ants, half black and half sorrel, had completely removed the pine-needles from the crown of their large hills, leaving them bare like a mountain-top.

Am struck by the beauty of the yellow birches, now fairly begun to be in bloom, at Yellow Birch, or Botrychium, Swamp. It is perhaps the handsomest tree or shrub yet in bloom (apparently opened yesterday), of similar character to the alders and poplars, but larger and of higher color. You see a great tree all hung with long yellow or golden tassels at the end of its slender, drooping spray, in clusters at intervals of a few inches or a foot. These are all dangling and incessantly waving in the wind, — a great display of lively blossoms (lively both by their color and motion) without a particle of leaf. Yet they are dense enough to reveal the outline of the tree, seen against the bare twigs of itself and other trees. The tassels of this one in bloom are elongated to two or three times the length of those of another not in bloom by its side. These dancing tassels have the effect of the leaves of the tremble. Those not quite open have a rich, dark, speckled or braided look, almost equally handsome. Golden tassels all trembling in the gentlest breeze, the only signs of life on the trees. A careless observer might not notice them at all. The re-

awakened springy life of the swamp, the product of its golden veins. These graceful pendants, not in too heavy or dense masses, but thinly dispersed with a noble moderation. Great vegetable chandeliers they stand in the swamps. The unopened catkins, some more golden, others brown or coppery, are like living worms ready to assume a winged life. These trees, which cannot stir their stumps, thus annually assume this lively color and motion.

I see and am bitten by little black flies, — I should say the same with those of Maine, — here on the Melvin Preserve. One eighth of an inch long.

Brakes are five inches high. *Poa annua* (small and flat spreading in Pratt's garden), say a week.

The sun sets red (first time), followed by a very hot and hazy day.

The wilderness, in the eyes of our forefathers, was a vast and howling place or *space*, where a man might roam naked of house and most other defense, exposed to wild beasts and wilder men. They who went to war with the Indians and French were said to have been "out," and the wounded and missing who at length returned after a fight were said to have "got in," to Berwick or Saco, as the case might be.

Veronica peregrina, Pratt's garden.

May 6. Surveying for Willis & Damon at the factory. Hear the *tea-lee* of the white-throat sparrow. It is suddenly very warm and oppressive, especially in the woods with thick clothing. *Viola pedata* begins to be common about white pine woods there.

While surveying this forenoon behind Willis's house on the shore of the mill-pond, I saw remarkable swarms of that little fuzzy gnat (*Tipulidæ*). Hot as it was, — oppressively so, — they were collected in the hollows in the meadow, apparently to be out of the way of the little breeze that there was, and in many such places in the meadow, within a rod of the water, the ground was perfectly concealed by them. Nay, much more than that. I saw one shallow hollow some three feet across which was completely filled with them, all in motion but resting one upon another, to the depth, as I found by measurement, with a stick, of more than an inch, — a living mass of insect life. There were a hundred of these basins full of them, and I then discovered that what I had mistaken for some black dye on the wet shore was the bodies of those that were drowned and washed up, blackening the shore in patches for many feet together like so much mud. We were also troubled by getting them into our mouths and throats and eyes. This insect resembles the plate of the *Chironomus plumosus* ("Library of Entertaining Knowledge, Insect Transformations," page 305), also the *Corethra plumicornis* (page 287), both of which live at first in the water, like the mosquito.

Young red maples suddenly bursting into leaf are very conspicuous now in the woods, among the most prominent of all shrubs or trees. The sprouts are reddish.

Hear yellow-throat vireo, and probably some new warblers. See the strong-scented wood ants in a stump.

Black suckers, so called, are being speared at the factory bridge.

This is about the last of the very dry leaves in the woods, for soon the ground will be shaded by expanded green leaves. It is quite hazy, if not smoky, and I smell smoke in the air, this hot day. My assistants, being accustomed to work indoors in the factory, are quite overcome by this sudden heat. The old leaves and earth are driest now, just before the new leaves expand and when the heat is greatest. I see the black traces of many a recent fire in the woods, especially in young woods.

At evening I hear the first sultry buzz of a fly in my chamber, telling of sultry nights to come.

May 7. Saturday. Surveying Damon's Acton lot.

It is hotter still, — 88° or more, as I hear in the afternoon. I frequently see pigeons dashing about in small flocks, or three or four at a time, over the woods here. Theirs is a peculiarly swift, dashing flight. The mayflower is still sparingly in bloom on what I will call Mayflower Path in this lot. It is almost the prevailing undershrub here. I think I hear the redstart.

To-day and yesterday the sunlight is peculiarly yellow, on account of the smoky haze. I notice its peculiar yellowness, almost orange, even when, coming through a knot-hole in a dark room, it falls on the opposite wall. Such is the first hot weather.

May 8. Sunday. Hotter still than the last two days, — 90° and more. Summer yellowbird. C. sees a chimney swallow. Indeed, several new birds have come, and many new insects, with the expanding leaflets. Cat-bird. The swollen leaf-buds of the white pine — and

yet more the pitch pine — look whitish, and show life in the tree.

Go on the river.

The sweet flags, both pads, and equisetum and pontederia are suddenly becoming conspicuous, also the *Arum peltandrum*. Grackles here yet. Tree-toad is heard. Apple trees begin to make a show with their green. See two great devil's-needles go by coupled, the foremost blue, the second brown.

Hear a dor-bug in the house at evening.

May 9. Surveying for Stow near Flint's Pond.

Hear the warbling vireo and oven-bird; yellow-throat vireo (?). One helping me says he scared up a whip-poor-will from the ground.

See black birch bloom fallen effete.

The first thunder this afternoon.

May 11. Wednesday. Golden robin yesterday. Fir-balsam well out in the rain; so say 9th.

P. M. — To Flint's Pond.

Arum triphyllum out. Almost every one has a little fly or two concealed within. One of the handsomest-formed plants when in flower. Sorrel out in rain, apparently a day or two, — say 9th. A blue heron flies away from the shore of the pond.

Scirpus planifolius in bloom on Smith's wooded hill, side of Saw Mill Brook.

A partridge-nest, with eleven fresh eggs, at foot of a chestnut, one upon another. It is quite a deep cavity amid the leaves, with some feathers of the bird in it.

Young, or fresh-expanding, oak leaves are very handsome now, showing their colors. It is a leafy mist throughout the forest.

Uvularia perfoliata out in rain; say, then, the 9th. Just after plucking it I perceived what I call the meadow fragrance, though in the woods; but I afterward found that this flower was peculiarly fragrant, and its fragrance like that, so it was probably this which I had perceived. S. was reminded of the lily-of-the-valley by it.

The witch-hazel has one of the broadest leaves now.

In the path in Stow's wood-lot, I find apparently *Thaspium aureum* (*Zizia aurea*), which will open the first fair day.¹ Shows quite yellow now.

Found in the path in the woods by the Mill Brook ditch, Flint's Pond, dead, the *Coluber punctatus*, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, but no row of spots in middle of abdomen. The head above blackish with a blackish ring behind the yellow. Tail 3 inches long; breadth of body $\frac{5}{16}$; plates 162; scales 55. Above, uniform glossy slate-color, with a yellowish-white band across the occiput; the head above blackish, and a blackish band close behind the yellowish one. Beneath, yellow or buff (whitish under head), with a row of small slanting black spots, one on each side of each abdominal plate except the first $\frac{3}{4}$ inch behind the head. In the midst of the path in the woods. I admired the iridescence from its glossy belly. It differs from Storer's *C. punctatus*, for it is not brown above, nor "reddish yellow" beneath, and has no row of spots in middle of the abdomen.

In that first thunder-shower, the evening of the 9th,

¹ 13th in house and probably abroad.

the grass evidently erected itself and grew darker, as it were instantaneously. Was it the effect of electricity in the air? It looked very differently from what it had ten minutes before.

May 12. Dug up to-day the red-brown dor-bugs. My red oak acorns have sent down long radicles underground. A parti-colored warbler hangs dead downward like a goldfinch on our gooseberries, within a few feet of me, apparently about the blossoms.

May 13. Friday. Surveying Damon's Acton lot.

Hear the pe-pe and evergreen-forest note, also night-warbler (the last perhaps the 11th).

Apple in bloom.

May 14. Saturday. Surveying for Damon.

Rhodora out, says C. Yorrick heard the 12th. Did I hear a bobolink this morning? C. says he heard a yellow-legs yesterday.

Bought a black sucker (?), just speared at the factory dam, fifteen inches long, blacker than I am used to, I think; at any rate a very good fish to eat, as I proved, while the other common sucker there is said not to be. This had very conspicuous corrugations on the lips. I suspect that their other one is the horned chub. They have speared the former a long time there, and it is getting late for them.

Vernal grass quite common at Willis Spring now.

May 15. Sunday. Observe *Cornus florida* involucre.

Sarsaparilla flower. *Salix discolor* seed, or down, begins to blow.

A woodcock starts up with whistling sound.

I have been struck of late with the prominence of the *Viburnum nudum* leaf in the swamps, reddish-brown and one inch over, a peculiarly large and mature-looking, firm-looking leaf.

Swamp white oak leafed several days, but generally appears as in winter at a little distance. *Salix lucida* well out, how long? *Nemopanthes* flower, apparently a day or two.

Now, when the warblers begin to come in numbers with the leafing of the trees, the woods are so open that you can easily see them. They are scarce and silent in a cool and windy day, or found only in sheltered places.

I see an oak shoot (or sprout) already grown ten inches, when the buds of oaks and of most trees are but just burst generally. You are surprised to see such a sudden and rapid development when you had but just begun to think of renewed life, not yet of growth. Very properly these are called shoots. This plant has, perhaps, in four or five days accomplished one fourth part [of] its whole summer's growth. (So on the 4th of June I notice the shoots of the white pine, five to nine inches long, arranged raywise about the terminal one and the end of their branches, having in about a fortnight accomplished one quarter to one third their whole summer growth. Thus they may be properly said to *shoot* when their season comes, and then stand to harden and mature before the winter.)

May 16. *Monday*. Surveying Damon's farm and factory lot.

Our corydalis was out the 13th. Hear a tanager to-day, and one was seen yesterday. Sand cherry out. *Ranunculus abortivus* well out (when?), southwest angle of Damon's farm. Hear a bobolink and kingbird, and find sparrows' nests on the ground.

At eve the first *spark* of a nighthawk.

May 18. Surveying for Stow in Lincoln.

Two-leaved Solomon's-seal. I hear of young song sparrows and young robins since the 16th. That handsome spawn of Ed. Emerson's aquarium — minute transparent ova in a double row on the glass or the stones — turns out to be snail-spawn, it having just hatched, and there was no salamander-spawn, as I thought on the 18th of April. Not *Paludina decisa*, but the smaller and simpler one.

May 19. Our *Azalea nudiflora* flowers.

It is a warm, muggy, rainy evening, when the night-hawks commonly *spark* and the whip-poor-will is heard.

May 22. *Sunday*. A warm, drizzling day, the tender yellow leaflets now generally conspicuous, and contrasting with the almost black evergreens which they have begun to invest. The foliage is never more conspicuously a tender yellow than now. This lasts a week from this date, and then begins to be confounded with the older green. We have had rain for three or four days, and hence the tender foliage is the more yellow.

Swallows fly low. The *Ranunculus bulbosus* is abundant.

I see that by the very severe frost of about the 15th, or full of the moon, a great many leaves were killed, as young oaks, cultivated grapes,¹ butternuts, ferns, etc., etc., which now show brown or blackish.²

May 24. What that brilliant warbler on the young trees on the side of the Deep Cut? Orange throat and beneath, with distinct black stripes on breast (*i. e.* on each side?), and, I think, some light color on crown. Was [it] Blackburnian? or *maculosa*?³

Hear the wood pewee.

Sand cherry flower is apparently at its height. I see (the 9th of June) that its fruit is an abortive puff, like that of some plums.

May 25. Dragon-flies have begun to come out of their larva state in numbers, leaving the cases on the weeds, etc. See one tender and just out this forenoon.

Meadow fox-tail grass abundantly out (how long?), front of E. Hosmer's by bars and in E. Hubbard's meadow, front of meeting-house.

The *Salix petiolaris* is either entire or serrate, and generally, I should now say, was becoming serrate, the later leaves, *e. g.* that one, a fertile one, nearly opposite the Shattuck oak. The river is quite high for the season, on account of the late rains. Hear within a day or two

¹ And some native.

² White ash; ferns generally; apparently *Polygala verticillata*, for it is not leafed again the 24th.

³ Probably first.

what I call the *sprayey* note of the toad, different and later than its early *ring*.

May 26. Thursday. P. M. — To Ledum Swamp and Lee's Cliff.

Eleocharis tenuis in bloom, apparently the earliest *eleocharis*. The rhodora at Ledum Swamp is now in its perfection, brilliant islands of color. *Eriophorum vaginatum*, how long? Ledum out apparently two or three days. *Andromeda Polifolia* out, how long? Tall swamp huckleberry just budded to bloom. Do I not hear the nuthatch note in the swamp? Do not detect the *scheuchzeria* there yet.¹

The air is full of terebinthine odors to-day, — the scent of the sweet-fern, etc. The reddish leaves (and calyx) of the *Vaccinium vacillans*, just leafed, are interesting and peculiar now, perhaps more or less crimson. See a flock of cowbirds, the first I have seen. Cows in water, so warm has it got to be. Geranium (how long?), behind Bittern Cliff, and wild pink. Pitch pine pollen at Lee's. Cherry-birds. Ascendant potentilla abundant, how long? *Juniperus repens* pollen, how long? Interrupted fern pollen [*sic*]. The dicksonia fern is one foot high, but not fairly unfolded. The tender white-downy stems of the meadow saxifrage, seen toward the westering sun, are very conspicuous and thick in the meadows now.

A purple finch's nest in one of our firs.

May 27. Friday. P. M. — Up Assabet.

¹ Vide 30th.

Now first I notice a linty dust on the surface of the dark river at the Hemlocks, evidently from the new and downy leaves. These expressions of the face of Nature are as constant and sure to recur as those of the eyes of maidens, from year to year, — sure to be repeated as long as time lasts. It is a new and peculiar season when this phenomenon is observed. Rivers flow already bearing the dust of summer on their bosoms. The dark river, now that shades are increased, is like the dark eye of a maiden.

Azalea nudiflora blooms generally.

Hear a black and white creeper sing, *ah vee vee, vee vee, vitchet vitchet vitchet vitchet*.

A peculiarity of these days is the first hearing of the crickets' creak, suggesting philosophy and thought. No greater event transpires now. It is the most interesting piece of news to be communicated, yet it is not in any newspaper.¹

Melvin and Skinner tell me of three wild geese, to their surprise seen within a week down the river, — a gander and two geese, — which must be breeding here. Melvin got near them a fortnight ago. They are too much disturbed to rear a brood, I think.

Melvin tells of seeing once in June dead shad-flies washed up on the North Branch in windrows, along the shore.

Golden senecio, at least to-morrow.

Went by Temple's. For rural interest, give me the houses of the poor, with simply a cool spring, a good deal of weather-stained wood, and a natural door-stone:

¹ [Channing, p. 296.]

a house standing somewhere in nature, and not merely in an atmosphere of art, on a measured lot; on a hillside, perchance, obviously not made by any gardener, amid rocks, not placed there by a landscape gardener for effect; with nothing "pretty" about it, but life reduced to its lowest terms and yet found to be beautiful. This is a good foundation or board to spring from. All that the natives erect themselves above that will be a genuine growth.

Blue-eyed grass out.

May 28. Saturday. P. M. — To Cliffs.

Some *Salix rostrata* seed begins to fly. Low black-berry in bloom on railroad bank. Also *S. Torreyana* seed, just begun to fly. *S. pedicellaris* long out of bloom there.

At the extreme east side of Trillium Wood, come upon a black snake, which at first keeps still prudently, thinking I may not see him, — in the grass in open land, — then glides to the edge of the wood and darts swiftly up into the top of some slender shrubs there — *Viburnum dentatum* and alder — and lies stretched out, eyeing me, in horizontal loops eight feet high. The biggest shrub was not over one inch thick at the ground. At first I thought its neck was its chief member, — as if it drew itself up by it, — but again I thought that it rather (when I watched it ascending) extended its neck and a great part of its body upward, while the lower extremity was more or less coiled and rigid on the twigs from a *point d'appui*. Thus it lifted itself quickly to higher forks. When it moved along more horizontally,

it extended its neck far, and placed it successively between the slender forks. This snake, some four feet long, rested there at length twelve feet high, on twigs, not one so big as a pipe-stem, in the top of a shad-bush; yet this one's tail was broken off where a third of an inch thick, and it could not cling with that. It was quick as thought in its motions there, and perfectly at home in the trees, so far was it from making the impression of a snake in an awkward position.

Cinnamon fern pollen [*sic*]. Lady's-slipper pollen. These grow under pines even in swamps, as at Ledum Swamp.

The lint from leaves sticks to your clothes now. Hear a rose-breasted grosbeak.

Methinks every tree and shrub is started, or more, now, but the *Vaccinium dumosum*, which has not burst.

May 29. *Sunday*. Thorn bushes and the *Ranunculus bulbosus* are apparently in prime.

Coming out of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery to-day, where I had just been to deposit the corpse of a man, I picked up an oak three inches high with the acorn attached. They are just springing up now on all sides.

The republican swallow at Hosmer's barn just begun to lay.

May 30. P. M. — To Gowing's Swamp.

Sorrel begins to redden fields. The peculiarly tender foliage (yellowish) which began to invest the dark evergreens on the 22d lasts a week or more, growing darker. No American mountain-ash out.

When I entered the interior meadow of Gowing's Swamp I heard a slight snort, and found that I had suddenly come upon a woodchuck amid the sphagnum, lambkill, *Kalmia glauca*, andromeda, cranberry, etc., there. It was only seven feet off, and, being surprised, would not run. It would only stand erect from time to time, — perfectly erect with its blackish paws held like hands near together in front, — just so as to bring its head, or eyes, above the level of the lambkill, kalmia, etc., and look round, turning now this ear toward me, then that; and every now and then it would make a short rush at me, half a foot or so, with a snort, and then draw back, and also grit its teeth — which it showed — very audibly, with a rattling sound, evidently to intimidate me. I could not drive it, but it would steadily face me and rush toward me thus. Also it made a short motion occasionally as if to bury itself by burrowing there. It impressed me as a singularly wild and grizzly [*sic*] native, survivor of the red man. He may have thought that no one but he came to Gowing's Swamp these afternoons.

Its colors were gray, reddish brown, and blackish, the gray-tipped wind hairs giving it a grizzly look above, and when it stood up its distinct rust-color beneath was seen, while the top of its head was dark-brown, becoming black at snout, as also its paws and its little rounded ears. Its head from snout to ears, when it stood up erect, made a nearly horizontal line. It did much looking round. When thus erect, its expression and posture were very bear-like, with the clumsiness of the bear. Though I drew off three or four rods, it

would not retreat into the thicket (which was only a rod off) while I was there so near.

The scheuchzeria is at height or past. E. Emerson's *Calla palustris* out the 27th. *Eleocharis palustris*, R. W. E.'s meadow, not long. Hear of linnæa out, the 28th.

May 31. Tuesday. Small black flies or millers over river, with long feelers, flying low in swarms now.