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I

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May 1. 5 A. M. — To Cliffs.

A smart frost in the night, the plowed ground and platforms white with it. I hear the little forked-tail chipping sparrow (*Fringilla socialis*) shaking out his rapid *tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi*, a little jingle, from the oak behind the Depot. I hear the note of the shy Savannah sparrow (*F. Savanna*),¹ that plump bird with a dark-streaked breast that runs and hides in the grass, whose note sounds so like a cricket's in the grass. (I used to hear it when I walked by moonlight last sum-

¹ Probably have seen it before, — seringo. [Though here, where the "seringo-bird" makes its first appearance in the *Journal*, its identity with the savanna sparrow seems to have been unquestioned by Thoreau, it proved afterwards (see p. 8., *et seq.*) to be almost as puzzling to him as the ever elusive "night-warbler." The probability is that the "seringo" in this and most other cases was the savanna sparrow, but it may sometimes have been the yellow-winged, or grasshopper, sparrow, or even, as Thoreau once suspected, the grass finch, or vesper sparrow. It is quite likely that at times the bird he saw was not the bird he heard.]

mer.) I hear it now from deep in the sod, — for there is hardly grass yet. The bird keeps so low you do not see it. You do not suspect how many there are till at length their heads appear. The word *seringo* reminds me of its note, — as if it were produced by some kind of fine metallic spring. It is an earth-sound. It is a moist, lowering morning for the mayers. The sun now shines under a cloud in the horizon, and his still yellow light falls on the western fields, as sometimes on the eastern after a shower in a summer afternoon. Nuttall says the note of the chipping sparrow is “given from time to time in the night like the reverie of a dream.” Have I not heard it when spearing? Is not that the tree sparrow which I have heard in the fall (in company with the *F. hyemalis*), which also clucks like a hen? Nuttall says they sing *s'weedit s'weedit weet*. I hear a lark in the meadow.

Hayden is sowing his oats. There is not much rye sown in the spring. There is the old picture in the fables, the sower stepping over plowed ground and the yellowish grain in a regularly formed shower in the air. I do not hear the peep of the frogs at this time. Found the first violet, which would open to-day, — either *V. sagittata* var. *ovata*,¹ or *V. cucullata*, for the leaves are not toothed at base nor arrow-shaped as in the first, yet they are hairy and I should say petiole-margined. Still, like the latter, they are rolled in at base and the scape is four-angled (?). I found this violet under a bank by a pool-side. I think it *cucullata*. The woods have a

¹ [“Either” and “or *V. cucullata*” crossed out in pencil. See p. 33.]

damp smell this morning. I hear a robin amid them, yet there are fewer singers to be heard than on a very pleasant morning some weeks ago. The low early blueberry, June berry, is now well budded. The grass ground, low ground at least, wears a good green tinge now. There are no leaves on the woods. The river is high over the meadows. There is a thin gauze-like veil over the village (I am on Fair Haven Hill), probably formed of the smokes. As yet we have had no morning fogs to my knowledge.

I hear the first towhee finch. He says *to-wee, to-wee*, and another, much farther off than I supposed when I went in search of him, says *whip your ch-r-r-r-r-r-r*, with a metallic ring. I hear the first catbird also, mewing, and the wood thrush, which still thrills me, — a sound to be heard in a new country, — from one side of a clearing. I think I heard an oven-bird just now, — *wicher wicher wicher wich*.¹ I am on the Cliff. It is about six. The flicker cackles. I hear a woodpecker tapping. The tinkle of the huckleberry-bird comes up from the shrub oak plain. He commonly lives away from the habitations of men, in retired bushy fields and sprout-lands. A partridge bursts away from under the rock below me on quivering wings, like some moths I have seen. We have, then, flowers, and the song of birds before the woods leave out, — like poetry. When leaving the woods I heard the hooting of an owl, which sounded very much like a clown calling to his team. Saw two large woodpeckers on

¹ [“Think” is crossed out in pencil, and “black and white creeper” substituted for “oven-bird.”]

an oak. I am tempted to say that they were other and larger than the flicker, but I have been deceived in him before.

5 P. M. — To Red Bridge.

The smell of our fresh meadows, from which the flood has in some measure receded, reminds me of the scent of salt marshes, to which it corresponds. A coarse grass is starting up, all the greener and more luxuriant for the freshet, one foot high. I hear a new kind of stertorous sound from the meadow: a new frog? The flowers (male) of the maple by the bridge are all dried up, and its buds are just expanding into leaves, while red maples are in their flowering prime. I find by the leaves that this is probably a white maple. The purple finch is come to Minott's neighborhood. I saw it. I rarely see it elsewhere than about R. W. E.'s. Are they not attracted hither by his fir trees? (I think it was not the tree sparrow which I used to hear in rainy weather.)

E. Wood, Senior, says it was in 1818 the river was so high, and that Sted. Buttrick marked it, but thinks the last flood an inch or two higher. Wood has observed that the North River will rise first, and he has seen the South Branch flowing up-stream faster than ever he saw it flowing down. Tells a story of barrels that floated once from where Loring's factory is to the old Lee or Barrett house meadow.

The little peeping frogs which I got last night resemble the description of the *Hylodes Pickeringii* and in some respects the peeping hyla, but they are probably

the former, though every way considerably smaller (*vide* pencil mark in report). Mine are about three quarters of an inch long as they sit, seven eighths if stretched; thigh five sixteenths, leg same; tarsus and toes one half; four-fingered and five-toed with *small* tubercles on the ends of them. Some difference in their color; one is like a pale oak leaf at this season, streaked with brown; two others more ashy. Two have crosses like

this on back,  of dark brown. On the

head thus,  with transverse bands on the legs. I keep them in a tumbler. Peep at twilight and evening, occasionally at other times. One that got out in the evening on to the carpet was found soon after by his peeping *on the piano*. They easily ascend the glass of the window; jump eighteen inches and more. When they peep, the loose wrinkled skin of the throat is swelled up into a globular bubble, very large and transparent and quite round, except on the throat side, behind which their little heads are lost, mere protuberances on the side of this sphere; and the peeping wholly absorbs them; their mouths shut, or apparently so. Will sit half a day on the side of a smooth tumbler. Made that trilling note in the house. Remain many hours at the bottom of the water in the tumbler, or sit as long on the leaves above. A pulse in the throat always, except in one for an hour or two apparently asleep. They change their color to a darker or lighter shade, chameleon-like.

May 2. 6 A. M. — Is not the chipping sparrow the commonest heard in the village streets in the mornings now, sitting on an elm or apple tree? Was it the black and white warbler that I saw this morning? It did not stop to creep round the trunks; was very shy. Or was it the myrtle-bird? Might it have been the log-cock woodpecker that I saw yesterday morning? Reptiles must not be omitted, especially frogs; their croaking is the most earthy sound now, a rustling of the scurf of the earth, not to be overlooked in the awakening of the year. It is such an earth-sound.

The flowers of Cheney's elm are not only much earlier and larger than others, but the peduncles are in separate bundles proceeding from a common *short* peduncle. There appears to be such a difference, the tree is made of a different form and appearance. I can easily break off a twig from its branches, which hang very low. *Vide* the rough-barked elm in the swamp, — if it is not the corky elm. The balm-of-Gilead begins to show its male (?) catkins.

The commonplaces of one age or nation make the poetry of another. I think that my seringo-bird has not the marks of the Savannah sparrow. Looks like a chip-bird; or did I see a spot on its breast? That white maple, methinks, has a smoother bark than the red ones.

P. M. — To Conantum.

The handsome blood-red lacquered marks on the edge and under the edge of the painted tortoise's shell, like the marks on a waiter, concentric, few colors like

it in nature. This tortoise, too, like the *guttata*, painted on these parts of its shell and on legs and tail in this style, but throat bright yellow stripes, sternum dull yellowish or buff. It hisses like the spotted. Tortoises everywhere coupling. Is the male the large and flatter, with depressed sternum? It so seems? There is *some* regularity in the *guttata's* spots, — generally a straight row on back. Some of the spots are orange sometimes on the head.

Brought home two little frogs which I have described in the Report (*q. v.*) but cannot make out. Are they young? The andromeda is ready to bloom. The yellow lily is budded. The little frogs peep more or less during the day, but chiefly at evening twilight, rarely in the morning. They peep at intervals. One begins, then all join in over the whole pond, and they suddenly stop all together.

If you would obtain insight, avoid anatomy.

I am pretty sure that is the myrtle-bird I see and hear on the Corner road, picking the blossoms of the maple, with the yellow crown and black throat or cheeks. It sings *pe-te-te-te-ter twe'*, emphasizing the last and repeating the second, third, and fourth fast.

The little frogs I kept three days in the house peeped at evening twilight, though they had been silent all day; never failed; swelled up their little bagpipes, transparent, and as big as a small cherry or a *large* pea. Saw a bird on the willows, very shy, which may be the indigo-bird, but I am not sure. The *Equisetum arvense* is now in bloom (the male flowers) all over the railroad embankment, coloring it yellowish (?).

May 3. 5 A. M. — To Cliffs.

A great brassy moon going down in the west. A flock of neat sparrows, small, striped-throated, whitish over eye, on an apple tree by J. Potter's. At Hayden's orchard, quite a concert from some small sparrows, forked-tailed, many jingling together like canaries. Their note still somewhat like the chip-sparrow's. Can it be this?

Fair Haven. How cheering and glorious any landscape viewed from an eminence! For every one has its horizon and sky. It is so easy to take wide views. Snow on the mountains. The wood thrush reminds me of cool mountain springs and morning walks.

That oven-birdish note which I heard here on May 1st I now find to have been uttered by the black and white warbler or creeper. He has a habit of looking under the branches. The towhee finch is the loudest singer here now.

Does that long-drawn, interesting note, something like *ha, ha, tull-a-tull tull-a-lull*, proceed from the chickadee?¹

Looking from the Cliff, now, about 6 A. M., the landscape is as if seen in a mirage, the Cliff being in shadow, and that in the fresh and dewy sunshine (not much dew yet). Cool sunlight. The landscape lies in a fresh morning light; the earth and water smell fresh and new; the water is marked by a few smooth streaks. The atmosphere suits the grayish-brown landscape, — the still ashy maple swamps and now nearly bare shrub

¹ [Probably the song of the white-throated sparrow, whose voice Thoreau mistook for the chickadee's in the Maine woods.]

oaks. The white pine, left here and there over the sprout-land, is never more beautiful than with the morning light — the early sunlight and the dew — on it. (Dew comes with grass? and for it?) Before the water is rippled and the morning song of the birds is quenched.

Hear the first brown thrasher, — two of them. Minott says he heard one yesterday, but does he know it from a catbird? They drown all the rest. He says *cherruwit, cherruwit; go ahead, go ahead; give it to him, give it to him; etc., etc., etc.* Plenty of birds in the woods this morning. The huckleberry birds and the chickadees are as numerous, if not as loud, as any. The flicker taps a dead tree as some what [*sic*] uses a knocker on a door in the village street. In his note he begins low, rising higher and higher. Is it a wood pewee or a vireo that I hear, something like *pewit pewit chowy chow?* It requires so much closer attention to the habits of the birds, that, if for that reason only, I am willing to omit the gun.¹

P. M. — Cinquefoil or five-finger (*Potentilla Canadensis*). Also the golden saxifrage (what a name!) (*Chrysosplenium Americanum*), in the meadow at Brister's Hill, in the water, in moss-like beds. It may have been in bloom some time; an obscure flower.

A cold wind from the northwest. How much are our summers retarded by the snow on the mountains? Annursnaek looks green three miles off. This is an important epoch, when the distant bare hills begin to show

¹ [*Walden*, p. 234; Riv. 330.]

green or verdurous to the eye. The earth wears a new aspect. Not tawny or russet now, but green, are such hills.

Some of the notes, the trills, of the lark sitting amid the tussocks and stubble are like my seringo-bird. May these birds that live so low in the grass be called the cricket birds? and does their song resemble the cricket's, an earth-song?

Was that a flying squirrel which the Emerson children found in his nest on the 1st of May? Heard some kind of dor-bug approaching with a hum, as I sat in a meadow this afternoon, and it struck the ground near me with as much noise as a bullet, as if some one had fired at me with an air-gun.

Evening. — The moon is full. The air is filled with a certain luminous, liquid, white light. You can see the moonlight, as it were reflected from the atmosphere, which some might mistake for a haze, — a glow of mellow light, somewhat like the light I saw in the afternoon sky some weeks ago; as if the air were a very thin but transparent liquid, not dry, as in winter, nor gross, as in summer. It has depth, and not merely distance (the sky).

Going through the Depot Field, I hear the dream frog at a distance. The little peeping frogs make a background of sound in the horizon, which you do not hear unless you attend. The former is a trembling note, some higher, some lower, along the edge of the earth, an all-pervading sound. Nearer, it is a blubbling or rather bubbling sound, such as children, who

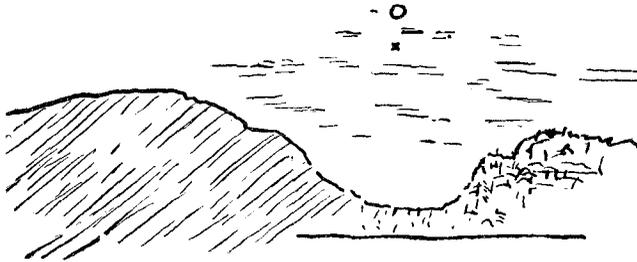
stand nearer to nature, can and do often make, — this and many others, remembering the frog state.¹ There is no dew (I have observed none yet). The dream of the frog sounds best at a distance, — most dreamy. The little peeper prefers a pool on the edge of a wood, which mostly dries up at midsummer, whose shore is covered with leaves and [where] twigs lie in the water, as where choppers have worked. Theirs is a clear, sharp, ear-piercing peep, not shrill, — sometimes a squeak from one whose pipe is out of order, frequently a quavering, curving (?) trill, as if of alarm (?). The sound of the dreamer frog does not fail, for one no sooner ceases than another in a different part of the landscape takes up the strain.

The sky is not so withdrawn, clear, tight, and cold as last moon. It is quite comfortable, more than during the day. No crickets are heard. The river in the west looks blue, exactly like the sky reflecting it. Is not the sky a lighter blue than in winter? The dogs bark. The rocks have not been enough warmed by day to feel decidedly warm at night.

At Hubbard's Bridge. The river still quite high. The water is calm. I hear a stertorous sound from some frog. This makes three frogs' notes that I hear. There is the moon in the south, with one bright star just beneath it, which, when the moon is in clouds, is its representative. Looking from bridge to hill, above is the moon, separated from attendant star by a bar of white clouds, below which the star shines brightly in a clearing; beneath this, bars of white clouds to the

¹ [The last four words crossed out in pencil.]

horizon. The hill and opposite woods are dark with fine effect. The little peepers have much the greatest



apparatus for peeping of any frogs that I know. Frogs are the birds of the night.

I go along the side of Fair Haven Hill. The clock strikes distinctly, showing the wind is easterly. There is a grand, rich, musical echo trembling on the air long after the clock has ceased to strike, like a vast organ, filling the air with a trembling music like a flower of sound. Nature adopts it. Beautiful is sound. The water is so calm the woods and single trees are doubled by the reflection, and in this light you cannot divide them as you walk along the river. See the spearkers' lights, one northeast, one southwest, toward Sudbury, beyond Lee's Bridge, — scarlet-colored fires. From the hill the river is a broad blue stream exactly the color of the heavens which it reflects. Sit on the Cliff with comfort, in greatcoat. All the tawny and russet earth — for no green is seen on the *ground* at this hour — sending only this faint multitudinous sound (of frogs) to heaven. The vast, wild earth. The first whip-or-will startles me. Hear three.

Summer is coming apace. Within three or four days the birds have come so fast I can hardly keep the run of them, — much faster than the flowers. I did not watch for the *very earliest*, however.

My little peepers — when they slept, the pulsation in their throats stopped. There was a wrinkled bag there. They begin to peep in earnest at or before sundown, and they keep it up now at 10 p. m. But I rarely hear any numbers in the morning, when they probably sleep. Heard the dreaming frogs close at hand, in the pool in the road by Hubbard's, a loud, liquid *ringing*, bubbling. One plainly answers another. Almost put my hand on one while bubbling. There is more ring to it close by, but on the whole it is not as poetic.

The salutations and commonplaces of all nations, which sound to us formal often, are always adapted to their circumstances, and grow out of their necessities. The Tartar inquires, "Has the rain been abundant? Are your flocks in prosperity? Have your mares been fruitful?" and the answer is, "All is at peace in our pastures." Serene and Biblical, and no man's invention.

M. Huc met with a family in China remarkable for hospitality.

May 4. R. W. E. tells me he does not like Haynes as well as I do. I tell him that he makes better manure than most men.

This excitement about Kossuth is not interesting to me, it is so superficial. It is only another kind of dancing or of politics. Men are making speeches to him all over the country, but each expresses only the

thought, or the want of thought, of the multitude. No man stands on truth. They are merely banded together as usual, one leaning on another and all together on nothing; as the Hindoos made the world rest on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise, and had nothing to put under the tortoise.¹ You can pass your hand under the largest mob, a nation in revolution even, and, however solid a bulk they may make, like a hail-cloud in the atmosphere, you may not meet so much as a cobweb of support. They may not rest, even by a point, on eternal foundations. But an individual standing on truth you cannot pass your hand under, for his foundations reach to the centre of the universe. So superficial these men and their doings, it is life on a leaf or a chip which has nothing but air or water beneath. I love to see a man with a tap-root, though it make him difficult to transplant.² It is unimportant what these men do. Let them try forever, they can effect nothing. Of what significance the things you can forget?

A little thought is sexton to all the world.

I see the slate-colored snowbird still,—a few. What was that large olive-yellow bird on Heywood's apple trees? The female flower of the sweet-gale, red, like so many female flowers. The meadow-sweet begins to leave out. The male flowers of the maple look yellowish-scarlet, looking up to the sky. The elms are still in full blossom. The cowslip's is a vigorous growth and makes at present the most show of any flower. Leaf,

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 470, 471; *Misc.*, Riv. 273.]

² *Vide* [pp. 54, 55].

stem, bud, and flower are all very handsome in their place and season. It has no scent, but speaks wholly to the eye. The petals are covered at base with a transparent, dewy (dew-like), apparently golden nectar. Better for yellows than for greens. I hear trees creak here (at Saw Mill Brook) like inn signs in the street. The singularly rough winged (?) barked elms here, which run up so high, blossom only at top. They are *very* easy to climb, the bark is so rough and furrowed and soft, affording a support to the clothes. The bark on the twigs strips up long. A kind of corky bark, but flower like the common.

The little frogs begin to peep in good earnest *toward* sundown.

May 5. 5 A. M. — Frost in night; hence the grass is wet. Hear the seringo-bird on an apple tree. I think it must be one of the species of song sparrow. Hear on the elms in the street, for the first time that I remember, the purple finch (without the crimson) singing loud, like a warbling vireo but with more variety. Hear also this morning in the village the chickadees' fine, ringing, air-possessing *tull-a-lull tull-a-lull*. Is this the third note of this bird, and confined to this season?¹ Heard it the morning of the brown thrasher. The other afternoon I could not hear the birds sing, the wind in the woods made such a noise.

3 P. M. — To little ponds.

A really warm day. I perspire in my thick coat. Hear

¹ [See p. 10.]

the dream frogs, but fainter than by night. The aspect of the woods half a mile distant shows the state of the atmosphere. There is a very slight transparent haze on them, just enough to glass them; somewhat such a reflection and seething in the air as I have described by moonlight. The maple-tops show red with their blossoms against the higher trees. What is the color of their tops in winter? The red maples and the elms, now covered with full rich [*sic*], are now on the whole the most common and obvious blossoms. It is their season, and they are worthy of it. The one has the woods and swamps and causeways; the other, the village. My scringo-bird sounds now from the railroad like the dropping of a file, or any bit of steel, on an anvil. Saw a shad-fly. The white-bellied (?) swallow soars and sails like a hawk. Leave the Cut. The woods are now dry, and the ground feels crisp under my feet. Fires in the woods will now rage. I see their traces by the railroad. I smell the dry leaves. Nature invites fire to sweep her floors, for purification. From the high field, see smokes toward Wachusett. The shade is even agreeable to-day. I smell the pines lately; is it because they are starting? Oh, the huckleberry-bird! The *Viola pedata* budded, ready to blossom. In Stow's clearing. Every part of the world is beautiful to-day; the bright, shimmering water; the fresh, light-green grass springing up on the hills, tender, firm, moss-like before it waves; — the very faint blue sky, without distinct clouds, is least beautiful of all, having yielded its beauty to the earth; — and the fine light smokes, sometimes blue against the woods; and the tracts where the woods have been

cut the past winter. The beautiful, ethereal, not misty, blue of the horizon and its mountains, as if painted. Now all buds may swell, methinks; now the summer may begin for all creatures. The wind appears to be a little north of west. The waters, still high, have a fine shimmering sparkle over a great part of their surface, not so large nor quite so bright as in the fall.

As I can throw my voice into my head and sing very loud and clear there, so I can throw my thought into a higher chamber, and think louder and clearer above the earth than men will understand.

The maple woods *half a mile* distant are not a bright red, but a little brighter than the oak leaves have been. It looks best from a hilltop a quarter of a mile distant, seen rising amid pines, with a light rosaceous tint in the sun, in Holden's Swamp. I can see them of a dull red a mile and a half distant. The blossom (male) of the maple has *very little* fragrance, but that agreeable. This and the elm may go together, possessing the season to careless eyes.

Now the flies are heard to buzz about you, as you sit on a rock on the hillside. How long is it since I saw geese and ducks? Methinks ever since the Great Freshet. They are swept northward with the storms, — a transient wildness. Is that a hop-hornbeam under the Cliffs which looks like a black birch? There is red-stemmed moss on the earth-covered rocks half-way down. The male flowers of the *grandidentata* begin to dry up. The young oaks on the plain have suddenly, I think within a day or two, lost all their leaves, being about to put forth new.

In its America of enterprise and active life, does not the mind lose its adipose tissue that Knox tells of?

A tree-toad again. The outlines of Fair Haven Pond begin to appear, and the two arms that claim the island. Few birds are heard from the Cliffs now at 4 P. M. Sunrise is already their hour.

I succeed best when I recur to my experience not too late, but within a day or two; when there is some distance, but enough of freshness.

Saxifrage and crowfoot abundant, though I have found but one violet. The crowfoot has a sweet spring-like fragrance, like the dandelion, if you have many, but very little of it. A gloss like varnish on its thin petals. It makes a show here in the grass over warm rocks. Saxifrage still less scent.

Heard the first cricket singing, on a lower level than any bird, observing a lower tone — the sane, wise one — than all the singers. He came not from the south, but from the depths. He has felt the heats at last, — that migrates downward. The smallest of birds. The myrtle-bird again, rather tame. A pretty little crimson willow, *i. e.* its four-divided stigmas, either the *Salix tristis* or *humilis*, one to two feet high, catkins a third of an inch long, recurved. I have seen no female willow so handsome, but neither Gray nor Emerson describes its beauty. It turns greenish as it grows old. Dotted with minute crimson stigmas. In the small ponds I hear a slight bullfroggy note. The andromeda is now a brownish-green; very little of the redness left. Seen from the sun side, now the sun is getting low, it looks like a large bed of greenish-gray moss, reflecting

the light. What has become of its red leaves? Does it shed them, and the present fresher ones not till next spring? These leaves show their under sides appressed to the stem. The sweet-fern now begins to shed its yellow pollen. The first anemones on a warm hillside west of the Island Pond. *Thalictrum anemonoides* (rue-leaved). What the shrub now leaving out at the east of the Long Pond, with sticky buds? A cherry or plum?¹ There is a dust on Walden, — where I come to drink, — which I think is the pollen of such trees and shrubs as are now in blossom, — aspens, maples, sweet-fern, etc., — food for fishes. I did not see any when I last drank here, a short time ago.

A fine scarlet sunset. As I sit by my window and see the clouds reflected in the meadow, I think it is important to have water, because it multiplies the heavens.

Evening. — To the Lee place rock.

Moon not up. The dream frog's is such a sound as you can make with a quill on water, a bubbling sound. Behind Dodd's. The spearers are out, their flame a bright yellow, reflected in the calm water. Without noise it is slowly carried along the shores. It reminds me of the light which Columbus saw on approaching the shores of the New World. There goes a shooting star down towards the horizon, like a rocket, appearing to describe a curve. The water sleeps with stars in its bosom. I see another light in the far southwest. To a stranger in the dark they would appear like light-houses on low points, lighting voyagers to our shores.

¹ Wild red cherry.

This might be called the spearer's moon this year, if it were of use to him. Hear a pout-like sound of frogs. (The chickadee¹ says now in morning, *har* (long), *pe-e-e pe-e-e pe-e-e*, the last trill something like *tull-a-lull tull-a-lull*.) The dream of the frogs² is very indistinct at a distance. Venus, the evening star, high in the sky. The spearers' light reveals the forms of trees and bushes near which it passes. When it is not seen, it makes a pillar of reddish or rosy light on the twigs above it. I see even the lamps of the village in the water, the river is so high.

As I went up the Groton road, I saw a dim light at a distance, where no house was, which appeared to come from the earth. Could it be a traveller with a lanthorn? Could it be a will-o'-the-wisp? (Who ever saw one? Are not they a piece of modern mythology?) You wonder if you will ever reach it; already it seems to recede. Is it the reflection of the evening star in water? or what kind of phosphorescence? But now I smell the burning. I see the sparks go up in the dark.— It is a heap of stumps half covered with earth, left to smoulder and consume in the newly plowed meadow, now burst forth into dull internal flames. Looks like a gipsy encampment. I sit on the untouched end of a stump, and warm me by it, and write by the light, the moon not having risen. What a strange, Titanic thing this Fire, this Vulcan, here at work in the night in this bog, far from men, dangerous to them, consuming earth.

¹ ["Myrtle-bird" is substituted in pencil for "chickadee." Thoreau afterward learned that the bird was the white-throated sparrow!]

² ["Toads" substituted in pencil for "frogs."]

gnawing at its vitals! The heap glows within. Here sits hungry Fire with the forest in his mouth. On the one side is the solid wood; on the other, smoke and sparks. Thus he works. The farmer designs to consume, to destroy, this wood, remains of trees. He gives them to his dog or vulture Fire. They burn like spunk, and I love the smell of the smoke. The frogs peep and dream around. Within are fiery caverns, incrustated with fire as a cave with saltpetre. No wonder at salamanders. It suggests a creature that lives in it, generated by it. The glass men are nearer the truth than the men of science.

I hear Barrett's sawmill¹ running by night to improve the high water. Then water is at work, another devourer of wood. These two wild forces let loose against nature. It is a hollow, galloping sound; makes tearing work, taming timber, in a rude Orphean fashion preparing it for dwellings of men and musical instruments, perchance. I can imagine the sawyer, with his lanthorn and his bar in hand, standing by, amid the shadows cast by his light. There is a sonorous vibration and ring to it, as if from the nerves of the tortured log. Tearing its entrails.

I go forward. The rabbit goes off from the wood-side with a squeak and bounce. I hear him strike the ground each time. He squeaks once like an alarmed bird. The rocks are very slightly warm, perhaps because it is not cold enough to-night, and it is a very little colder in the hollows.

The moon is just rising (9.30). She has not yet freed

¹ *Vide* p. [151].

herself from the clouds of earth and reached the clear and serene heavens.

No nighthawks heard yet.

I stand by the bubbling frogs (dreamers at a distance). They are sometimes intermittent, with a quavering. I hear betweenwhiles a little bird-like conversation between them. It is evidently their wooing.

May 6. 3 P. M. — To Conantum.

Heard the first warbling virco this morning on the elms. This almost makes a summer. Heard also, as I sat at my desk, the unusual low of cows being driven to their country pastures. Sat all day with the window open, for the outer air is the warmest. The balm-of-Gilead was well blossomed out yesterday, and has been for three or four days probably. The woods seen a mile off in the horizon are more indistinct yesterday and today, these two summer-like days (it is a summer heat), the green of the pines being blended with the gray or ash of the deciduous trees; partly, perhaps, because the fine haze in the air is the color of the twigs, and partly because the buds are expanded into leaves on many; but this last cause is hardly admissible. Now the wasps have come.

My dream frog turns out to be a toad. I watched half a dozen a long time at 3.30 this afternoon in Hubbard's Pool, where they were frogging (?) lustily. They sat in the shade, either partly in the water, or on a stick; looked darker and narrower in proportion to their length than toads usually do, and moreover are aquatic. I see them jump into the ditches as I walk. After an

interval of silence, one appeared to be gulping the wind into his belly, inflating himself so that he was considerably expanded; then he discharged it all into his throat while his body or belly collapsed suddenly, expanding his throat to a remarkable size. Was nearly a minute inflating itself; then swelled out its sac, which is rounded and reminded me of the bag to a work-table, holding its head up the while. It is whitish specked (the bag) on a dull bluish or slate ground, much bigger than all the rest of the head, and nearly an inch in diameter. It was a ludicrous sight, with their so serious prominent eyes peering over it; and a deafening sound, when several were frogging at once, as I was leaning over them. The mouth [seemed] to be shut always, and perhaps the air was expelled through the nostrils. The strain appeared prolonged as long as the air lasted, and was sometimes quavered or made intermittent, apparently by closing the orifice, whatever it was, or the blast. One, which I brought home, answers well enough to the description of the common toad (*Bufo Americanus*), though it is hardly so gray. Their piping (?) was evidently connected with their loves. Close by, it is an unmusical monotonous deafening sound, a steady blast, — not a peep nor a croak, but a *kind* of piping, — but, far away, it is a dreamy, lulling sound, and fills well the crevices of nature. Out of its place, as very near, it would be as intolerable as the thrumming of children. The plower yesterday disturbed a toad in the garden, the first I have heard of. I must catch him and compare them. Their heads are well above the water when they pipe.

Saw a striped snake lying by the roadside as if watching for toads, though they must be scarce now, his head just on the edge of the road. The most flexible of creatures, it is so motionless it appears the most rigid, in its waving line.

The yellow willows on the causeways are now fairly leaving out. They are more forward in this respect than that early willow, or any other that I see. The trees are already a mass of green, partly concealing the yellow stems, — a tender, fresh light green. No trees look so forward in this respect, and, being in rows, they make the more show, their branches are so thick and numerous, close together. If some have leaves as large, they are much more scattered and make no such show. I did not observe what time the willow bark would strip and make whistles. The female maple is more crimson, the male more scarlet. The horse-chestnut buds are so advanced that they are larger than the leaves of any tree. The elder, the wild cherry, thimble-berries, sweet-briars, cultivated cherry, and early apples, etc., white birches, hazels, aspens, hornbeams, maples, etc., etc., — not quite the hickory and alder, — are opening their buds; the alders are beginning to.

It is pleasant when the road winds along the side of a hill with a thin fringe of wood through which to look into the low land. It furnishes both shade and frame for your pictures, — as this Corner road. The first *Anemone nemorosa*, wind-flower or wood anemone, its petals more slightly tinged with purple than the rue-leaved. See the ferns here at the spring curling up like the proboscis of the sphinx moth. The first *Viola*

blanda (sweet-scented white), in the moist ground, also, by this spring. It is pretty numerous and may have been out a day or two. I think I could not find so many blue ones. It has a rather strong scent like heliotrope (?). The *Convallaria bifolia* budded. Sometimes the toad reminds me of the cricket, its note also proceeding from the ground. See now the woodchuck rolling across a field toward his hole and tumbling into it. See where he has just dug a new hole. Their claws long and rather weak-looking for digging. The woodpeckers tapping. The first columbine (*Aquilegia Canadensis*) to-day, on Conantum. Shade is grateful, and the walker feels a desire to bathe in some pond or stream for coolness and invigoration.

Cowslips show at a distance in the meadows (Miles's). The new butter is white still, but with these cows' lips in the grass it will soon be yellow, I trust. This yellowness in the spring, derived from the sun, affects even the cream in the cow's bag, and flowers in yellow butter at last. Who has not turned pale at the sight of hay butter? These are the cows' lips.

The music of all creatures has to do with their loves, even of toads and frogs. Is it not the same with man?

There are odors enough in nature to remind you of everything, if you had lost every sense but smell. The fever-bush is an apothecary's shop.

The farmers are very busily harrowing and rolling in their grain. The dust flies from their harrows across the field. The tearing, toothed harrow and the ponderous cylinder, which goes creaking and rumbling over the surface, heard afar, and vying with the sphere.

The cylinder is a simple machine, and must go into the new symbols. It is an interesting object, seen drawn across a grain-field. The willows are now suddenly of a light, fresh, tender yellowish-green. A green bittern, a gawky bird. As I return over the bridge, shaffies very numerous. Many insects now in the evening sunshine, especially over the water.

Houstonia (*Hedyotis cœrulea*), bluets, now just begun. Dewey calls it Venus' Pride. Gray says truly, "a very delicate little herb, . . . producing in spring a profusion of handsome bright blue blossoms fading to white, with a yellow eye." I should say bluish-white. The dwarf andromeda (*A. calyculata*) just begun; leaves called evergreen; flowers on "one-sided leafy racemes." Methinks its leaves remain two years, and fall in the spring, the small ones continuing to grow.¹ The ground is now strewn with the old red-brown lower leaves, and only the smaller and fresher green ones remain.

The common toad, with which I compared the dream toad I brought home, has two horn-like dark marks reaching over the eyes. It is not depressed, but rather has a tubercle, on the top of the head between the eyes. It is also much wider in proportion to length, and is triangular, as I have drawn in report. Yet they are probably the same. The garden toad made the same faint chicken-like, musical croak, when I held him in my hand, with the other, and in the same manner swelling his bag. The garden toad was yellowish beneath, the other white with some small spots. The latter turned much lighter-colored, — from brown to a

¹ [This sentence is queried in the margin.]

yellowish and light-brown green, or rather greenish-brown,—while I had him. They have a bright eye, with coppery or golden-coppery iris. It is their redeeming feature. But why do I not hear them in the garden? They appear to frequent the water first, and breed there, then hop to the gardens, and turn lighter and grow thicker.

May 7. Friday. 4.30 A. M. — To Cliffs.

Has been a dew, which wets the feet, and I see a very thin fog over the low ground, the first fog, which must be owing to the warm weather. Heard a robin singing powerfully an hour ago, and song sparrows, and the cocks. No peeping frogs in the morning, or rarely.

The toads sing (?), but not as at evening. I walk half a mile (to Hubbard's Pool, in the road), before I reach those I heard, — only two or three. The sound is uttered so low and over water; still it is wonderful that it should be heard so far. The traveller rarely perceives when he comes near the source of it, nor when he is farthest away from it. Like the will-o'-the-wisp, it will lead one a long chase over the fields and meadows to find one. They dream more or less at all hours now. I see the relation to the frogs in the throat of many a man. The full throat has relation to the distended paunch.

I would fain see the sun as a moon, more weird. The sun now rises in a rosaceous amber. Methinks the birds sing more some mornings than others, when I cannot see the reason. I smell the damp path, and derive vigor from the earthy scent between Potter's and

Hayden's. Beginning. I may say, with robins, song sparrows, chip-birds, bluebirds, etc., I walked through larks, pewees, pigeon woodpeckers, chickadee *tull-a-lulls*, to towhees, huckleberry-birds, wood thrushes, brown thrasher, jay, catbird, etc., etc. Entered a cool stratum of air beyond Hayden's after the warmth of yesterday. The *Viola pedata* still in bud only, and the other (*q. v.*). Hear the first partridge drum. The first oven-bird. A wood thrush which I thought a dozen rods off, was only two or three, to my surprise, and betrayed himself by moving, like a large sparrow with ruffled feathers, and quirking his tail like a pewee,¹ on a low branch. Blackbirds are seen going over the woods with a chattering bound to some meadow.

A rich bluish mist now divides the vales in the eastern horizon mile after mile. (I am ascending Fair Haven.) An oval-leaved pyrola (evergreen) in Brown's pines on Fair Haven.

Cliffs. — This is the gray morning; the sun risen; a very thin mist on the landscape; the falling water smooth. Far below, a screaming jay seen flying, against the bare stems of the pines. The young oaks on the plain, the pines standing here and there, the walls in Conantum pastures seen in the sun, the little groves on the opposite side of the river lit up by it while I am [in] shade, these are memorable and belong to the hour.

Here at this hour the brown thrasher often drowns the other birds. The towhee has been a main bird for

¹ [Probably the bird was a hermit thrush, this motion of the tail being almost a proof positive. Probably, too, all the "wood thrushes" seen by Thoreau in April (see *ante*) were hermits.]

regular morning singing in the woods for a little while. The creeper is regularly heard, too. Found the first strawberry blossoms (*Fragaria Virginiana*) on Fair Haven. The sedge grass blossom is now quite large and showy on the dry hillside where the wood has recently been cut off.

I think that birds vary their notes considerably with the seasons. When I hear a bird singing, I cannot think of any words that will imitate it. What word can stand in place of a bird's note? You would have to bury [?] it, or surround it with a *chevaux de frise* of accents, and exhaust the art of the musical composer besides with your different bars, to represent it, and finally get a bird to sing it, to perform it. It has so little relation to words. The wood thrush says *ah-tully-tully* for one strain. There appear to be one or more little warblers in the woods this morning which are new to the season, about which I am in doubt, myrtle-birds among them. For now, before the leaves, they begin to people the trees in this warm weather. The first wave of summer from the south. The purple finch (sober-colored) is a rich singer. As I said the other day, something like the warbling vireo, only louder, clearer, mellower, and more various. Bank swallows at Hayden's.

I fear that the dream of the toads will not sound so musical now that I know whence it proceeds. But I will not fear to *know*. They will awaken new and more glorious music for me as I advance, still farther in the horizon, not to be traced to toads and frogs in slimy pools.

P. M. — To Nawshawtuct.

The vireo comes with warm weather, midwife to the leaves of the elms. I see little ant-hills in the path, already raised. How long have they been? The first small pewee sings now *che-vet*, or rather chirrup *chevet*, *tche-vet* — a rather delicate bird with a large head and two white bars on wings. The first summer yellow-birds on the willow causeway. The birds I have lately mentioned come not singly, as the earliest, but all at once, *i. e.* many yellowbirds all over town. Now I remember the yellowbird comes when the willows begin to leave out. (And the small pewee on the willows also.) So yellow. They bring summer with them and the sun, *tche-tche-tche-tcha tcha-tchar*. Also they haunt the oaks, white and swamp white, where are not leaves. On the hill I sit in the shadow of the locust trunks and branches, for want of other shade. This is a mistake in Nature, to make shade necessary before she has expanded the leaves.

The catnep is now up, with a lustrous purple tinge to the under side of its leaves. (Why should so many leaves be so painted on the under side, concealed from men's eye — only not from the insects — as much as the sculptures on the tops of columns?) There is something in its fragrance as soothing as balm to a sick man. It advances me ever to the autumn and beyond it. How full of reminiscence is any fragrance! If it were not for virtuous, brave, generous actions, could there be any sweet fragrance?

“ Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

Now you may say the trees generally are *beginning* to leave out, excepting the oaks, celtis, late water willow, etc., etc. But only the willows and the balm-of-Gileads make any show in our landscape yet, — of native or wild trees, — the latter where they grow in clumps. Its catkins are five inches long.

Top of hill. — The haze is remarkably thick to-day as if all the distant western woods were on fire. (The wind west and what coolness in it most grateful.) The haze makes the western view quite rich, so many edges of woodland ridges where you see the pine tops against the white mist of the vale beyond. I count five or six such ridges rising partly above the mist, but successively more indistinct, the first only a quarter of a mile off. Of course there are no mountains. It belongs to this warm weather. The lower part of the sky is white, like a fog; only in the zenith do I see any blue. It makes the outlines of the blue water on the meadow eastward agreeably indistinct, being more nearly the color of the water itself than the land. A maple swamp in bloom, westward from this hill, is a rich sight, even like a rosy orchard in bloom. The dust flies.

I am not sure whether my first violet was the *cucullata* or *ovata*,¹ or the same with that minute one which I found prepared to blossom by the Spring Path this morning. A fern, one of the osmundas, beyond the celtis, one foot high, covered with reddish wool, unfolding its blossom (?) as it rises. The wool used for birds' nests. Might be used for other purposes? It is such weather as in summer we expect a thunder-shower after.

¹ [“I . . . whether” and “*cucullata* or” crossed out in pencil.]

Is this smoke-like haze produced by the warm west wind meeting the still cool earth? Or is it smoke? The ground under the walnuts is richly strewn with nutshells, broken and gnawed by squirrels, like an unswept dining-hall in early times. That little early violet close to the ground in dry fields and hillsides, which only children's eyes detect, with buds showing purple but lying so low, as if stooping to rise, or rather its stems actually bent to hide its head amid the leaves, quite unpretending. The gnaphalium, though without scent, is now a pure, dry, enduring flower and bears inspection. The first peewee; myrtle-birds numerous. The catbird does not make the corn-planting sounds. The toads dream loudly these first warm days. A yellow-throated green frog in the river, by the hemlocks, — bright silk-green the fore part of the body, tiger-striped legs. The eyes of toads and frogs are remarkably bright and handsome, — oval pupils (?) or blacks and golden or coppery irides. The hop-hornbeam is almost in bloom. The red-wing's shoulder, seen in a favorable light, throws all epaulets into the shade. It is General Abercrombie, methinks, when they wheel partly with the red to me. The crow blackbirds make a noise like crows, and also a singular and rarely heard scream or screech. They fly with lark-like wings. We require just so much acid as the cranberries afford in the spring. The first humblebee, that prince of hummers, — *bombyle* [*sic*], looking now over the ground as if he could find something. He follows after flowers. To have your existence depend on flowers, like the bees and hummingbirds! The willow twigs now may make

wreaths so pretty and graceful with their expanding leaves. They afford the only chaplets yet, fit to crown the fairest. The horse-chestnuts in the yards have opened their parasol-like leaves to-day, reminding me of tropical palms; and the rock maples' large buds are almost open. Such a haze as this makes a dark night.

May 8. 4.30. — The robin and the bluebird have sung for some time. The haziness is now like a sea-urn, through which the sun, shorn of beams, looks claret, and at length, when half an hour high, scarlet. You thought it might become rain. Many swallows flying in flocks *high* over the river, — the chimney swallow for one. What is the other? They sustain themselves sometimes on quivering wings, making little progress, as if to catch insects. A pretty little blossom on a willow, male and female sometimes on one catkin. The female catkins of the early willows are now expanded to two or three inches in length, making the otherwise backward tree look green. The male catkins have lost all their anthers for some time. The female maples are lengthening their stems for the keys. Some are a quite yellowish green (?), stigmas and all. A singular noise from a jay this morning. Hear the yellowbird, the creeper, and the myrtle-bird this morning, all together; they are much alike. The creeper, a faint oven-bird note; the myrtle-bird, a little more of the *s* or *ψ* in it than the yellowbird and more various. I hear the *wit er che*,¹ Maryland yellow-throat. Two gold robins; they chatter like blackbirds; the fire bursts

¹ *Vide* p. [40].

forth on their backs when they lift their wings. A fresh scent blows off from the meadows, the river rapidly going down. The leaves of the young rock maples, which have first expanded this morning, make little crosses against the sky, — four leaves, — or stars, the leaves being finely cut. The ground was found frozen still to-day, in the shade behind Aunt's house.

P. M. — Down river to Red Bridge.

The blackbirds have a rich *sprajey* warble now, sitting on the top [of] a willow or an elm. They possess the river now, flying back and forth across it. The high-backed, elliptical stinkpot covered with leeches. They lie near the shore with their backs out of water, dry in the sun. The spotted, and especially the painted, how they love to lie in the sun on rails and rocks!

No tarts that I ever tasted at any table possessed such a refreshing, cheering, encouraging acid that literally put the heart in you and set you on edge for this world's experiences, bracing the spirit, as the cranberries I have plucked in the meadows in the spring. They cut the winter's phlegm, and now I can swallow another year of this world without other sauce. Even on the Thanksgiving table they are comparatively insipid, have lost as much flavor as beauty, are never so beautiful as in water.

The warm weather (looking back over the past days) has [come] very suddenly. One day I had a fire (which day? *Vide* back a week or two), and the next night, and each night since, I slept with my window open, as I have sat with it all day. Everything has taken a sud-

den start within three or four days, and our thoughts are equally affected. The air has been remarkably hazy or smoky. The weather has been delightfully warm; not what you would call sultry, for there is, after all, a grateful coolness in the breeze. The haze is so thick that only the zenith is blue to-day and yesterday.

The aspens, with their young leaves, now make a show in the woods like light-green fires amid the other trees. Martins are heard over the meadows — their rich warble — and in one place they make the street alive. The white maple is covered with small leaves now, as forward or perhaps more so than the sugar maple. The cross they make is more irregular, two of the leaves being longer than the others. Is that female maple higher up the river a white one? Horse-mint is up (above ground).

The blackbirds fly in flocks and sing in concert on the willows, — what a lively, chattering concert! a great deal of chattering with many liquid and rich warbling notes and clear whistles, — till now a hawk sails low, beating the bush: and they are silent or off, but soon begin again. Do any other birds sing in such deafening concert? The red-wings, male and female. The red maple in blossom is most beautiful near to. Here too, on Red Bridge causeway, I find the yellow-birds *on the willows*. The *Salix alba* has bloomed to-day and fills the causeway with sweet fragrance, though there are yet but few flowers. Here are boys making whistles. Now no instrumental music should be heard in the streets more youthful and innocent than willow

whistles. Its sound has something soft in it as the wood of the willow. A rather rich scent has this willow blossom.

Sundown. — To Cliffs. (No moon.)

I am most impressed by the rapidity of the changes within a week. Saw a load of rock maples on a car from the country. Their buds have not yet started, while ours are leaved out. They must have been brought from the northern part of Vermont, where is winter still. A tree, with all its roots, which has not felt the influence of spring is a most startling evidence of winter, — of the magic worked by the railroad. The young sugar maples in our streets are now green with young leaves. These trees from the north are whirled into their midst from a region of ice and snow, with not a bud yet started, at least a fortnight or three weeks more backward, not fairly awaked from their winter's sleep.

Children are digging dandelions by the roadside with a pan and a case-knife. For the first time, this evening I observe the twittering of swallows about the barns. The sun has set *in the haze*. Methinks I have heard the snipe. Now hear the lark, the song sparrow, etc. The peeper, is he not lord of sound? so tiny, yet heard farther than a man! A cool but an agreeable wind. (Going by Bear Garden.) The sounds of peeping frogs (*Hyla*) and dreaming toads are mingled into a sort of indistinct universal evening lullaby to creation, while the wind roars in the woods for a background or sea of sound, in which — on whose bosom — these others float.

The young birch leaves, very neatly plaited, small triangular light-green leaves, yield an agreeable sweet fragrance, just expanded and sticky, — sweet-scented as innocence. The song sparrow and the robin sing early and late. The night-warbler while it is yet pretty light. It is that kind of mirage now in which the slope of the hills appears not a position but a motion. The hills ascend, the earth rocks. Do I not hear the veery's *yorick*? The "whipp-or-u-wills" begin. When I heard the first one the other night, feeling myself on the verge of winter, I was startled as if I had heard a summer sound in the midst of winter. I hear a catbird singing within a rod among the alders, but it is too dark to see him. Now he stops and half angrily, half anxiously and inquisitively, inquires *char-char*, sounding like the caw of a crow, not like a cat.

Venus is the evening star and the only star yet visible. Starlight marks conveniently a stage in the evening, *i. e.* when the first star can be seen. Does it not coincide with the whip-poor-wills' beginning? I am struck by the blackness of the small pines at this hour, two or three feet high, on the plain below Fair Haven Hill. It is already midnight behind or within them. Is there as great a contrast in the summer, when the grass in this field is more green? Such trees are, as it were, nuclei of the night. A strong but not cold southwest wind is blowing against the rocks mercilessly, an aerial surf, having been ordered to do so. The twilight seems long this evening. Is it not made so by the haze?

Hayden tells me that when he has been to water his cattle some time since in the pool behind his house, the

little peepers have been so thick all together as to hinder his cattle from drinking, — a hundred together. It was when the weather was cooler. Was it not for warmth, and when they were asleep in the morning?

Methinks the scent is a more primitive inquisition than the eye, more oracular and trustworthy. When I criticise my own writing, I go by the scent, as it were. The scent reveals, of course, what is concealed from the other senses. By it I detect earthiness.¹

May 9. Sunday Morning. — To Trillium Woods.

Apples and cherry trees begin to look green at a distance. I see the catkin of a female *Populus tremuloides* far advanced, *i. e.* become large like the willows. These low woods are full of the *Anemone nemorosa*, half opened at this hour and gracefully drooping, — sepals with a purple tinge on the under side, now exposed. They are in beds and look like hail on the ground; their now globular flowers spot the ground white. Saw a Maryland yellow-throat, whose note I have heard before, — the little restless bird that sits low, *i. e.* on low bushes. The golden senecio, ragwort, or squaw-weed (*Senecio aureus*), whose lower or radical leaves, roundish and crenate, somewhat resemble the cowslip early in the meadows, has now got up six inches high and shows purple buds. It is the plant whose stem when broken yields that sweet scent. Low blueberry bushes and high are well budded to bloom. The bluet (sometimes at least?) begins with a kind of lilac-blue, fading through white, delicately tinged with blue, to white.

¹ [Channing, p. 299.]

P. M. — To hill north of Walden.

I smell the blossoms of the willows, the row of *Salix alba* on Swamp Bridge Brook, a quarter of a mile to windward, the wind being strong. There is a delightful coolness in the wind. Reduce neck-cloth. Nothing so harmonizes with this condition of the atmosphere — warm and hazy — as the dream of the toad. The samaræ on Cheney's elms now give it a leafy appearance, or as if covered with hops, before the buds are expanded. Other elms are nearly as forward. The gray, misty-looking deciduous woods now appear to imbosom the evergreens, which before stood out distinct. It is partly to be referred now, I think, to the expanding leaves as well as the haze. They are closing in around them, and there is an indescribable change in the appearance of the evergreens. Now and for some days the west and southwest winds have prevailed. The early blueberry is almost in flower. The arbutus (?) pyrus shows red scales (?). The barren plants of the *Equisetum arvense* now shoot up rapidly on the railroad bank and make it suddenly green. *Viola ovata* in bloom. The shrub oak buds are expanding, red of various hues and mixtures, quite rich. There is a *positive* sweetness in the air from flowers and expanding leaves, a universal sweetness. A longish yellow-abdomened bee. Chickadee's phœbe note is common now, the *tull-a-lull* more rare and in mornings.

It is impossible to remember a week ago. A river of Lethe flows with many windings the year through, separating one season from another. The heavens for a few days have been lost. It has been a sort of *para-*

disc instead. As with the seashore, so is it with the universal earth-shore, not in summer can you look far into the ocean of the ether. They who come to this world as to a watering-place in the summer for coolness and luxury never get the far and fine November views of heaven. Is not all the summer akin to a paradise? We have to bathe in ponds to brace ourselves. The earth is blue now, — the near hills, in this haze.

The yellowish-white birch catkins are now opened. The buds of the white oak are now well swollen; they are later than the black and red oaks, which are beginning to leave out. The oaks, excepting the white, are quite as early if not earlier than the hickory. A choke (?) cherry well budded by Brooks's clearing; will blossom to-morrow or next day.

The cinquefoil, which so much resembles a strawberry, comes yellow not white. Do yellow flowers often bear an edible fruit? The *Viola ovata* is one of the minutest of spring flowers, — two leaves and a blossom-bud showing the blue close to the earth. What haste to push up and open its lesser azure to the greater above! Such a disproportion of blossom to the leaves! Almost literally a pretty delicate blue flower bursting forth from the scurf of the earth. The rue-leaved anemone not for scent, but a pretty leaf. The chair flag is six or eight inches high in the water, bluish-green. Swarms of little gnats with two plumes on their heads just born on the edge of the pond. The chestnuts are perhaps more advanced than oaks. Bees know what flowers have bloomed, but they must depend mainly on the willows as yet. I am not sure but the pond is higher

than ever. Some rich young oak buds I see, young and tender reddish leaves under scales, making buds [two] or three inches long, making a kind of cross with a fifth in the middle, — red oak, I think. There is also the number five in the form of the wood, when you cut the end of a twig. Some of the female catkins on cone-bearing willows are now more than three inches long. Tortoises out sunning, on rails, etc. Some young trees very forward in a warm place. The leaves of the maple are sharply recurved, partly so as to protect the tender parts, apparently. In such a place the scales have recurved from the hickory buds, revealing already developed branches. Saw a green snake, twenty or more inches long, on a bush, hanging over a twig with its head held forward six inches into the air, without support and motionless. What there for? Leaves generally are most beautiful when young and tender, before insects or weather has defaced them.

These are the warm-west-wind, dream-frog, leafing-out, willowy, haze days. Is not this summer, whenever it occurs, the vireo and yellowbird and golden robin being here? The young birch leaves reflect the light in the sun.

Mankind seen in a dream. The gardener asks what kind of beans he shall plant. Nobody is looking up into the sky. *In our woods* it is the aspens now and the birches that show their growth at a distance. It was in such a season and such a wind that the crow brought the corn from the southwest. Our eyes are turned to the west and southwest. It grows somewhat clearer; a cloud, threatening rain, coming up in the west. The

veiny leaves of the hawkweed appear. The *Salix tristis* is in bloom. Saw pigeons in the woods, with their inquisitive necks and long tails, but few representatives of the great flocks that once broke down our forests. Heard the night warbler. Our moods vary from week to week, with the winds and the temperature and the revolution of the seasons. The first shad-bush, June-berry, or service-berry (*Amelanchier Canadensis*), in blossom. The first *Viola pedata* and also, in a low place, the first *Viola cucullata*. That I observed the first of May was a *V. ovata*, a variety of *sagittata*. Saw one of the peeping frogs this afternoon, sitting on a dead leaf on the surface of the water. The color of a white oak leaf at present, so that it is hard to detect one, — much lighter and more decidedly fawn-colored than those I had. They will peep on the sideboard. The clumps of alders now look greenish with expanding leaves. The haze is now going off before a coming shower. The bluebird's warble is soon in a great measure drowned by the notes of new birds.

May 10. This Monday the streets are full of cattle being driven up-country, — cows and calves and colts. The rain is making the grass grow apace. It appears to stand upright, — its blades, — and you can almost see it grow. For some reason I now remember the autumn, — the succory and the goldenrod. We remember autumn to best advantage in the spring; the finest aroma of it reaches us then. Are those the young keys of sugar maples that I see? The Canada (?) (N. Brooks's) plum in bloom, and a cherry tree. How

closely the flower follows upon, if it does not precede, the leaf! The leaves are but calyx and escort to the flower. Some beds of clover wave.

Some look out only for the main chance, and do not regard appearances nor manners; others — others regard these mainly. It is an immense difference. I feel it frequently. It is a theme I must dwell upon. There is an aurora borealis to-night, and I hear a snoring, praying sound from frogs in the river, baser and less ringing and sonorous than the dreamers.

May 11. Sunrise, — merely a segment of a circle of rich amber in the east, growing brighter and brighter at one point. There is no rosy color at this moment and not a speck in the sky, and now comes the sun without pomp, a bright liquid gold. Dews come with the grass. There is, I find on examining, a small, clear drop at the end of each blade, quite at the top on one side.

The *Salix alba* has a *spicier* fragrance than the earliest willows. We have so much causeway planted with willows, — set with them on each side to prevent its washing away, — that they make a great show, and are obvious now before other trees are so advanced. The birches at a distance appear as in a thin green veil, in their expanding leaves.

P. M. — *Kossuth here.*

The hand-organ, when I am far enough off not to hear the friction of the machinery, not to see or be reminded of the performer, serves the grandest use for

me, deepens my existence. Heard best through walls and obstructions. These performers, too, have come with the pleasant weather and the birds.

I think I saw a female yellowbird yesterday; its note different from the male's, somewhat like the night warbler's. They come a little later than the males. The larches are leafing out.

May 12. Morning. — Swallows (I suppose barn) flying low over the Depot Field, a barren field, and sitting on the mulleins. Bobolinks.

Currants and gooseberries are in bloom in the garden. The mountain-ash leafed out as much as two days ago. The elms have been leafing out for two or three days. Sugar maples on the common are in blossom. Hear the peepers in the rain to-night (9.30), but not the dream toads.

May 13. The best men that I know are not serene, a world in themselves. They dwell in form. They flatter and study effect, only more finely than the rest. The world to me appears uninhabited. My neighbors select granite for the underpinning of their houses and barns; they build their fences of stone; but they do not themselves rest on an underpinning of granite. Their sills are rotten. What stuff is the man made of who is not coexistent in your thought with the purest and subtlest truth? While there are manners and compliments we do not meet. I accuse my finest acquaintances of an immense frivolity. They do not teach me the lessons of honesty and sincerity that the brute beasts do, or of

steadiness and solidity that the rocks do.¹ I cannot associate with those who do not understand me.

Rain to-day and yesterday, with fires in house. The birds — sparrows and yellowbirds — seeking shelter in the wood-pile.

Where are the men who dwell in thought? Talk, — that is palaver! at which men hurrah and clap! The manners of the bear are so far good that he does not pay you any compliments.

P. M. — To Walden in rain.

A May storm, yesterday and to-day; rather cold. The fields are green now, and the cows find good feed. The female *Populus grandidentata*, whose long catkins are now growing old, is now leafing out. The flowerless (male?) ones show half-unfolded silvery leaves. Both these and the aspens are quite green (the bark) in the rain. A young, slender maple-like bush from four to ten feet high just leafing out and in blossom, their few scarlet or crimson blossoms in the rain very handsome. It answers to the description of the red maple, but is it not different? I see an oak against the pines, apparently a red oak, now decidedly in the gray, — a light breaking through mist. All these expanding leaves and flower-buds are much more beautiful in the rain, — covered with clear drops. They have lost some of their beauty when I have shaken the drops off. They who do not walk in the woods in the rain never behold them in their freshest, most radiant and blooming beauty. The white birch is a very handsome object, with its golden tassels three inches long, hanging directly down,

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

amid the just expanding yellowish-green leaves, their perpendicularity contrasting with the direction of the branches, geometry mixed with nature. The catkins, beaten down by the rain, also strew the ground. The shrub oaks, covered with rain-drops, are very handsome, masses of variegated red-budded tassels and opening leaves, some redder, some lighter green or yellowish. They appear more forward than the oak trees. The red and black oaks are more forward than the white, which last is just opening its buds. The sweet-fern shows minute green leaves expanding. The shad-blossom with pinkish scales, or Emerson calls them "purple or faint crimson" "stipules." *Botryapium* (?). The amelanchiers (*Botryapium*, June-berry, which I suppose is the taller, and *ovalis* (Emerson), swamp sugar-pear, the shorter and more crowded) are now the prevailing flowers in the woods and swamps and sprout-lands, and a very beautiful, delicate flower the former is, with its purplish stipules and delicate drooping white blossoms, — so large and graceful a tree or bush. The shad-blossom days in the woods. The pines have started, white pines the most. These last are in advance of the white oak. The low early blueberry (*Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum*) (*V. tenellum* Big.) is just in blossom, and the *Cerasus Virginiana*, dwarf choke-cherry.

The birds are silent and in their coverts, excepting the black and white creepers and the jay and a brown thrasher. You know not what has become of all the rest. Channing heard the quail yesterday. The cow-slips, in rounded bunches a foot in diameter, make a

splendid show, even fresher and brighter, methinks, in the rain. The *Viola pedata* and *ovata* now begin to be abundant on warm, sandy slopes. The leaves of the lupine, six inches high, are handsome, covered with rain-drops.

May 14. *Hastily* reviewing this Journal, I find the flowers to have appeared in this order since the 28th of April (perhaps *some note* in my Journal has escaped me):¹ —

<i>Acer rubrum</i>	April 28 male; a female 30th; first date is perhaps early enough for both.
<i>Populus grandidentata</i>	29
<i>Epigaea repens</i>	30 (April 25, '51).
Sweet-gale	30 probably a day or two before.
<i>Viola ovata</i>	May 1 (April 25, '51).
<i>Potentilla Canadensis</i>	3
<i>Chrysosplenium Americanum</i>	3 this may have bloomed two or three days before.
<i>Salix tristis</i> or <i>humilis</i>	5
Sweet-fern	5
<i>Thalictrum anemonoides</i>	5
<i>Populus balsamifera</i>	5 two inches long.
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	6
<i>Viola blanda</i>	6 perhaps the day before.
<i>Aquilegia Canadensis</i>	6
<i>Hedysotis carulea</i>	6 (April 25, '51).
<i>Andromeda calyculata</i>	6
<i>Fragaria Virginiana</i>	7
<i>Benzoin odoriferum</i>	7 probably now (May 1, '51).
<i>Ostrya</i>	8 begins.

¹ The Latin Gray's. By last of June, '51 is apparently three or four days earlier than '52.

<i>Salix alba</i>	May 8
<i>Betula populifolia</i>	9
<i>Amelanchier Canadensis</i>	9
<i>Viola pedata</i>	9 probably a day or two before.
<i>V. cucullata</i>	9 did not examine where they grow.
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	10 probably some days earlier.
Canada (?) plum in gardens	10
<i>Rubus triflorus?</i>	10 probably about this (ripe July 1).
Cultivated cherry	10
<i>Fraxinus Americana</i> when?	
Currants	12
Gooseberries in garden	12
<i>Ribes hirtellum?</i> The wild; are they one?	
<i>Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum</i>	13
<i>Cerasus Pennsylvanica?</i>	13
<i>Betula papyracea</i> } when?	
<i>B. excelsa</i> }	
<i>B. lenta</i> }	

Did not observe so *very* carefully the first common elm and first red maple, but Cheney's and white (?) maple at bridge instead; yet accurately enough. *Perhaps* the wild gooseberry and some Solomon's-seal and other violets and birches and the hornbeam and the yellow lily in some places are in bloom now!

BIRDS SINCE 28TH APRIL

Saw the last <i>Fringilla hyemalis</i>	May 4.
First	
Savannah (?) ¹ sparrow	May 1 or a day or two before.

¹ ["Sringo" in pencil written over "Savannah" and "Bay-winged" under.]

Ground robin	May 1
Catbird	1
Black and white creeper	1
Purple finch	1
Myrtle-bird	2
Chipping sparrow	2
Indigo-bird (?)	2
Brown thrasher	3
Whip-poor-will	3
Warbling vireo	6
Green bittern	6
Oven-bird	7
Bank swallow	7
Small pewee	7
Summer yellowbird	7
Peetweet	7
Chimney swallow	8
Maryland yellow-throat	8
Golden robin	8
Martins	8 probably long before.
Snipe (?)	8
Night-warbler	8
Yorrick (?)	8
Pigeon or turtle dove	9
Female yellowbird	10
Bobolink	12
Quail	12

Snow in hollows?	April 28
Saw frog spawn	28
Rushes at Second Division one foot high, highest of grass-like herbs	29
A <i>large</i> water-bug	29
Heard toad (dreaming)	30
Bull(?)frog (saw him)	30
Flies buzz outdoors	

Gooseberry leaves (earliest of leaves?)	April 30	
Sit without fire to-night.		
Spearing.		
Chickadee's <i>tull-a-tull</i>	May 4	
First cricket on Cliff	5	
Shad-fly	5	
Toad in garden	5	
Wasps	6	
Willows suddenly green	6	
Cows going up-country		
Many trees <i>just beginning</i> to expand leaves	6	
First fog, very slight		
Ant-hills	7	
Humblebee	7	
Partridge drums	7	
Stinkpot tortoise	8	How much earlier?
Birch leaves, sweet-scented	8	
Ground still frozen in some places	8	
Barn swallows twitter	8	
Apple and cherry trees begin to show green	9	
Elms darkened with samaræ		
A green snake	9	
Reduce neck-cloth		
Clover waves	10	
Frogs snore in the river	10	
One oak in the gray	13	
Pines start	13	
A May storm	13	

These pages do not contain the earliest phenomena of the spring, for which see the previous journal, as far as observed.

P. M. — To Second Division.

A foul day. One scent of golden senecio recalls the

meadows of my golden age. It is like sweet-briar a little.

First kingbird. Its voice and flight relate it to the swallow. The maple-keys are already formed, though the male blossoms (on different trees) are not withered. Going over the Corner causeway, the willow blossoms fill the air with a sweet fragrance, and I am ready to sing, Ah! willow, willow! These willows have yellow bark, bear yellow flowers and yellowish-green leaves, and are now haunted by the summer yellowbird and Maryland yellow-throat. They see this now conspicuous mass of yellowish verdure at a distance and fly to it. Single large willows at distance are great nose-gays of yellow. This orchard precedes the peach and apple weeks. The *Salix nigra* (?) is leafing out now with its catkins appearing. The sounds and sights — as birds and flowers — heard and seen at those seasons when there are fewest are most memorable and suggestive of poetic associations. The trillium is budded. The *Uvularia sessilifolia*, a drooping flower with tender stems and leaves; the latter curled so as to show their under sides hanging about the stems, as if shrinking from the cold. The *Ranunculus bulbosus* shows its yellow by this spring thus early (Corner Spring). Apparently it is the leaves of this, and not the geranium, that are so common and early. Here is half an acre of skunk-cabbage leaves. It looks like a garden in the midst of the trees of the swamp. The cowslip even smells a little like the skunk-cabbage with which it grows. The grass is now whitened with bluets; the fields are green, and the roadsides. (I am on the C. Miles road.) Now is

the season to travel. The deciduous trees are rapidly investing the evergreens, making the woods rich and bosky by degrees. The robin sings this louring day. They sang most in and about that great freshet storm. The song of the robin is most suggestive in cloudy weather. I have not heard any toads during this rain (of which this is the third day), and very few peepers. A man wishes me to find a lead mine for him somewhere within three miles from this point (Marshal Miles's). The discoverer died suddenly about seven years ago, a month after the discovery, and revealed not the locality. Wanted to know where it grew! The beautiful birch catkins hang down four inches. Saw a whip-poor-will sitting in the path in woods on the mill road, — the brown mottled bird. It flutters off blindly, with slow, soft flight. Most birds are silent in the storm. Hear the robin, oven-bird, night warbler, and, at length, the towhee's *towee*, chickadee's *phabe*, and a prelude thrasher and a jay. The *Saxifraga Pennsylvanica* with the golden saxifrage and cowslip. The mayflowers, which I plucked to-day, surpass all flowers hitherto in fragrance; peeping up from amid the leaves, they perfume the roadside. A strawberry by the meadow-side, probably the other species. This weather has produced fungi in the path. Anemones now in their prime. The bear-berry (*Arbutus Uva-Ursi*) in bloom, a neat bell-like white flower with a red contracted rim, clear pearly and red, a reddish tinge and red lips, transparent at base.

Most men can be easily transplanted from here there, for they have so little root, — no tap-root, — or their

roots penetrate so little way, that you can thrust a shovel quite under them and take them up, roots and all.¹

On the 11th, when Kossuth was here, I looked about for shade, but did not find it, the trees not being leaved out. Nature was not prepared for great heats.

The barren flowers of the gnaphalium (*plantagineum*? no nerve to leaves), now three or four inches high, white, dotted with reddish anthers, like a diamond set in pearls, — very dry and pure and pearly like a breastpin.

That early willow at end of Corner Bridge has now female catkins on particular branches² at same time with leaves expanding. These are already serrulate and lighter beneath. The catkins are about an inch long (longer than the male were); ovaries stalked; rather downy scales, brown, rounded; stigmas distinctly two-divided and indistinctly four-divided; stem downy. Is it Bigelow's swamp willow?

Found four or five early grass-like plants or grasses or sedges. I think one the field rush (*Juncus campestris*).

May 16. The last four days have been a May storm, and this day is not quite fair yet. As I remember, there was the long storm and freshet near the end of April, then the warm, pleasant, hazy days, then this May storm, cooler but not cold as the first.

P. M. — To Conantum.

I think I may say that the buttercup (bulbous crow-

¹ [See p. 16.]

² Another tree?

foot) which I plucked at the Corner Spring would have blossomed to-day. The *Gnaphalium plantagineum* has a tender, springlike scent. The clustered purple buds of the senecio are very common in the meadows. The bees on the *Salix alba*, the prevailing one now in blossom, hum a further advance into summer. The American water cress (*Cardamine Pennsylvanica*) in blossom. The dwarf andromeda's leaf-buds are just starting. The dense beds of this plant resound with the hum of honey-bees. There is enough of this early flower to make up for deficiencies elsewhere at this season. The meadows ring with the bobolink's strain. I do not observe the female yet. Here is a bird's nest by the ditch-side which some animal has robbed, and an egg is fallen into the water. The first I have found this season. The air is sweet with fragrance. I have not seen any speckled frogs before to-day. The bobolink sits on a hardback, swaying to and fro, uncertain whether to begin his strain,—dropping a few bubbling notes by way of prelude,—with which he overflows. There are many insects now. I was ready to say that I had seen no more beautiful flower than the dandelion. That has the vernal scent. How many flowers have no peculiar, but only this simple vernal, fragrance?

The sessile-leaved bellwort, with three or four delicate pale-green leaves with reflexed edges, on a tender-looking stalk, the single modest-colored flower gracefully drooping, neat, with a fugacious, richly spiced fragrance, facing the ground, the dry leaves, as if unworthy to face the heavens. It is a beautiful sight, a pleasing discovery, the first of the season,—growing in

a little straggling company, in damp woods or swamps. When you turn up the drooping flower, its petals make a perfect geometrical figure, a six-pointed star. These faint, fugacious fragrances are pleasing. You are not always quite sure that you perceive any. In the swamp at end of Hubbard's Grove. Here are a million *Anemone nemorosa*. The inconspicuous white blossom of the gold-thread is detected amid them, but you are more struck by the bright-golden thread of its root when you pull it up. The *Viola ovata* is now very common, but rather indistinct in the grass, in both high and low land, in the sod where there is yet but little grass. The earth reflects the heavens in violets. The whole earth is fragrant as a bouquet held to your nose. I distinguish Bigelow's *Pyrus ovalis* (swamp) and *Botryapium* (wood), the former now downy, with smaller racemes, a shorter shrub, the other larger in most respects, if not all, with smooth aspen-colored leaves. Think it was the last I first plucked, though they apparently came together. *Vide* back. Peach trees in blossom. I have not walked to Lincoln lately; so have not watched their opening. It must have been some days ago. The apple buds show red. The trees are gradually leafing out and investing the evergreens. The high blueberry on high land will blossom fully in a day or two. Pretty sure I heard a hummingbird about the columbines. Can now pluck a sprig of fresh sweet-briar and feed my senses with that. I begin to hesitate about walking through some fields on account of the grass. Rye has been five or six inches high for some time. Methinks the columbine *here* is more remarkable for growing in

of the seams of the rocks than the saxifrage, and perhaps better deserves the latter name. It is now in its prime, ornamental for nature's rockwork. It is a beautiful sight to see large clusters of splendid scarlet and yellow flowers growing out of a seam in the side of this gray cliff. I observe some very *pale* blue *Viola cucullata* in the meadows. The *Arum triphyllum* in bloom and the nodding trillium budded. The black ash is now in flower (and some out of flower), and the male white ash in Miles's swamp. Is the fever-bush dead, that its wood looks so dry and its flower-buds do not expand?¹ Some of the *Gnaphalium plantagineum* have a yellow tip to the blossoms. Which is it? Male or female?

I hear few peepers to-day and no toads. The *Ane-mone nemorosa* are half closed, showing the purple under sides of the petals, but all the rue-leaved are open; but they are not so handsome open, notwithstanding their pretty leaves and yellow stamens, as the purple buds of the other. Some of these are wholly purple and their leaves a rich brown.

The muskrat has piled his shells high up the bank this year, on account of the freshet. Even our river shells will have some black, purple, or green tints, telling of distant skies, like shells from the Indies. How did these beautiful rainbow tints get into the shell of the fresh-water clam buried in the mud at the bottom of our dark river? Even the sea-bottom tells of the upper skies.

The tupelo tree is as late as, or later than, the white

¹ Yes, dead.

oak to leaf out. What is that grass in Conant's orchard in bloom? Early sedge? Here a woodchuck has dug out a bushel of sharp stones on a hillside, as big as your fist. The thrasher has a sort of laugh in his strain which the catbird has not. The sun comes out in patches somewhat like the expanding oak leaves. This gleam of sunshine, an hour or more before sundown (I am on the top of Conantum), on the tender foliage of Garfield's elms and of other trees, from behind a dark cloud in the west. Nature letting her sun shine by degrees, holding a veil of cloud before her tender plants. The patches of ground plowed and planted look fresh after the rain and of a dark-brown color. Even this nakedness is agreeable.

This will be the week of the oaks in the gray, when the farmers must plant away [?]. The bass is very conspicuous now, with its light yellow-green leaves, more forward than most. I see a hundred young apple trees come up in cow-dung. The flower-like leaves of the shrub oaks now, so red! A young of the painted tortoise, almost exactly circular and one inch in diameter, run over by a wheel in the road on the causeway.

Here on this causeway is the sweetest fragrance I have perceived this season, blown from the newly flooded meadows. I cannot imagine what there is to produce it. No nosegay can equal it. It is ambrosially, nectareally, fine and subtle, for you can see naught but the water, with green spires of meadow grass rising above it. Yet no flower from the Islands of the Blessed could smell sweeter. Yet I shall never know whence it

comes. Is it not all water-plants combined? A fine, delicious fragrance, which will come to the senses only when it will, — willful as the gales. I would give something to know of it. How it must attract all birds and insects! Can it be the willow over my head? I think not.

I hear the peepers *and toads again* this evening. It *gradually* clears up at the end of this May storm.

May 17. My seringo-bird is reddish-brown with a spot on the breast and other marks, two whitish lines on back, and some white in tail: runs in the grass, so that you see nothing of it where the grass is very low; and sings standing on a tuft of grass and holding its head up the while.

P. M. — To Loring's Pond.

Decidedly fair weather at last; a bright, breezy, flowing, *washing* day. I see that dull-red grass whose blades, having risen above the surface of the water, lie flat on it in close and conspicuous flakes, making a right angle with the part in the water. Perhaps a slightly rosaceous tint to it.

The different color of the water at different times would be worth observing. To-day it is full of light and life, the breeze presenting many surfaces to the sun. There is a sparkling shimmer on it. It is a deep, dark blue, as the sky is clear. The air everywhere is, as it were, full of the rippling of waves. This pond is the more interesting for the islands in it. The water is seen running behind them, and it is pleasant to know that it penetrates quite behind and isolates the land you

see, or to see it apparently flowing out from behind an island with shining ripples.

To-day the cinquefoils (the earliest one) on the hillsides shine in the sun. Their brightness becomes the day. That is a beautiful footpath through the pitch pines on the hillside north of this pond, over a carpet of tawny pine leaves, so slippery under your feet. Why do not men sprinkle these over their floors instead of sand? The sun on the young foliage of birches, alders, etc., on the opposite side of the pond has an enchanting effect. The sunshine has a double effect. The new leaves abet it, so fresh and tender, not apprehending their insect foes. Now the sun has come out after the May storm, how bright, how full of freshness and tender promise and fragrance is the new world! The woods putting forth new leaves; it is a memorable season. So hopeful! These young leaves have the beauty of flowers. The shrub oaks are just beginning to blossom. The forward leaves and shoots of the meadow-sweet, beneath the persistent dead flowers, make a very rich and conspicuous green now along the fences and walls. The conspicuous white flowers of the two kinds of shad-blossom spot the hillsides at a distance. This is the only bush or tree whose flowers are sufficiently common and large at this time (to-day), except the *Salix alba* and the peach (the choke-cherry is rare), to make a show now, as the apples will soon. I see dark pines in the distance in the sunshine, contrasting with the light fresh green of the deciduous trees.

There is life in these fresh and varied colors, life in the motion of the wind and the waves; all make it a

flowing, washing day. It is a good day to saunter. The female crimson flowers of the sweet-gale are still conspicuous. Is that the shepherd's-purse and the speed-well¹ that I found in blossom? Those commonest cockle(?) shells are holding on to the rocks under water by their feet in Fort Pond Brook. Wood tortoises are numerous in the fields to-day. Saw a young one two and a half inches diameter. Do I smell the young birch leaves at a distance? Most trees are beautiful when leafing out, but especially the birch. After a storm at this season, the sun comes out and lights up the tender expanding leaves, and all nature is full of light and fragrance, and the birds sing without ceasing, and the earth is a fairyland. The birch leaves are so small that you see the landscape through the tree, and they are like silvery and green spangles in the sun, fluttering about the tree. Bridged the brook with help of an alder loop and a rider. Are they not grandidentatas on Annurnack which show so white at this distance like shad-blossoms? Does not summer begin after the May storm? What is that huckleberry with sticky leaf-buds and just expanding leaves covered with a yellow waxy matter? The first *veery* note.

Methinks they were turtle doves which I saw this afternoon baited to a pigeon-place. They fly like a pigeon, — a slender, darting bird. I do not surely know them apart.

To-night I hear a new dreamer, a frog, — that sprayey note which perhaps I have referred to the midsummer frog. That praying or snoring sound also I hear.

¹ It is either the smooth or the procumbent, probably the first.

May 18. The rhodora in blossom, a delicate-colored flower.

P. M. — To Cliffs.

Frog or toad spawn in a pool in long worm-like or bowel-like strings, sometimes coiled up spirally.

It is fine clear atmosphere, only the mountains blue. A slight seething but no haze. Shall we have much of *this* weather after this? There is scarcely a flock of cloud in the sky. The heaven is now broad and open to the earth in these longest days. The world can never be more beautiful than now, for, combined with the tender fresh green, you have this remarkable clearness of the air. I doubt if the landscape will be any greener.

The landscape is most beautiful looking towards the sun (in the orchard on Fair Haven) at four. First, there is this green slope on which I sit, looking down between the rows of apple trees just being clothed with tender green, — sometimes underneath them to the sparkling water, or over through them, or seeing them against the sky. Secondly, the outline of this bank or hill is drawn against the water far below; the river still high, a beautifully bright sheen on the water there, though it is elsewhere a dull slaty-blue color, a sober rippled surface. A fine sparkling shimmer in front, owing to the remarkable clearness of the atmosphere (clarified by the May storm?). Thirdly, on either side of the wood beyond the river are patches of bright, tender, yellowish, velvety green grass in meadows and on hillsides. It is like a short furred mantle now and bright as if it had the sun on it. Those great fields of green affect me as did those early green blades by the Corner Spring,

— like a fire flaming up from the earth. The earth proves itself well alive even in the skin. No scurf on it, only a browner color on the barren tops of hills. Fourthly, the forest, the dark-green pines, wonderfully distinct, near and erect, with their distinct dark stems, spiring tops, regularly disposed branches, and silvery light on their needles. They seem to wear an aspect as much fresher and livelier as the other trees, — though their growth can hardly be perceptible yet, — as if they had been washed by the rains and the air. They are now being invested with the light, sunny, yellowish-green of the deciduous trees. This tender foliage, putting so much light and life into the landscape, is the remarkable feature at this date. The week when the deciduous trees are generally and conspicuously expanding their leaves. The various tints of gray oaks and yellowish-green birches and aspens and hickories, and the red or scarlet tops where maple keys are formed (the blossoms are now over), — these last the high color (rosaceous?) in the bouquet. And fifthly, I detect a great stretch of high-backed, mostly bare, grassy pasture country between this and the Nashua, spotted with pines and forests, which I had formerly taken for forest uninterrupted. And finally, sixthly, Wachusett rising in the background, slightly veiled in bluish mist, — toward which all these seem to slope gradually upward, — and those grassy hillsides in the foreground, seen but as patches of bare grassy ground on a spur of that distant mountain.

This afternoon the brown thrashers are very numerous and musical. They plunge downward when they

leave their perch, in a peculiar way. It is a bird that appears to make a business of singing for its own amusement. There is great variety in its strains. It is not easy to detect any repetition. The wood thrush, too, is pretty sure to be heard in a walk. Some shrub oaks are beginning to blossom. I hear my second cricket on the face of the Cliffs, clear and distinct, — only one. The shrub oaks on the plain show a little red with their buds and young leaves. The crowfoot shines on the rocks.

At evening the water is quite white, reflecting the white evening sky, and oily smooth. I see the willows reflected in it, when I cannot see their tops in the twilight against the dark hillside. The first bat by the riverside. The praying or snoring frog, the peepers (not so common as lately), the toads (not many), and sometimes my midsummer frog, — all together. The spearers are out to-night.

These days the golden robin is the important bird in the streets, on the elms.

May 19. Up to about the 14th of May I watched the progress of the season very closely, — though not so carefully the earliest birds, — but since that date, both from poor health and multiplicity of objects, I have noted little but what fell under my observation. The pear trees are in bloom before the apples. The cherries appear to have been blasted by the winter. The lilac has begun to blossom. There was the first lightning we have noticed this year, last Sunday evening, and a thunder-storm in Walpole, N. H. Light-

ning here this evening and an aurora in form of a segment of a circle.

May 20. P. M. — To Corner Spring.

So many birds that I have not attended much to any of late. A barn swallow accompanied me across the Depot Field, methinks attracted by the insects which I started, though I saw them not, wheeling and tacking incessantly on all sides and repeatedly dashing within a rod of me. It is an agreeable sight to watch one. Nothing lives in the air but is in rapid motion.

Now is the season of the leafing of the trees and of planting. The fields are white with houstonias, as they will soon be yellow with buttercups. Perchance the beginning of summer may be dated from the fully formed leaves, when dense shade (?) begins. I will see. High blueberries at length. It is unnecessary to speak of them. All flowers are beautiful. The *Salix alba* is about out of bloom. Pads begin to appear, though the river is high over the meadows.¹ A caterpillars' nest on a wild cherry. Some apple trees in blossom; most are just ready to burst forth, the leaves being half formed. I find the fever-bush in bloom, but apparently its blossoms are now stale. I must observe it next year. They were fresh perhaps a week ago. Currants in bloom by Conant's Spring. Are they natives of America? A lady's-slipper well budded and now white. The *Viola ovata* is of a deep purple blue, is darkest and has most of the red in it; the *V. pedata* is smooth and pale-blue, delicately tinged with purple reflections; the *cucullata*

¹ *Vide* p. [71].

is more decidedly blue, slaty-blue, and darkly striated. The white violets by the spring are rather scarce now. The red oak leaves are very pretty and finely cut, about an inch and three quarters long. Like most young leaves, they are turned back around the twig, parasol-like. The farmers apprehend frosts these nights. A purplish gnaphalium with three-nerved leaves.

May 21. Morning by river.

A song sparrow's nest and eggs so placed in a bank that none could tread on it; bluish-white, speckled. Also a robin's nest and eggs in the crotch of a maple. Methinks birds that build amid the small branches of trees wait for the leaves to expand.¹ The dew hangs on the grass like globules of quicksilver. Can I tell by it if it has rained in the night? I *hear that it has*.

P. M. — The black oak is just beginning to blossom. The earlier apple trees are in bloom, and resound with the hum of bees of all sizes and other insects. To sit under the first apple tree in blossom is to take another step into summer. The apple blossoms are so abundant and full, white tinged with red; a rich-scented Pomona fragrance, telling of heaps of apples in the autumn, perfectly innocent, wholesome, and delicious. On hill-sides cut off two years ago, the red oaks now contrast at a little distance with the yellowish-green birches. The latter are covered with green lice, which cover me.

The catbird sings like a robin sometimes, sometimes

¹ [This sentence is queried in the margin.]

like a blackbird's sprayey warble. There is more of squeak or mew, and also of clear *whistle*, than in the thrasher's note.

Nemopanthes in bloom; leaves three quarters of an inch. Sand cherry also, fully. Young blueberries everywhere in bloom, and *Viola pedata* along the woodland paths, in high land. Sorrel in bloom, beginning. I am eager to taste a handful.

May 22. Saturday. On my way to Plymouth, looked at Audubon in the State-House. Saw painted the *red* berries of the *Arum triphyllum*. The pigeon is more red on the breast and more blue than the turtle dove. The female (and male?) wood thrush spotted the whole length of belly; the hermit thrush not so. The seringo-bird cannot be the Savannah sparrow. The piping plover has a big head, white breast, and ring neck.

Two kinds of bluets in New York Report.

5 P. M. — Plymouth.

The hill whence Billington discovered the pond. The field plantain in blossom and abundant here. A chickweed in bloom in Watson's garden. Is it the same that was so early? A yellow flower, apparently a hieraccum, just ready to blossom. The four-leaved loosestrife, with dark leaves, shows its flower-buds on the ends of its threads. The mayweed is ready to blossom.¹ The German forget-me-not reminded me of my little blue flower in the brook.

¹ Was it not whiteweed?

May 23. To Billington Sea at sunrise.

The purple finch sings like a canary and like a robin. Huckleberry leaves here, too, are sticky, and yellow my fingers. *Pyrus arbutifolia* in bloom. The low, spreading red cedars which come abruptly to naught at top suggest that they be used for posts with the stubs of branches left, as they often are. The bayberry is late, just beginning to leaf. The buttercup season has arrived here. Mrs. Watson says they have no bluets nor wild pinks (catchfly) here. Some ponds have outlets; some have not. So some men. Singular that so many ponds should have connection with the sea. The inkberry is late. The red-eyed vireo is a steady singer, sitting near the top of a tree a long time alone, — the robin of the woods, — as the robin sings at morning and evening on an elm in the village.

It is worth the while to go a little south to anticipate nature at home. I am now covered with down from the tender foliage, walking in the woods in the morning. Hear the hollow, spitting, *tunk tunk* sound of frogs in the morning, which tells of sultry nights, though we have not had them yet. The *Viola lanceolata* here. *Corema Conradii* in the cemetery, just out of bloom, — broom crowberry, from *κόρημα*, a broom, — a rare plant which I have seen at Provincetown. The *Empetrum nigrum*, or black crowberry, is found at the White Mountains. The buck-bean in bloom. What is that linear-leaved, small pink-purple flower which they say grows about the stones in a walk? Beach plum ready to bloom. Young oak leaves red above and light below, with a red edge only, handsome as flowers.

P. M. — To Great South Pond.

A brown spotted snake, two feet or more long, light-colored beneath, with blotchy dark - brown spots above like this:¹ —



The trientalis in bloom. The dandelions close at eve, so that you cannot find those that starred the meadow. Woods extensive but small and low, soil sandy; no variety in the landscape. Woods and deer because the soil is sandy and unfit for cultivation.

May 24. The cooing of a dove reminded me of an owl this morning. Counted just fifty violets (*pedata*) in a little bunch, three and a half by five inches, and as many buds, there being six plants close together; on the hill where Billington climbed a tree.

A calabash at Pilgrim Hall nearly two feet high, in the form of a jar, showed what these fruits were made for. Nature's jars and vases.

Holbrook says the *Bufo Americanus* is the most common in America and is our representative of the *Bufo communis* of Europe; speaks of its trill; deposits its spawn in pools.

Found in College Yard *Trifolium procumbens*, or yellow clover.

Concord. — Celandine in blossom, and horse-chestnut.

May 25. Tuesday. P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook and Flint's Pond.

¹ The *Tropidonotus sipedon*, water snake, of Holbrook.

The *Rhodora Canadensis* is not yet out of blossom, and its leaves are not expanded. It is important for its contrast with the surrounding green, — so much high-colored blossom. The *Pyrus arbutifolia* now. The ferns are grown up large, and some are in fruit, a dark or blackish fruit part way down the stem, with a strong scent, — quite a rich-looking fruit, of small dark-greenish globules clustered together. The female red maples bearing keys are later to put forth leaves. The catkins of the willows on the Turnpike, now fallen, cover the water. The water has subsided so that the pads lie on the surface. The chinquapin shrub oak is blossoming. The pincushion galls appear on the oak. The oak apples are forming. Those galls first named, a sparkling frosted cotton, are very beautiful. The veronica is everywhere in bloom, in the grass by the roadside. It is blossom week with the apples. The shad-blossoms are gone. Apple trees on distant hillsides look like whitish rocks, or like a snow imperfectly covering the ground, or like the reindeer mosses. The sarsaparilla in bloom; and trientalis, its white star. Some call bluets innocence. The reddish buds of the *Pyrus arbutifolia* are handsomer than the flower. What a sunny yellow in the early cinquefoil, which now spots the grass! The red oak sprouts have grown ten inches before their leaves are expanded. Some late willows have fresh green catkins now. Clustered Solomon's-seal. *Polygonatum pubescens* ready to bloom. Is that an aralia near the brook? Medeola or cucumber-root in bud, with its two-storied whorl of leaves. The trilliums (*T. cernuum*, wake-robin) in bloom, and the geraniums show great

leaves. Mosquitoes have come. (They say there are none in Plymouth village.) Consider the fugacious fragrance of many flowers. The dark striped flowers of the arums now, some whitish. Cress in flower. The veratrums by this brook have run up so high they make a tropical scenery on the edge of the water, like young palms. Yellow butterflies one at a time. The large yellow woods violet (*V. pubescens*) by this brook now out. The *Rana palustris*, or pickerel frog, is abundant in the meadows. I hear the first troonk of a bull-frog. The fringed polygala (*P. paucifolia*), flowering wintergreen. What bird was that whose wild note I heard at Goose Pond to-night? A loon or a bittern? First nighthawks squeak and boom. Grasshoppers appear.

May 26. Wednesday. Surveying the Brooks farm. The early thalictrum has been in bloom some time. Perceive the rank smell of brakes. Observe the yellow bark of the barberry.

When the cows and bullocks were lively in the pasture about my compass, Bigelow said the grubs were working in their backs. He had that morning taken out three or four from the back of a young bull he has. They have black heads, which appear and are three quarters of an inch long; are natural to the creature; lie right in the meat, and when they begin to squirm, then the cattle toss their tails and are lively. Great corporations are the cattle, and their vermin are large. This is a new version of the œstrus, — a sudden stampede among the steers when the grubs

squirm in their backs!! He had also seen the grub in their tails. They are occupied as parts of the earth.

The air is full of the odor of apple blossoms, yet the air is fresh as from the salt water. The meadow smells sweet as you go along low places in the road at sundown. To-night I hear many crickets. They have commenced their song. They bring in the summer.

Walking home from surveying. — The fields are *just beginning* to be reddened with sorrel. I hear the peawai, the tender note. Is it not the small pewee? Channing says he has seen a red clover blossom and heard a stake-driver. Lousewort (*Pedicularis Canadensis*), very badly named. Pipes (*Equisetum uliginosum*) in blossom. The *Geranium maculatum*(?). One of the large flowering ferns, — part way up the stalk, — (*Osmunda* ?); and an early *Thalictrum* (*dioicum* ?). The meadows are full of saxifrage.

May 27. At Corner Spring.

A wet day. The veery sings nevertheless. The road is white with the apple blossoms fallen off, as with snowflakes. The dogwood is coming out. Ladies'-slippers out. They perfume the air. *Ranunculus recurvatus*, hooked crowfoot, by the spring. *Prunus maritima*, beach plum, by Hubbard's. Dwarf cornel. *Smilacina racemosa*, clustered Solomon's-seal. The nodding trillium has a faint, rich scent; the *Convallaria bifolia* a strong but not very pleasant scent. *Ranunculus acris*, or tall crowfoot, before the first buttercup shows much.

Viola lanceolata, white. (I did not distinguish it before.) My early willow is either the swamp willow or the bog willow of Bigelow. The *Salix nigra*, or black willow, of Gray, in bloom. *Myosotis laxa*, water mouse-ear, by Depot Field Brook. The fruit of the sweet flag is now just fit to eat, and reminds me of childhood, — the critchicrotches. They would help sustain a famished traveller. The inmost tender leaf, also, near the base, is quite palatable, as children know. I love it as well as muskrats (?). The smooth speedwell, the minute pale-blue striated flower by the roadsides and in the short sod of fields, common now. I hear but few toads and peepers now. The sweetness which appears to be wafted from the meadow (I am on the Corner causeway) is indescribably captivating, Sabeian odors, such as voyageurs tell of when approaching a coast. Can it be the grape so early? I think not. May it be the mint in the meadow, just left bare by the receding waters? It appears to come from the ditch by the roadside. Methinks the tree-toad croaks more this wet weather. The tall crowfoot out. The fringed polygala near the Corner Spring is a delicate flower, with very fresh tender green leaves and red-purple blossoms; beautiful from the contrast of its clear red-purple flowers with its clear green leaves. The cuckoo. Caught a wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), the color of a dead leaf. He croaked as I held him, perfectly frog-like. A humblebee is on my bunch of flowers laid down.

May 28. White thorn and yellow Bethlehem-star (*Hypoxis erecta*)

May 29. Fogs this and yesterday morning. I hear the quails nowadays while surveying. Barberry in bloom, wild pinks, and blue-eyed grass.

May 30. Sunday. Now is the summer come. A breezy, washing day. A day for shadows, even of moving clouds, over fields in which the grass is beginning to wave. Senecio in bloom. A bird's nest in grass, with coffee-colored eggs. Cinquefoil and houstonia cover the ground, mixed with the grass and contrasting with each other. Strong lights and shades now. Wild cherry on the low shrubs, but not yet the trees, a rummy scent. Violets everywhere spot the meadows, some more purple, some more lilac. The tall pipe-grass (*Equisetum uliginosum*). The *Drosera rotundifolia* now glistens with its dew at midday, a beautiful object closely examined. The dwarf andromeda is about out of bloom. Its new shoots from the side of the old stem are an inch or more long. The little leaves appear to be gradually falling off, after all. See again if they do not all fall off in the summer. Distinguished the *Viola palmata* in Hubbard's meadow, near the sidesaddle-flowers, which last are *just beginning* to blossom. The last are quite showy flowers when the wind turns them so as to show their under sides.

It is a day of shadows, the leaves have so grown, and of wind, — a washing day, — and the shadows of the clouds are observed flitting over the landscape. I do not yet observe a difference between the two kinds of *Pyrus arbutifolia*, if, indeed, I have compared the two, *i. e.* my early black and later red-fruited, which last

holds on all winter. The fruit of the amelanchier is as big as *small* peas. I have not noticed any other berry so large yet. The anemones appear to be nearly gone. Yellow lilies are abundant. The bulbous arctusa, the most splendid, rich, and high-colored flower thus far, methinks, all flower and color, almost without leaves, and looking much larger than it is, and more conspicuous on account of its intense color. A flower of mark. It appeared two or three times as large as reality when it flashed upon me from the meadow. Bigelow calls it a "crystalline purple." (Saw some the 6th of June, but no longer fresh.)¹ What kind of blackberry did I find in blossom in Hubbard's Swamp? Passed a cow that had just dropped her calf in the meadow. The sumach (*glabra*) is well under weigh now. The yellow water ranunculus by the Corner causeway. There are young robins in nests. To what sparrow belong the coffee-colored eggs in Hubbard's field by the brook? White cohush in bloom; also *Smilacina stellata*. The branches or branchlets of the maidenhair fern are so disposed as to form two thirds of a cup around the stem. The flowers of the sassafras have not such a fragrance as I perceived last year. High blueberry flowers are quite conspicuous. The bass leaf is now large and handsome. The geranium is a delicate flower and belongs especially to shady places under trees and shrubs, — better if about springs, — in by-nooks, so modest. The early gnaphaliums are gone to seed, having run

¹ [In this case, as not infrequently happened, Thoreau was evidently writing up his Journal — or copying his pencilled field-notes into it — some days after the event.]

up seven or ten inches. The field plantain, which I saw in Plymouth a week ago, abundant there. The narrow-leaved cotton-grass. The *Equisetum sylvaticum*, or wood horse-tail in the meadows. The lupine, which I saw almost in blossom a week ago at Plymouth, I hear is in blossom here. The river is my own highway, the only wild and unfenced part of the world hereabouts. How much of the world is widow's thirds, with a hired man to take negligent care of it! The apple trees are about out of blossom. It is but a week they last.

Israel Rice thinks the first half of June is not commonly so warm as May, and that the reason is that vegetation is so advanced that the earth is shaded and protected from the sun by the grass also, so that it is delayed in being warmed by the summer sun.