

V

SEPTEMBER, 1852

(ÆT. 35)

*Sept. 1. Wednesday.* Some tragedy, at least some dwelling on, or even exaggeration of, the tragic side of life is necessary for contrast or relief to the picture. The genius of the writer may be such a colored glass as Gilpin describes, the use of which is "to give a greater depth to the shades; by which the effect is shown with more force." The whole of life is seen by some through this darker medium, — partakes of the tragic, — and its bright and splendid lights become thus lurid.

4 P. M. — To Walden.

Paddling over it, I see large schools of perch only an inch long, yet easily distinguished by their transverse bars. Great is the beauty of a wooded shore seen from the water, for the trees have ample room to expand on that side, and each puts forth its most vigorous bough to fringe and adorn the pond. It is rare that you see so natural an edge to the forest. Hence a pond like this, surrounded by hills wooded down to the edge of the water, is the best place to observe the tints of the autumnal foliage. Moreover, such as stand in or near to the water change earlier than elsewhere.

This is a very warm and serene evening, and the surface of the pond is perfectly smooth except where

the skaters dimple it, for at equal intervals they are scattered over its whole extent, and, looking west, they make a fine sparkle in the sun. Here and there is a thistle(?)—down floating on its surface, which the fishes dart at, and dimple the water,<sup>1</sup> — delicate hint of approaching autumn, when the first thistle-down descends on some smooth lake's surface, full of reflections, in the woods, sign to the fishes of the ripening year. These white faery vessels are annually wafted over the cope of their sky. Bethink thyself, O man, when the first thistle-down is in the air. Buoyantly it floated high in air over hills and fields all day, and now, weighed down with evening dews, perchance, it sinks gently to the surface of the lake. Nothing can stay the thistle-down, but with September winds it unfailingly sets sail. The irresistible revolution of time. It but comes down upon the sea in its ship, and is still perchance wafted to the shore with its delicate sails. The thistle-down is in the air. Tell me, is thy fruit also there? Dost thou approach maturity? Do gales shake windfalls from thy tree? But I see no dust here as on the river.

Some of the leaves of the rough hawkweed are purple now, especially beneath.

I see a yet smoother, darker water, separated from this abruptly, as if by an invisible cobweb resting on the surface.<sup>2</sup> I view it from Heywood's Peak. How rich and autumnal the haze which blues the distant hills and fills the valleys. The lakes look better in this haze, which confines our view more to their reflected

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, pp. 197, 206, 207; Riv. 278, 291-293.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, p. 208; Riv. 293.]

heavens and makes the shore-line more indistinct. Viewed from the hilltop, it reflects the color of the sky. Some have referred the vivid greenness next the shores to the reflection of the verdure, but it is equally green there against the railroad sand-bank and in the spring before the leaves are expanded. Beyond the deep reflecting surface, near the shore, where the bottom is seen, it is a vivid green.<sup>1</sup> I see two or three small maples already scarlet, across the pond, beneath where the white stems of three birches diverge, at the point of a promontory next the water, a distinct scarlet tint a quarter of a mile off. Ah, many a tale their color tells of Indian times — and autumn wells [?] — primeval dells.<sup>2</sup> The beautifully varied shores of Walden, — the western indented with deep bays, the bold northern shore, the gracefully sweeping curve of the eastern, and above all the beautifully scalloped southern shore, where successive capes overlap each other and suggest unexplored coves between. Its shore is just irregular enough not to be monotonous. From this peak I can see a fish leap in almost any part of the pond, for not a pickerel or shiner picks an insect from this smooth surface but it manifestly disturbs the equilibrium of the lake. It is wonderful with what elaborateness this simple fact is advertised. This piscine murder will out, and from my distant perch I distinguish the circling undulations when they are now half a dozen rods in diameter.<sup>3</sup> Methinks I distinguish

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 196; Riv. 276, 277.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Walden*, p. 265; Riv. 372.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Walden*, p. 208; Riv. 293.]

Fair Haven Pond from this point, elevated by a mirage in its seething valley, like a coin in a basin.<sup>1</sup> They cannot fatally injure Walden with an axe, for they have done their worst and failed. We see things in the reflection which we do not see in the substance. In the reflected woods of Pine Hill there is a vista through which I see the sky, but I am indebted to the water for this advantage, for from this point the actual wood affords no such vista.

*Bidens connata* (?) not quite out. I see the *Hieracium venosum* still, but slightly veined. Have I not made another species of this variety? *Aster undulatus* (?), like a many-flowered *amplexicaulis*, with leaves narrowed below, a few days. *Amphicarpæa monoica*, like the ground-nut, but ternate, out of bloom; probably July or August. Pods just forming. *Desmodium rotundifolium* just going out of bloom. Last two, side of Heywood's Peak.

Gilpin, who is usually so correct, standing at the head of Loch Fyne in Scotland, which he describes as "a bay of salt water, sixty or seventy fathoms deep, four miles in breadth," and about fifty miles long, surrounded by mountains, observes: "If we could have seen it immediately after the diluvian crash, or whatever convulsion of nature occasioned it, before the waters gushed in, what a horrid chasm must it have appeared!

"So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad, and deep,  
Capacious bed of waters —." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [This sentence is queried in the margin.]

<sup>2</sup> [William Gilpin, *Observations on the Highlands of Scotland.*]

But if we apply these proportions to Walden, which, as we have seen, appears already in a *transverse* section like a shallow plate, it will appear four times as shallow. So much for the increased horrors of the emptied chasm of Loch Fyne. No doubt many a smiling valley with its extended fields of corn occupies exactly such a "horrid chasm," from which the waters have receded, though it requires the insight of the geologist to convince the unsuspecting inhabitants of the fact. Most ponds, being emptied, would leave a meadow no more hollow than we frequently see. I have seen many a village situated in the midst of a plain which the geologist has at length affirmed must have been levelled by water, where the observing eye might still detect the shores of a lake in the horizon, and no subsequent elevation of the plain was necessary to conceal the fact.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is only by emphasis and exaggeration that real effects are described. What Gilpin says in another place is perfectly applicable to this case; though he says that that which he is about to disclose is so bold a truth, "that it ought only, perhaps, to be opened to the initiated." "In the exhibition of distant mountains on paper, or canvas," says he, "unless you make them exceed their *real* or *proportional* size, they have no effect. It is inconceivable how objects lessen by distance. Examine any distance, closed by mountains, in a camera, and you will easily see what a poor, diminutive appearance the mountains make. By the power of perspective they are lessened to nothing. Should

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, pp. 317, 318; Riv. 443, 444.]

you represent them in your landscape in so diminutive a form, all dignity, and grandeur of idea would be lost."

*Sept. 2. P. M. — To Walden.*

The seringo, too, has long been silent like other birds. The red prinus berries ripe in sunny places. Rose hips begin to be handsome. Small flocks of pigeons are seen these days. Distinguished from doves by their sharper wings and bodies. August has been a month of berries and melons, small fruits. First in the descent from summer's culminating-point. There is a stillness in nature for want of singing birds, commenced a month or more ago; only the crickets' louder creak to supply their place. I have not heard a bullfrog this long time. The small cornel, or bunch-berry, is in bloom now (!) near the pond. What great tuft-like masses the cow-wheat makes now in sprout-lands!

As I look over the pond now from the eastern shore, I am obliged to employ both my hands to defend my eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun, for they appear equally bright; and between my hands I look over the smooth and glassy surface of the lake. The skaters make the finest imaginable sparkle. Otherwise it is literally as smooth as glass, except where a fish leaps into the air or a swallow dips beneath its surface. Sometimes a fish describes an arc of three or four feet in the air, and there is a bright flash where it emerges and another where it strikes the water.<sup>1</sup> A slight haze at this season makes the shore-line so much

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 207; Riv. 292, 293.]

the more indistinct. Looking across the pond from the Peak toward Fair Haven, which I seem to see, all the earth beyond appears insulated and floated, even by this small sheet of water, the heavens being seen reflected, as it were beneath it, so that it looks thin.

The scenery of this small pond is humble though very beautiful, and does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it, or lived by its shore.<sup>1</sup>

*Sept. 3. 1 A. M., moon waning, to Conantum.*

A warm night. A thin coat sufficient. I hear an apple fall, as I go along the road. Meet a man going to market thus early. There are no mists to diversify the night. Its features are very simple. I hear no whip-poor-will or other bird. See no fireflies. Saw a whip-poor-will (?) flutter across the road. Hear the dumping sound of frogs on the river meadow, and occasionally a kind of croak as from a bittern there. It is very dewy, and I bring home much mud on my shoes. This is a peculiarity of night, — its dews, water resuming its reign. Return before dawn. Morning and evening are more attractive than midnight.

I will endeavor to separate the tide in my thoughts, or what is due to the influence of the moon, from the current distractions and fluctuations. The winds which the sun has aroused go down at evening, and the lunar influence may then perchance be detected.

Of late I have not heard the wood thrush.

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 195; Riv. 275.]

Sept. 5. P. M. — To Cliffs.

The petals of the purple gerardia strew the brooks. The oval spikes of somewhat pear-shaped berries of the arum perhaps vermilion-color now; its scapes bent to the ground. These by their color must have caught an Indian's eye. The brooks are full of red rootlets of the alder, etc. The country begins to have a dry and *flavid* look, — corn-fields, grass-fields, etc., — and when winds blow, a slight rustling is heard. I observed minute red maples, on the shore near water, only an inch high, completely turned red. I have noticed the thistle-down now for some days in the air, not yet the milkweed, though some flowers of the thistle are still seen. Some galls on the oak an inch in diameter like Castile soap balls, quite handsome.

Some smaller and redder, with watered zones.  Interesting kind of parasitic fruits, not so handsome, perchance, as the pincushion galls of the spring. What is that bidens now just blossomed, rough-stemmed or bristly, with undivided, lanceolate, serrate, and strongly connate leaves, short but conspicuous rays, achenia four-awned and downwardly barbed? <sup>1</sup>

Sept. 6. Monday. To Peterboro. Railroad to Mason Village.

Observed from cars at 7.30 A. M. the dew, or fog rather, on the fine grass in meadows, — a dirty white, which, one of these mornings, will be frozen to a white frost. A woman who wished to go to Nashua was left behind at Groton Junction, — to which she said, "Why,

<sup>1</sup> *B. cernua*.

I was *he-ar*." Girls picking hops in Townsend. Some fields are completely yellow — one mass of yellow — from the solidago. It is the prevailing flower the traveller sees. Walked from Mason Village over the mountain-tops to Peterboro. Saw, sailing over Mason Village about 10 A. M., a white-headed and *white-tailed* eagle with black wings, — a grand sight. The "doubly compound racemed panicles" of the spikenard berries, varnish-colored berries, or color of varnished mahogany. Met a crazy man, probably being carried to a hospital, who must take us both by the hand and tell us how the spirit of God had descended on him and given him all the world, and he was going to make every man a present of half a million, etc., etc. High blackberries by the roadside abundant still, the long, sweet, mulberry-shaped ones, mostly confined to the road, and very grateful to the walker. A stone by the roadside in Temple, whitewashed, with an inscription in black, evincing the vulgarity of the Yankees, "Here Jesse Spofford was killed," etc., etc., not telling how. Thus we record only the trivial, not the important event, as the advent of a thought. Who cares whether Jesse Spofford was killed or not, if he does not know whether he was worthy to live?

The tavern-keeper at Temple said the summit just south of the Peterboro road, covered with wood, was the highest (probably a mistake), — 980 feet above Temple Common, which is itself very high. Went across lots from here toward this. When part way up, or on a lower part of the ridge, discovered it was not the highest, and turned northward across the road to what

is apparently the highest, first having looked south to Kidder's mountain, between New Ipswich and Temple and further west and quite near to Boundary Mountain between Sharon and Temple. Already we had had experience of a mountain-side covered with bare rocks, as if successive thunder [*sic*] spouts had burst over it, and bleached timber lying across the rocks, the woodbine red as blood about a tall stump, and the strong, sweet, bracing scent of ferns between the rocks, the raspberry bushes still retaining a few berries. They usually tell you how many mountain-houses you can see from a mountain, but they are interesting to me in proportion to the number you cannot see. We went down the west side of this first mountain, from whose summit we could not see west on account of another ridge; descended far, and across the road, and up the southernmost of what I have called the Peterboro Hills. The raw edge of a forest of canoe birches on the side of this hill was remarkable on account of the wonderful contrast of the white stems with the green leaves; the former glaringly white, as if whitewashed and varnished or polished. You now hear that grating, creaking flight of the grasshopper. There is something in the aspect of the evergreens, the dwarfed forests and the bare rocks of mountain-tops, and the scent of the ferns, stern yet sweet to man. Hazy. Monadnock would probably look better toward evening. It was now two or three p. m. In the woods near the top, the *Viburnum lantanoides*, hobble-bush, American way-faring-tree, in fruit, mostly large and red, but the ripe dark blue or black like the *V. nudum*, — what I have

formerly falsely called moose-berry. Probably it does not grow in Concord.

Went, still across lots, to Peterboro village, which we could not see from the mountain. But first we had seen the Lyndeboro Mountain, north of these two, — partly in Greenfield, — and further Crotched Mountain, and in the northeast Uncannunuc. Descended where, as usual, the forest had been burned formerly, — tall bleached masts still standing, making a very wild and agreeably [*sic*] scenery, — keeping on a westward spur or side, that we might see north and south. Saw the pond on the "embenchment" between the two mountains. Some sheep ran from us in great fear. Others put their heads down and together, and stood *perfectly still*, resembling rocks, so that I did not notice them at first. Did they not do it for concealment? After we got down, the prevailing trees were hemlock, spruce, black and yellow birch, and beech, the ground very cleanly and smoothly carpeted with the old leaves of the last two especially, without weeds. Saw some ground-hemlock with some fruit still. Had seen on the hill *Polygonum cilinode*, running polygonum, but no flower, — *alias* fringe-jointed false-buckwheat.

A man in Peterboro told me that his father told him that Monadnock used to be covered with forest, that fires ran through it and killed the turf; then the trees were blown down, and their roots turned up and formed a dense and impenetrable thicket in which the wolves abounded. They came down at night, killed sheep, etc., and returned to their dens, whither they could not be pursued, before morning; till finally they set fire to

this thicket, and it made the greatest fire they had ever had in the county, and drove out all the wolves, which have not troubled them since. He himself had seen one wolf killed there when he was a boy. They kill now raccoons, hedgehogs, and wildcats there. I thought that I did not see so great a proportion of forest from their hilltops as about Concord, to which they agreed. I should say their hills were uncommonly rocky, — more stone than soil.

*Sept. 7. Tuesday.* Went, across lots still, to Monadnock, the base some half-dozen miles in a straight line from Peterboro, — six or seven miles. (It had been eleven miles (*by road*) from Mason Village to Peterboro.) My clothes sprinkled with ambrosia pollen. Saw near the mountain a field of turnips whose leaves, all but the midribs, were eaten up by grasshoppers and looked white over the field, and sometimes the turnips were eaten also. Joe Eavely's, the house nearest the top, that we saw under the east side, a small red house a little way up. The summit hardly more than a mile distant in a straight line, but about two miles as they go. Bunch-berries everywhere now. *Acer Pennsylvanicum*, striped maple or moosewood or striped dogwood, but no keys to be seen, — a very large-leaved, three-lobed maple with a handsome striped bark. This, I believe, the Indians smoke. Also *Acer spicatum*, mountain maple, with upright racemes in fruit. Between the rocks on the summit, an abundance of large and fresh blueberries still, apparently *Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum*, very large, fresh and cooling to eat, supply

ing the place of water. They said they did not get ripe so early as below, but at any rate they last much longer; both, perhaps, because of the greater coolness of the atmosphere. Though this vegetation was very humble, yet it was very productive of fruit. In one little hollow between the rocks grew blueberries, choke-berries, bunch-berries, *red* cherries, wild currants (*Ribes prostratum*, with the berry the odor of skunk-cabbage, but a not quite disagreeable wild flavor), a few raspberries still, holly berries, mountain cranberries (*Vaccinium Vitis-Idæa*), all close together. The little soil on the summit between the rocks was covered with the *Potentilla tridentata*, now out of bloom, the prevailing plant at the extreme summit. Mountain-ash berries also.

Descending toward Troy, a little after 1 P. M., plucked the *Trillium erythrocarpum* with the large red berry, painted trillium. The *Aster acuminatus*, with its leaves in a whorl, white; methinks we may have it. When we had got down, we could see that the mountain had spurs or buttresses on every side, by whose ridge you might ascend. It is an interesting feature in a mountain. I have noticed that they will send out these buttresses every way from their centre.

Were on the top of the mountain at 1 P. M. The cars left Troy, four or five miles off, at three. We reached the depot, by running at last, at the same instant the cars did, and reached Concord at a quarter after five, *i. e.* four hours from the time we were picking blueberries on the mountain, with the plants of the mountain fresh in my hat.

Sept. 8. Grapes ripe on the Assabet for some days. *Gentiana saponaria* out. Carrion-flower berries ripe for some days. *Polygala verticillata* still, on left side of road beyond Lee place. I put it with the other polygalas in July. Do I perceive the shadows lengthen already?

Sept. 9. There are enough who will flatter me with sweet words, and anon use bitter ones to balance them, but they are not my friends. Simple sincerity and truth are rare indeed. One acquaintance criticises me to my face, expecting every moment that I will become his friend to pay for it. I hear my acquaintance thinking his criticism aloud. We love to talk with those who can make a good guess at us, not with those who talk to us as if we were somebody else all the while. Our neighbors invite us to be amiable toward their vices. How simple is the law of love! One who loves us acts accordingly, and anon we come together and succeed together without let or hindrance.

Yesterday and to-day have felt about as hot as any weather this year. The potato-balls lie ripe in the fields. The groundsel down is in the air. The last day of August I saw a sharp-nosed green grasshopper. The goldenrods resound with the hum of bees and other insects. Methinks the little leaves now springing, which I have called mullein, must be fragrant everlasting (?). I believe that I occasionally hear a hylodes within a day or two. In front of Caesar's, the *Crotalaria sagittalis*, rattle-pod, still in bloom, though the seeds are ripe; probably began in July. Also by Caesar's well, *Liatris*

*scariosa*, handsome rose-purple, with the aspect of a Canada thistle at a distance, or a single vernonia. Referred to August. Ah! the beauty of the liatris bud just bursting into bloom, the rich fiery rose-purple, like that of the sun at his rising. Some call it button snake-root. Those crotalaria pods would make pretty play-things for children.

Sept. 11. Genius is like the snapping-turtle born with a great developed head. They say our brain at birth is one sixth the weight of the body.

Cranberries are being raked for fear of frosts. These fall rains are a peculiarity of the season. How much fresher some flowers look in rainy weather! When I thought they were about done, they appear to revive, and moreover their beauty is enhanced, as if by the contrast of the louring atmosphere with their bright colors. Such are the purple gerardia and the *Bidens cernua*. The purple gerardia and blue-curly are interesting for their petals strewn about, beaten down by the rain. Many a brook I look into is strewn with the purple petals of the gerardia, whose stalk is not obvious in the bank. Again the *Potentilla Canadensis* var. *pumila*, and dandelions occasionally.

Sept. 13. Yesterday it rained all day, with considerable wind, which has strewn the ground with apples and peaches, and, all the country over, people are busy picking up the windfalls. More leaves also have fallen. Rain has as much to do with it as wind. Rode round through Lincoln and a part of Weston and Wayland.

The barberries, now red and reddening, begin to show. Asters, various shades of blue, and especially the smaller kinds of *dense-flowering white ones*, are more than ever by the roadsides. The great bidens in the sun in brooks affects me as the rose of the fall, the most *flavid* product of the water and the sun. They are low suns in the brook. The golden glow of autumn concentrated, more golden than the sun. How surely this yellow comes out along the brooks when you have applied the chemical test of autumn air to it! It yellows along the brook. The earth wears different colors or liveries at different seasons. If I come by at this season, a golden blaze will salute me here from a thousand suns.

How earnestly and rapidly each creature, each flower, is fulfilling its part while its day lasts! Nature never lost a day, nor a moment. As the planet in its orbit and around its axis, so do the seasons, so does time, revolve, with a rapidity inconceivable. In the moment, in the æon, well employed, time ever advances with this rapidity. To an idler the man employed is terribly rapid. He that is not behind his time is swift. The immortals are swift. Clear the track! The plant that waited a whole year, and then blossomed the instant it was ready and the earth was ready for it, without the conception of delay, was rapid. To the conscience of the idle man, the stillness of a placid September day sounds like the din and whirl of a factory. Only employment can still this din in the air.

In my ride I experienced the pleasure of coming into a landscape where there was more distance and a bluish

tinge in the horizon. I am not contented long with such narrow valleys that all is greenness in them. I wish to see the earth translated, the green passing into blue. How this heaven intervenes and tinges our more distant prospects! The farther off the mountain which is the goal of our enterprise, the more of heaven's tint it wears. This is the chief value of a distance in landscapes.

I must walk more with free senses. It is as bad to *study* stars and clouds as flowers and stones. I must let my senses wander as my thoughts, my eyes see without looking. Carlyle said that how to observe was to look, but I say that it is rather to see, and the more you look the less you will observe. I have the habit of attention to such excess that my senses get no rest, but suffer from a constant strain. Be not preoccupied with looking. Go not to the object; let it come to you. When I have found myself ever looking down and confining my gaze to the flowers, I have thought it might be well to get into the habit of observing the clouds as a corrective; but no! that study would be just as bad. What I need is not to look at all, but a true sauntering of the eye.

*Sept. 14.* This morning the first frost. Yet the 10th was one of the warmest days in the year. Methinks it is the *Amaranthus hypochondriacus*, prince's-feather, with "bright red-purple flowers" and sanguine stem, on Emerson's muck-heap in the Turnpike, and the *Polygonum orientale*, prince's-feather, in E. Hosmer's grounds. Blue vervain still. The grass is very green

after the rains, like a second spring, and, in my ride yesterday, the under sides of the willows, etc., in the wind, the leaves of the fall growth perhaps, reminded me of June. Is not the colder and frosty weather thus introduced by a rain? *i. e.* it clears up cold.

*Sept. 16. Thursday. 8 A. M. — To Fair Haven Pond.*

Since the rains and the sun, great fungi, six inches in diameter, stand in the woods, warped upward on their edges, showing their gills, so as to hold half a gill of water.

The two-leaved convallaria berries are now decidedly red. The sweet-fern has a russet look. The jay screams; the goldfinch twitters; the barberries are red. I heard a warbling vireo in the village, which I have not heard for long, and the common *che-wink* note in the woods. Some birds, like some flowers, begin to sing again in the fall. The corn is topped.

The rippled blue surface of Fair Haven from the Cliffs, with its smooth white border where weeds preserve the surface smooth, a placid silver-plated rim. The pond is like the sky with a border of whitish clouds in the horizon. Yesterday it rained all day.

What makes this such a day for hawks? There are eight or ten in sight from the Cliffs, large and small, one or more with a white rump. I detected the transit of the first, by his shadow on the rock, and I look toward the sun for him. Though he is made light beneath to conceal him, his shadow betrays him. A hawk must get out of the wood, must get above it, where he can sail. It is narrow dodging for him amid the boughs.

He cannot be a hawk there, but only perch gloomily. Now I see a large one — perchance an eagle, I say to myself! — down in the valley, circling and circling, higher and wider. This way he comes. How beautiful does he repose on the air, in the moment when he is directly over you, and you see the form and texture of his wings! How light he must make himself, how much earthy heaviness expel, before he can thus soar and sail! He carries no useless clogs there with him. They are out by families; while one is circling this way, another circles that; kites without strings. Where is the boy that flies them? Are not the hawks most observed at this season?

Before this, probably no leaves have been affected by frost. The puffballs (?), five to eight fingered, now. Tobacco-pipe still, and the water parsnip. Discovered an excellent lively wild red grape. Why not propagate from it and call it the *Musketaquid*? Gathered some sound blueberries still. Mitchella berries ripe. Dogsbane still. What I have called the *Cornus circinata* is that of Emerson, if you call the fruit white tinged with blue (in Laurel Glen), but its cyme is not flat, as Gray says. Its berries to-day. I suspect that my *C. stolonifera* is the *sericea*. Maple-leaved viburnum berries, dark-bluish.

The Norwegians, the Normen [*sic*], were such inveterate mariners that they called the summit of the mountain chain which separates Norway from Sweden the Keel Ridge of the country, as if it were a vessel turned up.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [See *Journal*, vol. iii, p. 201.]

Sept. 17. What produces this flashing air of autumn? — a brightness as if there were not green enough to absorb the light, now that the first frosts wither the herbs. The corn-stalks are stacked like muskets along the fields. The pontederia leaves are sere and brown along the river. The fall is further advanced in the water, as the spring was earlier there. I should say that the vegetation of the river was a month further advanced in its decay than of the land generally. The yellow lily pads are apparently decayed generally; as I wade, I tread on their great roots only; and the white lily pads are thinned. Now, before any effects of the frost are obvious on the leaves, I observe two black rows of dead pontederia in the river. Is it the alder locust that rings so loud in low land now? The umbrella-shaped smilax berry clusters are now ripe. Still the oxalis blows, and yellow butterflies are on the flowers. I hear the downy woodpecker whistle, and see him looking about the apple trees as if to bore him a hole. Are they returning south? Abundance of wild grapes.

I laid down some wild red grapes in front of the Cliffs, three united to a two-thirds-inch stock, many feet from the root, under an alder *marked* with two or three small sticks atop, and, ten feet north, two more of different stocks, one-half inch diameter, directly on the edge of the brook, their tops over the water, the shell of a five-inch log across them.

Sept. 18. I think it must be the *Cornus sericea* which I have called the *stolonifera*. *Vide* that red stem on the Bear Hill road. The poor student begins now to seek

the sun. In the forenoons I move into a chamber on the east side of the house, and so follow the sun round. It is agreeable to stand in a new relation to the sun. They begin to have a fire occasionally below-stairs.

3.30 P. M. — A-barberrying to Flint's Pond.

The goldenrods have generally lost their brightness. Methinks the asters were in their prime four or five days ago. Came upon a nighthawk on the ground in Thrush Alley. There are many large toadstools, pecked apparently by birds. I find the Castile soap gall still under the oaks. The robins of late fly in flocks, and I hear them oftener. The partridges, grown up, oftener burst away. Pennyroyal still in bloom. The crows congregate and pursue me through the half-covered woodland path, cawing loud and angrily above me, and when they cease, I hear the winnowing sound of their wings. What ragged ones! Water lobelia still in blossom. Gratiola, horned utricularia, and the white globose flower by Flint's still. Is that the *Cirsium muticum*, four feet high, in the blue-stemmed goldenrod path, with a glutinous involucre, but I should say spinous? The prinus berries now quite red. How densely they cover the bushes! Very handsome, contrasting with the leaves. The barberries are not wholly reddened yet. How much handsomer in fruit for being bent down in wreaths by the weight! The increasing weight of the fruits adds gracefulness to the form of the bush. I get my hands full of thorns, but my basket full of berries. How productive a barberry bush! On each the berries seem more abundant and plumper than on the last. They stand amid the cedars. Coming home by the

pond road, I see and smell the grapes on trees, under the dense bowers made by their leaves in trees, three feet above the water or the road. The purple clusters hang at that height and scent the air. They impart a sense of tropical richness to our zone. I hear little warbling sparrows in the garden, which apparently have come from the north. Now-a-nights there are fogs pretty extensive in the evening.

Sophia has come from Bangor and brought the *Dalibarda repens*, white dalibarda, a little crenate-rounded-heart-shaped-leaved flower of damp woods; the small-leaved *Geranium Carolinianum*; etc.

Sept. 19. P. M. — To Great Meadows.

The red capsules of the sarothra. Many large crickets about on the sand. Observe the effects of frost in particular places. Some blackberry vines are very red. I see the oxalis and the tree primrose and the Norway cinquefoil and the prenanthes and the *Epilobium coloratum* and the cardinal-flower and the small hypericum and yarrow, and I think it is the *Ranunculus repens*, between Ripley Hill and river, with spotted leaves lingering still. The soapwort gentian cheers and surprises, — solid bulbs of blue from the shade, the stale grown purplish. It abounds along the river, after so much has been mown. The polygala and the purple gerardia are still common and attract by their high color. The small-flowering *Bidens cernua* (?) and the fall dandelion and the fragrant everlasting abound. The *Viola lanceolata* has blossomed again, and the lambkill. What pretty six-fingered leaves the three oxalis leaflets make! I see

the effects of frost on the *Salix Purshiana*, imbrowning their masses; and in the distance is a maple or two by the water, beginning to blush.

That small, slender-leaved, rose-tinted (white petals, red calyx) polygonum by the river is perhaps in its prime now; slender spikes and slender lanceolate sessile leaves, with rent hairy and ciliate sheaths, eight stamens, and three styles united in middle. Not biting. I cannot find it described. And what is that white flower which I should call *Cicuta maculata*, except that the veins do not terminate in the sinuses?

Sept. 20. The smooth sumachs are turning conspicuously and generally red, apparently from frost, and here and there is a whole maple tree red, about water. In some hollows in sprout-lands, the grass and ferns are crisp and brown from frost. I suppose it is the *Aster undulatus*, or variable aster, with a large head of middle-sized blue flowers. The *Viola sagittata* has blossomed again. The *Galium circæzans* (?) still, and narrow-leaved johnswort.

On Heywood's Peak by Walden. — The surface is not perfectly smooth, on account of the zephyr, and the reflections of the woods are a little indistinct and blurred. How soothing to sit on a stump on this height, overlooking the pond, and study the dimpling circles which are incessantly inscribed and again erased on the smooth and otherwise invisible surface, amid the reflected skies! The reflected sky is of a deeper blue. How beautiful that over this vast expanse there can be no disturbance, but it is thus at once gently smoothed

away and assuaged, as, when a vase of water is jarred, the trembling circles seek the shore and all is smooth again! Not a fish can leap or an insect fall on it but it is reported in lines of beauty, in circling dimples, as it were the constant welling up of its fountain, the gentle pulsing of its life, the heaving of its breast. The thrills of joy and those of pain are indistinguishable. How sweet the phenomena of the lake! Everything that moves on its surface produces a sparkle. The peaceful pond! The works of men shine as in the spring. The motion of an oar or an insect produces a flash of light; and if an oar falls, how sweet the echo!<sup>1</sup>

The groundsel and hieracium down is in the air. The golden plover, they say, has been more than usually plenty here this year. Doves of cattle have for some time been coming down from up-country.

How distinctly each thing in nature is marked! as the day by a little yellow sunlight, so that the sluggard cannot mistake it.

Sept. 21. P. M. — To Conantum.

The small skull-cap and cress and the mullein still in bloom. I see pigeon woodpeckers oftener now, with their light rears. Birches and elms begin to turn yellow, and ferns are quite yellow or brown in many places. I see many tall clustered bluish asters by the brooks, like the *A. undulatus*. The blue-stemmed goldenrod is abundant, bright and in its prime. The maples begin to be ripe. How beautiful when a whole maple on the edge of a swamp is like one great scarlet

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, pp. 208, 209; Riv. 294, 295.]

fruit, full of ripe juices! A sign of the ripening. Every leaf, from lowest limb to topmost spire, is aglow.<sup>1</sup> The woodbine is red, too, and its berries are bluing. The flattened black berries of the cucumber-root, with the triangular bases of its leaves tinged red beneath, as a sort of cup for them. My red ball fungus *blossoms* in the path in the midst of its jelly.

As I was walking through the maple swamp by the Corner Spring, I was surprised to see apples on the ground, and at first supposed that somebody had dropped them, but, looking up, I detected a wild apple tree, as tall and slender as the young maples and not more than five inches in diameter at the ground. This had blossomed and borne fruit this year. The apples were quite mellow and of a very agreeable flavor, though they had a rusty-scraperish look, and I filled my pockets with them. The squirrels had found them out before me. It is an agreeable surprise to find in the midst of a swamp so large and edible a fruit as an apple.

Of late we have much cloudy weather without rain. Are not liable to showers, as in summer, but may have a storm. The *Lentago* berries appear to drop off before, or as soon as, they turn. There are few left on the bushes. Many that I bring home will turn in a single night. The sassafras leaves are red. The huckleberry bushes begin to redden. The white actæa berries still hang on, or their red pedicels remain.

My friend is he who can make a good guess at me, hit me on the wing.

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 259; Riv. 318.]

Sept. 22. Sophia has in her herbarium and has found in Concord these which I have not seen this summer:—

*Pogonia verticillata*, Hubbard's Second Wood. Bigelow says July.

*Trillium erythrocarpum*, Bigelow says May and June.

*Uvularia perfoliata*, Bigelow says May.

P. M. — On river.

The *Polygonum amphibium* var. *terrestre* is a late flower, and now more common and the spikes larger, quite handsome and conspicuous, and more like a prince's-feather than any. Large woolly aphides are now clustered close together on the alder stems. Some of those I see are probably the sharp-shinned hawk. When was it I heard the upland plover? Has been a great flight of blue-winged teal this season. The soapwort gentian the flower of the river-banks now.

In love we impart, each to each, in subtlest immaterial form of thought or atmosphere, the best of ourselves, such as commonly vanishes or evaporates in aspirations, and mutually enrich each other. The lover alone perceives and dwells in a certain human fragrance. To him humanity is not only a flower, but an aroma and a flavor also.

Sept. 23. P. M. — Round by Clematis Brook.

The forget-me-not still. I observe the rounded tops of the dogwood bushes, scarlet in the distance, on the edge of the meadow (Hubbard's), more full and bright than any flower. The maples are mostly darker, the

very few boughs that are turned, and the tupelo, which is reddening. The ash is just beginning to turn. The scarlet dogwood is the striking bush to-day. I find huckleberries on Conantum still sound and blackening the bushes.

How much longer a mile appears between two blue mountain peaks thirty or more miles off in the horizon than one would expect!

Some acorns and hickory nuts on the ground, but they have not begun to shell. Is it the nut of the *Carya amara*, with raised seams, but not bitter, that I perceive? I suppose that is the *Carya tomentosa*, or mockernut hickory, with large rounded nuts on Lee's land. The bitternuts (?), rubbed together, smell like varnish.

The sarothra in bloom. The wind from the north has turned the white lily pads wrong side up, so that they look red, and their stems are slanted up-stream. Almost all the yellow ones have disappeared. A blue-stemmed goldenrod, its stem and leaves red. The woodbine high on trees in the shade a delicate pink. I gathered some haws very good to eat to-day. I think they must be the senelles of the Canadians. *Hamamelis Virginiana* out, before its leaves fall. A woodchuck out. The waxwork not opened. The "feathery tails" of the clematis fruit conspicuous and interesting now. Yellow lily out (again?) in the pond-holes.

Passing a corn-field the other day, close by a hat and coat on a stake, I recognized the owner of the farm. Any of his acquaintances would. He was only a trifle more weather[-beaten] than when I saw him last. His back being toward me, I missed nothing, and I thought

to myself if I were a crow I should not fear the balance of him, at any rate.<sup>1</sup>

In northern latitudes, where other edible fruits are scarce, they make an account of haws and bunchberries.

The barberry bushes in Clematis Hollow are very beautiful now, with their wreaths of red or scarlet fruit drooping over a rock.

Sept. 24. According to Emerson, *Lonicera hirsuta*, hairy honeysuckle, grows in Sudbury. Some hickories are yellow. Hazel bushes a brownish red. Most grapes are shrivelled. Pasture thistle still. The zizania ripe, shining black, cylindrical kernels, five eighths of an inch long. The fruit of the thorn trees on Lee's Hill is large, globular, and gray-dotted, but I cannot identify it certainly.

Sept. 25. *Polygonum dumetorum*, climbing false-buckwheat, still; also dodder. The fall dandelions are a prevailing flower on low turfy grounds, especially near the river. *Ranunculus reptans* still. The small galium (*trifidum*). A rose again, apparently *lucida* (?). This is always unexpected. The scarlet of the dogwood is the most conspicuous and interesting of the autumnal colors at present. You can now easily detect them at a distance; every one in the swamps you overlook is revealed. The smooth sumach and the mountain is a darker, deeper, bloodier red.

Found the *Bidens Beckii* (?) September 1st, and the fringed gentian November 7th, last year.

<sup>1</sup> [Walden, p. 24; Riv. 37.]

Sept. 26. Dreamed of purity last night. The thoughts seemed not to originate with me, but I was invested, my thought was tinged, by another's thought. It was not I that originated, but I that *entertained* the thought.

The river is getting to be too cold for bathing. There are comparatively few weeds left in it.

It is not in vain, perhaps, that every winter the forest is brought to our doors, shaggy with lichens. Even in so humble a shape as a wood-pile, it contains sermons for us.

P. M. — To Ministerial Swamp.

The small cottony leaves of the fragrant everlasting in the fields for some time, protected, as it were, by a little web of cotton against frost and snow, — a little dense web of cotton spun over it, — entangled in it, — as if to restrain it from rising higher.

The increasing scarlet and yellow tints around the meadows and river remind me of the opening of a vast flower-bud; they are the petals of its corolla, which is of the width of the valleys. It is the flower of autumn, whose expanding bud just begins to blush. As yet, however, in the forest there are very few changes of foliage.

The *Polygonum articulatum*, giving a rosy tinge to Jenny's Desert and elsewhere, is very interesting now, with its slender dense racemes of rose-tinted flowers, apparently without leaves, rising cleanly out of the sand. It looks warm and brave; a foot or more high, and mingled with deciduous blue-curls. It is much divided, into many spreading slender-racemed branches, with

inconspicuous linear leaves, reminding me, both by its form and its color, of a peach orchard in blossom, especially when the sunlight falls on it. Minute rose-tinted flowers that brave the frosts and advance the summer into fall, warming with their color sandy hill-sides and deserts, like the glow of evening reflected on the sand. Apparently all flower and no leaf. A warm blush on the sands, after frosty nights have come. Perhaps it may be called the "evening red." Rising, apparently, with clean bare stems from the sand, it spreads out into this graceful head of slender rosy racemes, wisp-like. This little desert of less than [an] acre blushes with it.

I see now ripe, large (three-inch), very dark chocolate(?)-colored puffballs. Are then my five-fingers puffballs? The tree fern is in fruit now, with its delicate, tendril-like fruit climbing three or four feet over the asters, goldenrods, etc., on the edge of the swamp. The large ferns are yellow or brown now. Larks, like robins, fly in flocks. Dogsbane leaves a clear yellow. Succory in bloom at the Tommy Wheeler house. It bears the frost well, though we have not had much. Set out for use. The *Gnaphalium plantaginifolium* leaves, green above, downy beneath.

Sept. 27. Monday. P. M. — To C. Smith's Hill.

The flashing clearness of the atmosphere. More light appears to be reflected from the earth, less absorbed. Green lice are still on the birches.

At Saw Mill Brook many finely cut and flat ferns are faded whitish and very handsome, as if pressed, — very

delicate. White oak acorns edible. Everywhere the squirrels are trying the nuts in good season. The touch-me-not seed-vessels go off like pistols, — shoot their seeds off like bullets. They explode in my hat.

The arum berries are now in perfection, cone-shaped spikes an inch and a half long, of scarlet or vermilion-colored, irregular, somewhat pear-shaped berries springing from a purplish core. They are exactly the color of bright sealing-wax, or, I believe, the painted tortoise's shell; on club-shaped peduncles. The changed leaves of this are delicately white, especially beneath. Here and there lies prostrate on the damp leaves or ground this conspicuous red spike. The medeola berries are common now, and the large red berries of the panicked Solomon's-seal.

It must have been a turtle dove that eyed me so near, turned its head sideways to me for a fair view, looking with a St. Vitus twitching of its neck, as if to recover its balance on an unstable perch, — that is their way.

From Smith's Hill I looked toward the mountain line. Who can believe that the mountain peak which he beholds fifty miles off in the horizon, rising far and faintly blue above an intermediate range, while he stands on his trivial native hills or in the dusty highway, can be the same with that which he looked up at once near at hand from a gorge in the midst of primitive woods? For a part of two days I travelled across lots once, loitering by the way, through primitive wood and swamps over the highest peak of the Peterboro Hills to Monadnock, by ways from which all landlords

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and stage-drivers endeavored to dissuade us. It was not a month ago. But now that I look across the globe in an instant to the dim Monadnock peak, and these familiar fields and copsewoods appear to occupy the greater part of the interval, I cannot realize that Joe Eavely's house still stands there at the base of the mountain, and all that long tramp through wild woods with invigorating scents before I got to it. I cannot realize that on the tops of those cool blue ridges are in abundance berries still, bluer than themselves, as if they borrowed their blueness from their locality. From the mountains we do not discern our native hills; but from our native hills we look out easily to the far blue mountains, which seem to preside over them. As I look northwestward to that summit from a Concord corn-field, how little can I realize all the life that is passing between me and it, — the retired up-country farmhouses, the lonely mills, wooded vales, wild rocky pastures, and new clearings on stark mountain-sides, and rivers murmuring through primitive woods! All these, and how much more, I *overlook*. I see the very peak, — there can be no mistake, — but how much I do not see, that is between me and it! How much I overlook! In this way we see stars. What is it but a faint blue cloud, a mist that may vanish? But what is it, on the other hand, to one who has travelled to it day after day, has threaded the forest and climbed the hills that are between this and that, has tasted the raspberries or the blueberries that grow on it, and the springs that gush from it, has been wearied with climbing its rocky sides, felt the coolness of its summit, and been lost in the clouds there?

When I could sit in a cold chamber muffled in a cloak each evening till Thanksgiving time, warmed by my own thoughts, the world was not so much with me.

*Sept. 28. P. M. — To the Boulder Field.*

I find the hood-leaved violet quite abundant in a meadow, and the *pedata* in the Boulder Field. I have now seen all but the *blanda*, *palmata*, and *pubescens* blooming again, and bluebirds and robins, etc., are heard again in the air. This is the commencement, then, of the second spring. Violets, *Potentilla Canadensis*, lambkill, wild rose, yellow lily, etc., etc., begin again.

Children are now gathering barberries, — just the right time. Speaking of the great fall flower which the valleys are at present, its brightest petal is still the scarlet one of dogwood, and in some places the redder red maple one is equally bright; then there is the yellow walnut one, and the broad dull red one of the huckleberry, and the hazel, high blueberry, and *Viburnum nudum* of various similar tints.

It has been too cold for the thinnest coat since the middle of September.

Grapes are still abundant. I have only to shake the birches to bring down a shower of plums. But the flavor of none is quite equal to their fragrance. Some soils, like this rocky one on the old Carlisle road, are so suited to the apple that they spring up wild and bear well in the midst of pines, birches, maples, and oaks, their red and yellow fruit harmonizing with the autumnal tints of the forest in which they grow. I am surprised to see

rising amid the maples and birches in a swamp the rounded tops of apple trees rosy with fair fruit.

A windy day. What have these high and roaring winds to do with the fall? No doubt they speak plainly enough to the sap that is in these trees, and perchance they check its upward flow.

A very handsome *gray dotted* thorn near the black birch grove, six inches in diameter, with a top large in proportion, as large as a small apple tree, bristling with many thorns from suckers about its trunk. This is a very handsome object, and the largest thorn I have seen in Concord, almost bare of leaves and one mass of red fruit, five eighths of an inch in diameter, causing its slender branches to spread and droop gracefully. It reminds me of a wisp of straws tied together, or a dust-brush upright on its handle. It must be the same I have seen in Canada. The same with that on Nawshawtuct. Probably most beautiful in fruit, not only on account of its color, but because this causes the branches to spread and curve outward gracefully.

Ah, if I could put into words that music that I hear; that music which can bring tears to the eyes of marble statues! — to which the very muscles of men are obedient!

*Sept. 30. Thursday. 10 A. M.* — To Fair Haven Pond, bee-hunting, — Pratt, Rice, Hastings, and myself, in a wagon.

A fine, clear day after the coolest night and severest frost we have had. The apparatus was, first a simple round tin box about four and a half inches in diameter

and one and a half inches deep, containing a piece of empty honeycomb of its own size and form, filling it within a third of an inch of the top; also another, *wooden* box about two and a half inches square every way, with a glass window occupying two thirds the upper side under a slide, with a couple of narrow slits in the wood, each side of the glass, to admit air, but too narrow for the bees to pass; the whole resting on a circular bottom a little larger than the lid of the tin box, with a sliding door in it. We were earnest to go this week, before the flowers were gone, and we feared the frosty night might make the bees slow to come forth.

After we got to the Baker Farm, to one of the open fields nearest to the tree I had marked, the first thing was to find some flowers and catch some honey-bees. We followed up the bank of the brook for some distance, but the goldenrods were all dried up there, and the asters on which we expected to find them were very scarce. By the pond-side we had no better luck, the frosts perhaps having made flowers still more scarce there. We then took the path to Clematis Brook on the north of Mt. Misery, where we found a few of the *Diplopappus linariifolius* (savory-leaved aster) and one or two small white (bushy?) asters, also *A. undulatus* and *Solidago nemoralis* rarely, on which they work in a sunny place; but there were only two or three bumblebees, wasps, and butterflies, yellow and small red, on them. We had no better luck at Clematis Brook. Not a honey-bee could we find, and we concluded that we were too late, — that the weather was too cold, and

so repaired at once to the tree I had found, a hemlock two feet and a half in diameter on a side-hill a rod from the pond. I had cut my initials in the bark in the winter, for custom gives the first finder of the nest a right to the honey and to cut down the tree to get it and pay the damages, and if he cuts his initials on it no other hunter will interfere. Not seeing any signs of bees from the ground, one of the party climbed the tree to where the leading stem had formerly been broken off, leaving a crotch at about eighteen feet from the ground, and there he found a small hole into which he thrust a stick two or three feet down the tree, and dropped it to the bottom; and, putting in his hand, he took out some old comb. The bees had probably died.

After eating our lunch, we set out on our return. By the roadside at Walden, on the sunny hillside sloping to the pond, we saw a large mass of goldenrod and aster several rods square and comparatively fresh. Getting out of our wagon, we found it to be resounding with the hum of bees. (It was about 1 o'clock.) There were far more flowers than we had seen elsewhere. Here were bees in great numbers, both bumblebees and honey-bees, as well as butterflies and wasps and flies. So, pouring a mixture of honey and water into the empty comb in the tin box, and holding the lid of the tin box in one hand and the wooden box with the slides shut in the other, we proceeded to catch the honey-bees by shutting them in suddenly between the lid of the tin box and the large circular bottom of the wooden one, cutting off the flower-stem with the edge of the lid at

the same time. Then, holding the lid still against the wooden box, we drew the slide in the bottom and also the slide covering the window at the top, that the light might attract the bee to pass up into the wooden box. As soon as he had done so and was buzzing against the glass, the lower slide was closed and the lid with the flower removed, and more bees were caught in the same way. Then, placing the other, tin, box containing the comb filled with honeyed water close under the wooden one, the slide was drawn again, and the upper slide closed, making it dark; and in about a minute they went to feeding, as was ascertained by raising slightly the wooden box. Then the latter was wholly removed, and they were left feeding or sucking up the honey in broad daylight. In from two to three minutes one had loaded himself and commenced leaving the box. He would buzz round it back and forth a foot or more, and then, sometimes, finding that he was too heavily loaded, alight to empty himself or clean his feet. Then, starting once more, he would begin to circle round irregularly,



at first in a small circle only a foot or two in diameter, as if to examine the premises that he might know them again, till, at length, rising higher and higher and circling wider and wider and swifter and swifter, till his orbit was ten or twelve feet in diameter and as much from the ground, — though its centre might be moved to one side, — so that it was very difficult to follow him, especially if you looked against a wood or the hill,

and you had to lie low to fetch him against the sky (you must operate in an open space, not in a wood); all this as if to ascertain the course to his nest; then, in a minute or less from his first starting, he darts off in a bee-line, that is, as far as I could see him, which might be eight or ten rods, looking against the sky (and you had to follow his whole career very attentively indeed to see when and where he went off at a tangent), in a waving or sinuous (right and left) line, toward his nest.

We sent forth as many as a dozen bees, which flew in about three directions, but all toward the village, or where we knew there were hives. They did not fly so almost absolutely straight as I had heard, but within three or four feet of the same course for half a dozen rods, or as far as we could see. Those belonging to one hive all had to digress to get round an apple tree. As none flew in the right direction for us, we did not attempt to line them. In less than half an hour the first returned to the box still lying on the wood-pile, — for not one of the bees on the surrounding flowers discovered it, — and so they came back, one after another, loaded themselves and departed; but now they went off with very little preliminary circling, as if assured of their course. We were furnished with little boxes of red, blue, green, yellow, and white paint, in dry powder, and with a stick we sprinkled a little of the red powder on the back of one while he was feeding, — gave him a little dab, — and it settled down amid the fuzz of his back and gave him a distinct red jacket. He went off like most of them toward some hives about three

quarters of a mile distant, and we observed by the watch the time of his departure. In just twenty-two minutes red jacket came back, with enough of the powder still on his back to mark him plainly. He may have gone more than three quarters of a mile. At any rate, he had a head wind to contend with while laden. They fly swiftly and surely to their nests, never resting by the way, and I was surprised — though I had been informed of it — at the distance to which the village bees go for flowers.

The rambler in the most remote woods and pastures little thinks that the bees which are humming so industriously on the rare wild flowers he is plucking for his herbarium, in some out-of-the-way nook, are, like himself, ramblers from the village, perhaps from his own yard, come to get their honey for his hives. All the honey-bees we saw were on the blue-stemmed golden-rod (*Solidago casia*), which is late, lasts long, which emitted a sweet agreeable fragrance, not on the asters. I feel the richer for this experience. It taught me that even the insects in my path are not loafers, but have their special errands. Not merely and vaguely in this world, but in this hour, each is about its business. If, then, there are any sweet flowers still lingering on the hillside, it is known to the bees both of the forest and the village. The botanist should make interest with the bees if he would know when the flowers open and when they close. Those I have named were the only common and prevailing flowers at this time to look for them on.

Our red jacket had performed the voyage in safety;

no bird had picked him up. Are the kingbirds gone? Now is the time to hunt bees and take them up, when the combs are full of honey and before the flowers are so scarce that they begin to consume the honey they have stored.

The common milkweed down has begun to fly; the desmodium, tick-trefoil, adheres now to my clothes. Saw by Clematis Brook extensive rootings of moles.

Forty pounds of honey was the most our company had got hereabouts.

We also caught and sent forth a bumblebee, who manœuvred like the others, though we thought he took time to eat some before he loaded himself, and then he was so overloaded and bedaubed that he had to alight after he had started, and it took him several minutes to clean himself.

It is not in vain that the flowers bloom, and bloom late too, in favored spots. To us they are a culture and a luxury, but to bees meat and drink. The tiny bee which we thought lived far away there in a flower-bell in that remote vale, he is a great voyager, and anon he rises up over the top of the wood and sets sail with his sweet cargo straight for his distant haven. How well they know the woods and fields and the haunt of every flower! The flowers, perchance, are widely dispersed, because the sweet which they collect from the atmosphere is rare but also widely dispersed, and the bees are enabled to travel far to find it. A precious burthen, like their color and fragrance, a crop which the heavens bear and deposit on the earth.

Rees's Cyclopædia says that "Phylliscus retired into

a desert wood, that he might have the opportunity of observing them [bees]<sup>1</sup> to better advantage." Paul Dudley wrote the Royal Society about 1723 that the Indians had no word for bee; called it "Englishman's fly."

<sup>1</sup> [The word is supplied by Thoreau.]