

II

APRIL, 1853

(ÆT. 35)

April 1. Of the small and ambiguous sparrow family, methinks I have seen only the song sparrow, that one with white feathers in tail seen March 23d, the tree sparrow; and heard the field or rush sparrow. I have for some time noticed the large yellow lily roots. Thus far we have had very little if any freshet this year, — none since spring came in, I believe. The river has been going down a month, at least.

P. M. — To Dugan's.

The three spots on breast of the song sparrow seem to mark a difference of sex. At least, the three-spotted is the one I oftenest hear sing of late. The accompanying one is lighter beneath and one-spotted. One of the former by J. P. Brown's meadow-side, selecting the top of a bush, after lurking and feeding under the alders, sang *olit olit olit* (faster) *chip chip chip che char* (fast) *che wiss wiss wiss*.¹ The last bar was much varied, and sometimes one *olit* omitted in the first. This, I have no doubt, is my bird of March 18th. Another three-spotted sang *vit chit chit char* | *weeter char* | *tee chu*.

Saw ten black ducks at Clamshell. Had already started two, who probably occupied an outpost. They

¹ [*Walden*, p. 343; Riv. 480.]

all went off with a loud and disagreeable quacking like ducks in a poultry-yard, their wings appearing lighter beneath.

It has rained all night and this forenoon, and now begins to clear up. The rain rests on the downy leaves of the young mulleins in separate, irregular drops, from their irregularity and color looking like ice. The drops quite in the cup of the mullein have a peculiar translucent silveriness, apparently because, being upheld by the wool, it reflects the light which would otherwise be absorbed, as if cased in light. The fresh mullein leaves are pushing up amid the brown unsightly wreck of last fall, which strews the ground like old clothes, — these the new patches.

The gooseberry in Brown's pasture shows no green yet, though ours in the garden does. The former is on the north side of a hill. Many blackbirds in concert, like leaves on the trees. The hazel stigmas now more *fully* out, curving over and a third of an inch long, that the catkins begin to shed pollen. In a skunk's probing, several dead and bruised small black crickets with a brassy tinge or reflection.

That early willow by Miles's (which I have little doubt is Gray's *Salix eriocephala*¹) has been injured by the rain. The drops rest on the catkins as on the mullein. Though this began to open only day before yesterday and was the earliest I could find, already I hear the well-known hum of a honey-bee, and one alights on it (also a fly or two), loads himself, circles round with a loud humming and is off. Where the first wil-

¹ [Two interrogation-points in pencil here.]

low catkin opens, there will be found the honey-bee also with it. He found this out as soon as I. The stamens have burst out on the side toward the top, like a sheaf of spears thrust forth to encounter the sun, so many spears as the garrison can spare, advanced into the spring. With this flower, so much more flower-like or noticeable than any yet, begins a new era in the flower season.

The early sedge is very fit to be the earliest grass that flowers here, appearing in the midst of dry tufts more than half hay.

Heard, I have very little doubt, the strain of my seringo¹ in the midst of the strain of a song sparrow, I believe with three spots.

Starlight by river up Assabet.

Now, at early starlight, I hear the snipe's hovering note as he circles over Nawshawtuct Meadow. Only once did I seem to see him; occasionally his squeak. He is now heard near, now farther, but is sure to circle round again. It sounds very much like a winnowing-machine increasing rapidly in intensity for a few seconds.

There will be no moon till toward morning. A slight mist is rising from the surface of the water. Hear what I should not hesitate to call the squeak of the nighthawk, — only Wilson makes them arrive early in May, — also over the meadow. Can it be the snipe? It is a little fainter than the nighthawk, perhaps, but it is further off.²

¹ [Two interrogation-points in pencil here.]

² It may be the squeak of the snipe mentioned by Nuttall. May be woodcock.

Without a mist the river appears indefinitely wide. Looking westward, the water, still reflecting the twilight, appears elevated, and the shore-line, being invisible, lost against the distant highland, is referred toward the highland against which it is seen, for the slope of the hill and the expanse of the meadow cannot be appreciated, appearing only edgewise as height. We therefore make the water, which extends but a rod or two, wash the base of hills a quarter of a mile distant. There are but three elements in the landscape now, — the star-studded sky, the water, reflecting the stars and the lingering daylight, and the dark but comparatively narrow land between. At first there was no fog.

Hear ducks, disturbed, make a quacking or loud croaking. Now, at night, the scent of muskrats is very strong in particular localities. Next to the skunk it is perceived further than that of any of our animals that I think of. I perceive no difference between this and the musk with which ladies scent themselves, though here I pronounce it a strong, rank odor. In the faint reflected twilight, I distinguish one rapidly swimming away from me, leaving a widening ripple behind, and now hear one plunge from some willow or rock. A faint croaking from over the meadow up the Assabet, exactly like frogs. Can it be ducks? They stop when I walk toward them. How happens it that I never found them on the water when spearing? Now and then, when I pass an opening in the trees which line the shore, I am startled by the reflection of some brighter star from a bay.

Ascend Nawshawtuct. See a fire in horizon toward Boston. The first spearer's fire I have noticed is floating along the meadow-side in the south. The mist is now all gone. The baying of dogs is borne to me with great loudness down the river. We still have the wolf in the village.

April 2. 5.30 A. M. — Down railroad.

Ground white with frost and slippery. Thin ice formed over pools. The beaked hazel pistillate blossoms (*i. e.* by Walden road). Do not find its flower described. Are not its catkins distinct from the common in not being stalked? The tree sparrows and a few blue snowbirds in company sing (the former) very sweetly in the garden this morning. I now see a faint spot on the breast. It says something like *a twee twee, chit chit, chit chit chee var-r.* Notice still plenty of sumach berries, *Juniperus repens* (those in shade green, in light turning purplish), green-briar, and a few barberries, etc., etc.

The farmers are trembling for their poultry nowadays. I heard the scream of hens, and a tumult among their mistresses (at Dugan's), calling them and scaring away the hawk, yesterday. They say they do not lose by hawks in midsummer. White quotes Linnæus as saying of hawks, "*Paciscuntur inducias cum avibus, quamdiu cuculus cuculat,*" but White doubts it.

"'Beetles, flies, worms, form part of the lion and tiger's food, as they do that of the fox.' See Jarrold's *Dissert. on Man.*"¹ (Mitford, Note to White's "*Selborne.*")

¹ [*Dissertations on Man*, London, 1806, p. 232. Mitford's quotation, if it is from Jarrold, is inexact.]

Found twenty or thirty of the little brown nuts of the skunk-cabbage deposited on a shelf of the turf under an apple tree by E. Hubbard's close, as I have done before. What animal uses them?

The song sparrows, the three-spotted, away by the meadow-sides, are very shy and cunning: instead of flying will frequently trot along the ground under the bushes, or dodge through a wall like a swallow; and I have observed that they generally bring some object, as a rail or branch, between themselves and the face of the walker, — often with outstretched necks will peep at him anxiously for five or ten minutes.

P. M. — To Second Division Brook.

The rain cleared away yesterday afternoon, and to-day that haziness is all gone, and the air is remarkably clear. I can see houses with distinct and sharp outlines at a great distance, though there is a little seething shimmer in the air. Especially I can see far into the pine woods to tree behind tree and one tower behind another of silvery needles, stage above stage, relieved with shade. The edge of the wood is not a plane surface, but has depth. Was that *Rana fontinalis* or *pipiens* in the pool by E. Wood's railroad crossing? The first large frog I have seen. C. says a wasp lit on him.

A wood tortoise by river above Derby's Bridge; extreme length of shell seven and three eighths inches, extreme breadth five inches across the back part, fore part about one half inch less, and a trifle less still in middle. The orange-color of its inner parts. It was

sluggish, lean, and I judged old from the shell being worn beneath and it not resisting much when I drew out its claws; unlike [in] these respects to one I after found. Irides golden. A singularly flat and broad head with a beak slanting backward much like a snake's head. There were some hundreds of small dark-colored leeches in masses in the chink over his tail and under his hind quarters, a kind of vermin they are much infested by. The same was the case with second one.

Heard and saw what I call the pine warbler, — *vetter vetter vetter vetter vet*, — the cool woodland sound. The first this year of the higher-colored birds, after the bluebird and the blackbird's wing; is it not? It so affects me as something more tender. Together with the driftwood on the shore of the Assabet and the sawdust from Heywood's mill, I pick up teasel-heads from the factory with the wool still in them. How many tales the stream tells! The poplars by the railroad and near Harrington's, male aspens, begin to-day. A turtle dove. It sailed like a hawk. Heard the hooting owl in Ministerial Swamp. It sounded somewhat like the hounding or howling of some dogs, and as often as the whistle of the engine sounded, I noticed a resemblance in the tone. A singular kind of squealing introduced into its note. See the larger red-and-black-abdomen ants at work. See the fine moss in the pastures with beautiful red stems even crimsoning the ground. This is its season. The amelanchier buds look more forward than those of any shrub I notice. The cowslip at Second Division

shows the yellow in its bud; will blossom in four or five days. I see the skins of many caddis-worms in the water there. Have not the ephemerae already flown? Again I notice the sort of small green ova in the water there like frog's ova, on the weeds and even on the shells of the snails. The stem, so to speak, of a cocoon, — though it inclosed the leaf-stem of the plant (a viburnum) it was on, and so put on the guise of the leaf, — was still so strongly fastened about the main stem that I broke the latter in getting it off. Cheney's elm blossomed to-day. Many others scarcely a day behind it.

We cannot well afford not to see the geese go over a single spring, and so commence our year regularly.

Observed the first female willow just coming out, apparently *Salix eriocephala*, just beyond woods by Abel Hosmer's field by railroad. Apparently the female willows, as well as white maples and poplars, are a few days later than the males. The swollen red maple buds now conspicuously tinge the tops of the trees.

Methinks some birds are earlier this year because the ground has been bare so long. Observed some plowing yesterday.

April 3. Saturday. Nothing is more saddening than an ineffectual and proud intercourse with those of whom we expect sympathy and encouragement. I repeatedly find myself drawn toward certain persons but to be disappointed. No concessions which are not radical are the least satisfaction. By myself I can live and

thrive, but in the society of incompatible friends I starve. To cultivate their society is to cherish a sore which can only be healed by abandoning them. I cannot trust my neighbors whom I know any more than I can trust the law of gravitation and jump off the Cliffs.

The last two *Tribunes* I have not looked at. I have no time to read newspapers. If you chance to live and move and have your being in that thin stratum in which the events which make the news transpire, — thinner than the paper on which it is printed, — then these things will fill the world for you; but if you soar above or dive below that plane, you cannot remember nor be reminded of them.¹

No fields are so barren to me as the men of whom I expect everything but get nothing. In their neighborhood I experience a painful yearning for society, which cannot be satisfied, for the hate is greater than the love.

P. M. — To Cliffs.

At Hayden's I hear hylas on two keys or notes. Heard one after the other, it might be mistaken for the varied note of one. The little croakers, too, are very lively there. I get close to them and witness a great commotion and half hopping, half swimming, about, with their heads out, apparently in pursuit of each other, — perhaps thirty or forty within a few square yards and fifteen or twenty within one yard. There is not only the incessant lively croaking of many

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 472; *Misc.*, Riv. 275.]

together, as usually heard, but a lower, hoarser, squirming, screwing kind of croak, perhaps from the other sex. As I approach nearer, they disperse and bury themselves in the grass at the bottom; only one or two remain outstretched on the surface, and, at another step, these, too, conceal themselves.

Looking up the river yesterday, in a direction opposite to the sun, not long before it set, the water was of a rich, dark blue — while looking at it in a direction diagonal to this, *i. e.* northeast, it was nearly slate-colored.

To my great surprise the saxifrage is in bloom. It was, as it were, by mere accident that I found it. I had not observed any particular forwardness in it, when, happening to look under a projecting rock in a little nook on the south side of a stump, I spied one little plant which had opened three or four blossoms high up the Cliff. Evidently you must look very sharp and faithfully to find the first flower, such is the advantage of position, and when you have postponed a flower for a week and are turning away, a little further search may reveal it. Some flowers, perhaps, have advantages one year which they have not the next. This spring, as well as the past winter, has been remarkably free from snow, and this reason, and the plant being hardy withal, may account for its early blossoming. With what skill it secures moisture and heat, growing commonly in a little bed of moss which keeps it moist, and lying low in some cleft of the rock! The sunniest and most sheltered exposures possible it secures. This faced the southeast, was nearly a foot under the eaves of the rock,

had not raised its little strawberry-like cluster of buds in the least above the level of its projecting, calyx-like leaves. It was shelter within shelter. The blasts sweep over it. Ready to shoot upward when it shall be warm. The leaves of those which have been more exposed are turned red. It is a very pretty, snug plant with its notched leaves, one of the neatest and prettiest leaves seen now.

A blackberry vine which lay over the rock was beginning to leave out, as much or more than the gooseberry in the garden, such was the reflected heat. The Missouri currant is perhaps more advanced than the early gooseberry in our garden. The female *Populus tremuliformis* catkins, narrower and at present more red and somewhat less downy than the male, west side of railroad at Deep Cut, quite as forward as the male in this situation. The male *P. grandidentata*'s a little further west are nearly out.

I should have noticed the fact that the pistillate flower of the hazel peeps forth gradually.¹

April 4. Last night, a sugaring of snow, which goes off in an hour or two in the rain. Rains all day. The steam-cloud from the engine rises but slowly in such an atmosphere, and makes a small angle with the earth. It is low, perhaps, for the same reason that the clouds are. The robins sang this morning, nevertheless, and now more than ever hop about boldly in the garden in the rain, with full, broad, light cow-colored breasts.

¹ *Vide* [p. 92].

P. M. — Rain, rain. To Clematis Brook *via* Lee's Bridge.

Again I notice that early reddish or purplish grass that lies flat on the pools, like a warm blush suffusing the youthful face of the year. A warm, dripping rain, heard on one's umbrella as on a snug roof, and on the leaves without, suggests comfort. We go abroad with a slow but sure contentment, like turtles under their shells. We never feel so comfortable as when we are abroad in a storm with satisfaction. Our comfort is positive then. We are all compact, and our thoughts collected. We walk under the clouds and mists as under a roof. Now we seem to hear the ground a-soaking up the rain, and not falling [*sic*] ineffectually on a frozen surface. We, too, are penetrated and revived by it. Robins still sing, and song sparrows more or less, and blackbirds, and the unfailing jay screams. How the thirsty grass rejoices! It has pushed up so visibly since morning, and fields that were completely russet yesterday are already tinged with green. We rejoice with the grass.

I hear the hollow sound of drops falling into the water under Hubbard's Bridge, and each one makes a conspicuous bubble which is floated down-stream. Instead of ripples there are a myriad dimples on the stream. The lichens remember the sea to-day. The usually dry cladonias, which are so crisp under the feet, are full of moist vigor. The rocks speak and tell the tales inscribed on them. Their inscriptions are brought out. I pause to study their geography.

At Conantum End I saw a red-tailed hawk launch

himself away from an oak by the pond at my approach, — a heavy flier, flapping even like the great bittern at first, — heavy forward. After turning Lee's Cliff I heard, methinks, more birds singing even than in fair weather, — tree sparrows, whose song has the character of the canary's, *F. hyemalis's*, *chill-lill*, the sweet strain of the fox-colored sparrow, song sparrows, a nuthatch, jays, crows, bluebirds, robins, and a large congregation of blackbirds. They suddenly alight with great din in a stubble-field just over the wall, not perceiving me and my umbrella behind the pitch pines, and there feed silently; then, getting uneasy or anxious, they fly up on to an apple tree, where being reassured, commences a rich but deafening concert, *o-gurgle-ee-e*, *o-gurgle-ee-e*, some of the most liquid notes ever heard, as if produced by some of the water of the Pierian spring, flowing through some kind of musical water-pipe and at the same time setting in motion a multitude of fine vibrating metallic springs. Like a shepherd merely meditating most enrapturing glees on such a water-pipe. A more liquid bagpipe or clarinet, immersed like bubbles in a thousand sprayey notes, the bubbles half lost in the spray. When I show myself, away they go with a loud harsh *charr-r*, *charr-r*. At first I had heard an inundation of blackbirds approaching, some beating time with a loud *chuck*, *chuck*, while the rest played a hurried, gurgling fugue.

Saw a sucker washed to the shore at Lee's Bridge, its tail gone, large fins standing out, purplish on top of head and snout. Reminds me of spring, spearing, and gulls.

A rainy day is to the walker in solitude and retirement like the night. Few travellers are about, and they half hidden under umbrellas and confined to the highways. One's thoughts run in a different channel from usual. It is somewhat like the dark day; it is a light night.

How cheerful the roar of a brook swollen by the rain, especially if there is no sound of a mill in it!

A woodcock went off from the shore of Clematis or Nightshade Pond with a few slight rapid sounds like a watchman's rattle half revolved.

A clustering of small narrow leaves somewhat cone-like on the shrub oak. Some late, low, remarkably upright alders (*serrulata*), short thick catkins, at Clematis Brook. The hazel bloom is about one tenth of an inch long (the stigmas) now. A little willow (*Salix Muhlenbergiana*?) nearly ready to bloom, not larger than a sage willow.

All our early willows with catkins appearing before the leaves must belong to the group of "The Sal-lows. Cinereæ. Borrer," and that of the "Two-colored Willows. Discolores. Borrer," as adopted by Barratt; or, in other words, to the first § of Carey in Gray.

The other day, when I had been standing perfectly still some ten minutes, looking at a willow which had just blossomed, some rods in the rear of Martial Miles's house, I felt eyes on my back and, turning round suddenly, saw the heads of two men who had stolen out of the house and were watching me over a rising ground as fixedly as I the willow. They were study-

ing man, which is said to be the proper study of mankind, I nature, and yet, when detected, they felt the cheapest of the two.

I hear the twitter of tree sparrows from fences and shrubs in the yard and from alders by meadows and the riverside every day.

April 5. The bluebird comes to us bright in his vernal dress as a bridegroom. (Cleared up at noon, making a day and a half of rain.) Has he not got new feathers then? Brooks says "the greater number of birds renew their plumage in autumn only;" if they have two moults, spring and autumn, there is still but one of the wings and tail feathers. Also says that in the spring various "birds undergo a change of color unaccompanied by any moult."

I have noticed the few phœbes, not to mention other birds, mostly near the river. Is it not because of the greater abundance of insects there, those early moths or ephemeræ? As these and other birds are most numerous there, the red-tailed hawk is there to catch them?

April 6. 6 A. M. — To Cliffs.

The robin is the singer at present, such is its power and universality, being found both in garden and wood. Morning and evening it does not fail, perched on some elm or the like, and in rainy days it is one long morning or evening. The song sparrow is still more universal but not so powerful. The lark, too, is equally constant, morning and evening, but con-

fined to certain localities, as is the blackbird to some extent. The bluebird, with feebler but not less sweet warbling, helps fill the air, and the phoebe does her part. The tree sparrow, *P. hyemalis*, and fox-colored sparrows make the meadow-sides or gardens where they are flitting vocal, the first with its canary-like twittering, the second with its lively ringing trills or jingle. The third is a very sweet and more powerful singer, which would be memorable if we heard him long enough. The woodpecker's tapping, though not musical, suggests pleasant associations in the cool morning, — is inspiring, enlivening.

I hear no hylas nor croakers in the morning. Is it too cool for them? The gray branches of the oaks, which have lost still more of their leaves, seen against the pines when the sun is rising and falling on them, how rich and interesting!

From Cliffs see on the still water under the hill, at the outlet of the pond, two ducks sailing, partly white. Hear the faint, swelling, far-off beat of a partridge.

Saw probably female red-wings (?), grayish or dark ashy-brown, on an oak in the woods, with a male (?) whose red shoulder did not appear.

How many walks along the brooks I take in the spring! What shall I call them? Lesser riparial excursions? Prairial? rivular?¹

When I came out there was not a speck of mist in the sky, but the morning without a cloud is not the fairest. Now, 8.30 A. M., it rains. Such is April.

¹ [Chauning, p. 97.]

A male willow, apparently same with that at II.'s Bridge, or No. 2, near end of second track on west. Another male by ring-post on east side, long cylindrical catkins, now dark with scales, which are generally more rounded than usual and reddish at base and not lanceolate, turning backwards in blossom and exposing their sides or breasts to the sun, from which side burst forth fifty or seventy-five long white stamens like rays, tipped with yellow anthers which at first were reddish above, — spears to be embraced by invisible Arnold Winkelrieds; — reddish twigs and clear gray beneath. These last colors, especially, distinguish it from Nos. 1 and 2. Also a female, four or five rods north of last, just coming into bloom, with very narrow tapering catkins, lengthening already, some to an inch and a half, ovaries conspicuously stalked; very downy twigs, more reddish and rough than last below.

If we consider the eagle as a large hawk, how he falls in our estimation!

Our new citizen Sam Wheeler has a brave new weathercock all gilt on his new barn. This morning at sunrise it reflected the sun so brightly that I thought it was a house on fire in Acton, though I saw no smoke, but that might well be omitted.

The flower-buds of the red maple have very red inner scales, now being more and more exposed, which color the tree-tops a great distance off.

P. M. — To Second Division Brook.

Near Clamshell Hill, I scare up in succession four pairs of good-sized brown or grayish-brown ducks.

They go off with a loud squeaking quack. Each pair is by itself. One pair on shore some rods from the water. Is not the object of the quacking to give notice of danger to the rest who cannot see it?

All along under the south side of this hill on the edge of the meadow, the air resounds with the hum of honey-bees, attracted by the flower of the skunk-cabbage. I first heard the fine, peculiarly sharp hum of the honey-bee before I thought of them. Some hummed hollowly within the spathes, perchance to give notice to their fellows that plant was occupied, for they repeatedly looked in, and backed out on finding another. It was surprising to see them, directed by their instincts to these localities, while the earth has still but a wintry aspect so far as vegetation is concerned, buzz around some obscure spathe close to the ground, well knowing what they were about, then alight and enter. As the cabbages were very numerous for thirty or forty rods, there must have been some hundreds of bees there at once, at least. I watched many when they entered and came out, and they all had little yellow pellets of pollen at their thighs. As the skunk-cabbage comes out before the willow, it is probable that the former is the first flower they visit. It is the more surprising, as the flower is for the most part invisible within the spathe. Some of these spathes are now quite large and twisted up like cows' horns, not curved over as usual. Commonly they make a pretty little crypt or shrine for the flower, like the overlapping door of a tent. It must be bee-bread (?), then, they are after. Lucky

that this flower does not flavor their honey. I have noticed for a month or more the bare ground sprinkled here and there with several kinds of fungi, now conspicuous, — the starred kind, puffballs, etc. Now it is fair, and the sun shines, though it shines and rains with short intervals to-day. I do not see so much greenness in the grass as I expected, though a considerable change. No doubt the rain exaggerates a little by showing all the greenness there is! The thistle is now ready to wear the rain-drops.

I see, in J. P. Brown's field, by Nut Meadow Brook, where a hen has been devoured by a hawk probably. The feathers whiten the ground. They cannot carry a large fowl very far from the farmyard, and when driven off are frequently baited and caught in a trap by the remainder of their quarry. The gooseberry has not yet started. I cannot describe the lark's song. I used these syllables in the morning to remember it by, — *hectar-su-e-oo*. The willow in Miles's Swamp which resembles No. 2 not fairly in blossom yet. Heard unusual notes from, I think, a chickadee in the swamp, elicited, probably, by the love season, — *che che vet*, accent on last syllable, and *vissa viss a viss*, the last sharp and fine. Yet the bird looked more slender than the common titmouse, with a longer tail, which jerked a little, but it seemed to be the same bird that sang *phebe* and *he-phebe* so sweetly. The woods rang with this. Nuttall says it is the young that *phebe* in winter. I noticed some aspens (*tremuliformis*) of good size there, which have no flowers!

The first lightning I remember this year was in the

rain last evening, quite bright; and the thunder followed very long after. A thunder-shower in Boston yesterday.

One cowslip, though it shows the yellow, is not *fairly* out, but will be by to-morrow. How they improve their time! Not a moment of sunshine lost. One thing I may depend on: there has been no idling with the flowers. They advance as steadily as a clock. Nature loses not a moment, takes no vacation. These plants, now protected by the water, just peeping forth. I should not be surprised to find that they drew in their heads in a frosty night. Returning by Harrington's, saw a pigeon woodpecker flash away, showing the rich golden under side of its glancing wings and the large whitish spot on its back, and presently I heard its familiar long-repeated loud note, almost familiar as that of a barn-door fowl, which it somewhat resembles. The robins, too, now toward sunset, perched on the old apple trees in Tarbell's orchard, twirl forth their evening lays unweariedly. Is that a willow, the low bush from the fireplace ravine which from the lichen oak, fifty or sixty rods distant, shows so red in the westering sunlight? More red, I find, by far than close at hand.

To-night for the first time I hear the hylas in full blast.

Is that pretty little reddish-leaved star-shaped plant by the edge of water a different species of hypericum from the *perforatum*?

April 7. 6 A. M. — I did not notice any bees on the willows I looked at yesterday, though so many on the cabbage.

The white-bellied swallows advertise themselves this morning, dashing up the street, and two have already come to disturb the bluebirds at our box. Saw and heard this morning, on a small elm and the wall by Badger's, a sparrow (?), seemingly somewhat slaty-brown and lighter beneath, whose note began loud and clear, *twice-tooai*, etc., etc., ending much like the field sparrow. Was it a female *F. hyemalis*? Or a field, or a swamp, sparrow? Saw no white in tail. Also saw a small, plain, warbler-like bird for a moment, which I did not recognize.

10 A. M. — Down river in boat to Bedford, with C.

A windy, but clear, sunny day; cold wind from northwest. Notice a white maple with almost all the staminate flowers above or on the top, most of the stamens now withered, before the red maple has blossomed. Another maple, all or nearly all female. The stamiferous flowers look light yellowish, the female dark crimson. These white maples' lower branches droop quite low, striking the head of the rower, and curve gracefully upward at the ends. Another sucker, the counterpart of the one I saw the other day, tail gone, but not purpled snout, being fresher. Is it the work of a gull or of the spearer? Do not the suckers chiefly attract the gulls at this season?

River has risen from last rains, and we cross the Great Meadows, scaring up many ducks at a great distance, some partly white, some apparently black, some brownish (?). It is Fast-Day, and many gunners are about the shore, which makes them shy.

I never cross the meadow at this season without seeing ducks. That is probably a marsh hawk, flying low over the water and then skirting the meadow's copsy edge, when abreast, from its apparently triangular wings, reminding me of a smaller gull. Saw more afterward. A hawk above Ball's Hill which, though with a distinct white rump, I think was not the harrier but sharp-shinned, from its broadish, mothlike form, light and slightly spotted beneath, with head bent downward, watching for prey. A great gull, though it is so fair and the wind northwest, fishing over the flooded meadow. He slowly circles round and hovers with flapping wings in the air over particular spots, repeatedly returning there and sailing quite low over the water, with long, narrow, pointed wings, trembling throughout their length. Hawks much about water at this season.


If you make the least correct observation of nature this year, you will have occasion to repeat it with illustrations the next, and the season and life itself is prolonged.

I am surprised to see how much in warm places the high blueberry buds are started, some reddish, some greenish, earlier now than any gooseberries I have noticed. Several painted tortoises; no doubt have been out a long time.

Walk in and about Tarbell's Swamp. Heard in two distinct places a slight, more prolonged croak, somewhat like the toad. This? Or a frog? It is a *warmer* sound than I have heard yet, as if dreaming outdoors were possible.

Many spotted tortoises are basking amid the dry leaves in the sun, along the side of a still, warm ditch cut through the swamp. They make a great rustling a rod ahead, as they make haste through the leaves to tumble into the water. The flower-buds of the andromeda here are ready to open, almost. Yet three or four rods off from all this, on the edge of the swamp, under a north hillside, is a long strip of ice five inches thick for ten or twelve rods. The first striped snake crawling off through leaves in the sun.

Crossed to Bedford side to see where [they] had been digging out (probably) a woodchuck. How handsome the river from those hills! The river southwest over the Great Meadows a sheet of sparkling molten silver, with broad lagoons parted from it by curving lines of low bushes; to the right or northward now, at 2 or 3 P. M., a dark blue, with small smooth, light edgings, firm plating, under the lee of the shore. Fly-like bees buzzing about, close to the dry, barren hillside.

The only large catkins I notice along the river-side are on the recent yellow-green shoots from the stump of what looks like the ordinary early swamp willow, which is common, — near by almost wholly grayish and stunted and scarcely opening yet. Small bee-like wasps (?) and flies are numerous on them, not flying when you stand never so close. A large leech in the water, serpentine this wise,  as the snake is not. Approach near to Simon Brown's ducks, on river. They are continually bobbing their heads under water in a shallow part of the meadow,

more under water than above. I infer that the wild employ themselves likewise. You are most struck with the apparent ease with which they glide away, — not seeing the motion of their feet, — as by their wills.

As we stand on Nawshawtuct at 5 p. m., looking over the meadows, I doubt if there is a town more adorned by its river than ours. Now the sun is low in the west, the northeasterly water is of a peculiarly ethereal light blue, more beautiful than the sky, and this broad water with innumerable bays and inlets running up into the land on either side and often divided by bridges and causeways, as if it were the very essence and richness of the heavens distilled and poured over the earth, contrasting with the clear russet land and the paler sky from which it has been subtracted, — nothing can be more elysian. Is not the blue more ethereal when the sun is at this angle? The river is but a long chain of flooded meadows. I think our most distant extensive low horizon must be that northeast from this hill over Ball's Hill, — to what town is it? It is down the river valley, partly at least toward the Merrimack, as it should be.

What is that plant with a whorl of four, five, or six reddish cornel-like leaves, seven or eight inches from the ground, with the minute relics of small dried flowers left, and a large pink (?) bud now springing, just beneath the leaves?¹ It is a true evergreen, for it dries soon in the house, as if kept fresh by the root.

¹ Large cornel (*Canadensis*).

April 8. 6 A. M. — To Abel Hosmer's ring-post.

The ground sprinkled, salted, with little snowlike pellets one tenth of an inch in diameter, from half an inch to one inch apart, sometimes cohering starwise together. As if it had spit so much snow only. I think it one form of frost merely, or frozen dew. Noticed the like a week or two ago. It was gone in half an hour, when I came back. What is the peculiar state of the atmosphere that determines these things? The spearer's light last night shone into my chamber on the wall and awakened me.

Saw and heard my small pine warbler shaking out his trills, or jingle, even like money coming to its bearings. They appear much the smaller from perching high in the tops of white pines and flitting from tree to tree at that height.

Is not my night-warbler the white-eyed vireo? — not yet here. Heard the field sparrow again.

The male *Populus grandidentata* appears to open very gradually, beginning sooner than I supposed. It shows some of its red anthers long before it opens. There is a female on the left, on Warren's Path at Deep Cut.

Is not the pollen of the *P. tremuliformis* like rye meal? Are not female flowers of more sober and modest colors, as the willows for instance? The hylas have fairly begun now.

April 9. P. M. — To Second Division.

The chipping sparrow, with its ashy-white breast and white streak over eye and undivided chestnut

crown, holds up its head and pours forth its *che che che che che che*. On a pitch [pine] on side of J. Hosmer's river hill, a pine warbler, by ventriloquism sounding farther off than it was, which was seven or eight feet, hopping and flitting from twig to twig, apparently picking the small flies at and about the base of the needles at the extremities of the twigs. Saw two afterward on the walls by roadside.

A warm and hazy but breezy day. The sound of the laborers' striking the iron rails of the railroad with their sledges, is as in the sultry days of summer, — resounds, as it were, from the hazy sky as a roof, — a more confined and, in that sense, domestic sound echoing along between the earth and the low heavens. The same strokes would produce a very different sound in the winter. Men fishing for trout. Small light-brown lizards, about five inches long, with somewhat darker tails, and some a light line along back, are very active, wiggling off, in J. P. Brown's ditch, with pollywogs.

Beyond the desert, hear the hooting owl, which, as formerly, I at first mistook for the hounding of a dog, — a squealing *eee* followed by *hoo hoo hoo* deliberately, and particularly sonorous and ringing. This at 2 p. m. Now mated. Pay their addresses by day, says Brooks. Winkle lichens, some with greenish bases, on a small prostrate white oak, near base. Also large white ear-like ones higher up. A middling-sized orange-copper butterfly on the mill road, at the clearing, with deeply scalloped leaves [*sic*]. You see the buff-edged and this, etc., in warm, sunny southern exposures on the edge of woods or sides of rocky hills and cliffs, above dry

leaves and twigs, where the wood has been lately cut and there are many dry leaves and twigs about. An ant-hill covered with a firm sward except at top. The cowslips are well out, — the first conspicuous herbaceous flower, for the cabbage is concealed in its spathe.

The *Populus tremuliformis*, just beyond, *resound* with the hum of honey-bees, flies, etc. These male trees are frequently at a great distance from the females. Do not the bees and flies alone carry the pollen to the latter? I did not know at first whence the humming of bees proceeded. At this comparatively still season, before the crickets begin, the hum of bees is a very noticeable sound, and the least hum or buzz that fills the void is detected. Here appear to be more bees than on the willows. On the last, where I can see them better, are not only bees with pellets of pollen, but more flies, small bees, and a lady-bug. What do flies get here on male flowers, if not nectar? Bees also in the female willows, of course without pellets. It must be nectar alone there. That willow by H.'s Bridge is very brittle at base of stem, but hard to break above. The more I study willows, the more I am confused. The epigaea will not be out for some days.

Elm blossoms now in prime. Their tops heavier against the sky, a rich brown; their outlines further seen. Most alders done. Some small upright ones still fresh.

Evening. — Hear the snipe a short time at early starlight.

I hear this evening for the first time, from the partially flooded meadow across the river, I standing on this side,

at early starlight, a general faint, prolonged stuttering or stertorous croak, — probably same with that heard April 7th, — that kind of growling, like wild beasts or a coffee-mill, which you can produce in your throat. It seems too dry and wooden, not sonorous or pleasing enough, for the toad. I hear occasionally the bullfrog's note, croakingly and hoarsely but faintly imitated, in the midst of it, — which makes me think it may be they, though I have not seen any frogs so large yet, but that one by the railroad which I suspect may have been a *fontinalis*. What sound do the tortoises make beside hissing? There were the mutilated *Rana palustris* seen in the winter, the hylodes, the small or middling-sized croakers in pools (a shorter, less stuttering note than this to-night), and next the note of the 7th, and to-night the last, the first I have heard from the river. I occasionally see a little frog jump into a brook.

The whole meadow resounds, probably from one end of the river to the other, this evening, with this faint, stertorous breathing. It is the waking up of the meadows. Louder than all is heard the shrill peep of the hylodes and the hovering note of the snipe, circling invisible above them all.

Vide again in Howitt, pp. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 49, 54, 95.

Is it the red-eye or white-eye whose pensile nest is so common?

April 10 (?). P. M. — To Cliffs.

A cold and windy day. Our earliest gooseberry is pretty green; next, probably the Mississippi [*sic*] cur-

rant, which is beginning to look green; next, the large buds of the lilac are opening; and next, our second or later gooseberry appears to be just beginning to expand or to show its green, and this appears to be the same with the wild one by J. P. Brown's. The male red maple buds now show eight or ten (ten counting everything) scales, alternately crosswise, and the pairs successively brighter red or scarlet, which will account for the gradual reddening of their tops. They are about ready to open.

From Fair Haven I see, in the northwestern and northern horizon and pretty high, the light reflected from falling rain, sleet, or hail, or all together, — a certain glow, almost sunny light, from the upright or nearly upright, but always straight, sides of clouds, defined by the falling rain or hail, — for hail and rain fell on me within an hour or two. The northern Peterboro Hill is concealed by a driving storm, while the southern one is distinct.

A small black dor-bug dead in the wood-path.

Two crowfoots out on the Cliff. A very warm and dry exposure, but no further sheltered were they. Pale-yellow offering of spring. The saxifrage is beginning to be abundant, elevating its flowers somewhat, pure, trustful, white, amid its pretty notched and reddish cup of leaves. The white saxifrage is a response from earth to the increased light of the year; the yellow crowfoot, to the increased heat of the sun. The buds of the thorn bushes are conspicuous. The chrysosplenium is open, a few of them, in Hubbard's meadow. I thought he had destroyed them all.

When the farmer cleans out his ditches, I mourn the loss of many a flower which he calls a weed. The main *charm* about the Corner road, just beyond the bridge, to me, has been in the little grove of locusts, sallows, and birches, etc., which has sprung up on the bank as you rise the hill. Yesterday I saw a man who is building a house near by cutting them down. I asked him if he was going to cut them all. He said he was. I said if I were in his place I would not have cut them for a hundred dollars, that they were the chief attraction of the place. "Why," said he, "they are nothing but a parcel of prickly bushes and are not worth anything. I'm going to build a new wall here." And so, to ornament the approach to his house, he substitutes a bare, ugly wall for an interesting grove.

I still feel the frost in the meadows firm under my feet.

Saw a pretty large narrow-winged hawk with a white rump and white spots or bars on under (?) side of wings. Probably the female or young of a marsh hawk. What was that smaller, broader-winged hawk with *white* rump of April 7th? For, after all, I do not find it described.

The sweet-gale will blossom very soon.

April 11. I hear the clear, loud whistle of a purple finch, somewhat like and nearly as loud as the robin, from the elm by Whiting's. The maple which I think is a red one, just this side of Wheildon's, is just out this morning.

9 A. M. — To Haverhill *via* Cambridge and Boston.

Dr. Harris says that that early black-winged, buff-edged butterfly is the *Vanessa Antiopa*, and is introduced from Europe, and is sometimes found in this state alive in winter. The orange-brown one with scalloped wings, and smaller somewhat, is *Vanessa Progne*. The early pestle-shaped bug or beetle is a cicindela, of which there are three species, one of them named from a semicolon-like mark on it. *Vide* Hassley on spiders in Boston *Journal of Natural History*.

At Natural History Rooms, saw the female red-wing, striped white and ash; female cow-bird, ashy-brown.

First. The swamp sparrow is ferruginous-brown (spotted with black) and ash above about neck; brownish-white beneath; undivided chestnut crown.

Second. The grass-bird, grayish-brown, mingled with ashy-whitish above; light, pencilled with dark brown beneath; no marked crown; outer tail feathers whitish, perhaps a faint bar on wing.

Third. Field sparrow, smaller than either; marked like first, with less black, and less distinct ash on neck, and less ferruginous and no distinct crown.

Fourth. Savannah sparrow, much like second, with more black, but not noticeable white in tail, and a little more brown; no crown marked.

Emberiza miliaria Gmel. (What is it in Nuttall?) appears to be my young of purple finch.

One Maryland yellow-throat, probably female, has no black on side head, and is like a summer yellow-bird except that the latter has ends of the wings and tail black.

The yellow-rump warbler (what is it in Nuttall?) is bluish-gray, with two white bars on wings, a bright yellow crown, side breasts, and rump. Female less distinct.

Blackburnian is orange-throated.

American redstart, male, is black forward, coppery-orange beneath and stripe on wings and near base of tail. Female dark ashy and fainter marks.

J. E. Cabot thought my small hawk might be Cooper's hawk. Says that Gould, an Englishman, is the best authority on birds.

April 13. Haverhill. — Pewee days and April showers.

First hear toads (and take off coat), a loud, ringing sound filling the air, which yet few notice. First shad caught at Haverhill to-day; first alewife 10th. Fishermen say that no fish can get above the dam at Lawrence. No shad, etc., were caught at Lowell last year. Were catching smelts with a small seine. It says in deeds that brooks shall be opened or obstructions removed by the 20th of April, on account of fish.

April 15. Mouse-car.

April 16. Either barn or bank swallows overhead. Birds loosen and expand their feathers and look larger in the rain.

April 17. Sunday. The elder leaf is the most forward of any shrub or tree I have seen; more than one inch long.

Visited two houses of refuge about one hundred and sixty years old, two miles or more east of Haverhill village, — the Peaslee houses, substantial brick houses some forty by twenty feet. Two rows of bricks project between the two stories; cavities left for the staging; marks of ovens (which projected outdoors) cut off; *white oak* timber, fifteen by twelve inches, sound; space in chimney above fireplace about three feet deep (see stars); two or three very narrow windows; large-sized bricks. These were the houses of Joseph and Nathaniel Peaslee, appointed houses of refuge by the town about 1690. The occupant of one, not a very old man, told me that his grandfather, Joseph Peaslee, was seventeen years old when the French and Indians attacked the town, killed Rolfe, etc. A Newcomb from Cape Cod lives in the other. There are as many as six garrison-houses and houses of refuge still standing in Haverhill. I have seen four still entire and one partly so, all brick.

Field sparrows common now. The Merrimack is yellow and turbid in the spring; will run clear anon. The red maple begins to show stamens here. A pleasant hilly country north of Great Pond. What were those five large gray ducks with white wing-coverts?

April 19. Haverhill. — Willow and bass strip freely. Surveying Charles White's long piece. Hear again that same nighthawk-like sound over a meadow at evening.

April 20. Saw a toad and a small snake.

April 21. Haverhill. — A peach tree in bloom.

April 23. Haverhill. — Martins.

April 24. Sunday. To and around Creek Pond and back over Parsonage Hill, Haverhill.

Field horse-tail in bloom. Marsh (?) hawk, with black tips of wings. Alders about all done. Green leaves just beginning to expand. Houstonias. How affecting that, annually at this season, as surely as the sun takes a higher course in the heavens, this pure and simple little flower peeps out and spots the great globe with white in our America, its four little white or bluish petals on a slender stalk making a delicate flower about a third of an inch in diameter! What a significant, though faint, utterance of spring through the veins of earth!

I see, in a pool by the Creek Brook, pretty chains of toad-spawn in double parallel crenate or serpentine or sometimes corkscrewing lines of black ova, close together, immersed in a light-colored jelly a third of an inch in diameter, appearing as if the two strings were one, like a lace with two scalloped black borders. This is what they were singing about.

Haverhill is remarkably bare of trees and woods. The young ladies cannot tell where are the nearest woods. I saw the moon rise last night over great bare hills eastward, and it reminded me of Ossian. Saw a pretty islet in the Creek Pond on the east side covered with white pine wood, appearing from the south higher than wide and as if the trees grew out of the water. You saw the light-colored trunks six or eight feet

beneath, and then the heavy green mass overhung the water a rod, under and beyond which you see the light surface of the pond, which gives the isle a peculiarly light and floating appearance. So much beauty does a wooded islet add to a pond. It is an object sufficiently central and *insular*. Dandelions. How surprising this bright-yellow disk! Why study other hieroglyphics? It is along the east side of this pond that the Indians are said to have taken their way with Hannah Dustin and her nurse in 1697 toward the Merrimack. I walked along it and thought how they might have been ambuscaded.

April 27. Haverhill. — The warbling vireo.

Talked with a fisherman at the Burrough [*sic*], who was cracking and eating walnuts on a post before his hut. He said he got twenty cents a stick for sawing marked logs, which were mostly owned at Lowell, but trees that fell in and whatever was not marked belonged to them. Much went by in the ice and could not be got. They haul it in and tie it. He called it Little Concord where I lived. They got some small stuff which came from that river, and said he knew the ice, it was blue (it is not) and was turned over by the falls. The Lawrence dam breaks up the ice so now that it will not be so likely to jam below and produce a freshet. Said a thousand dollars' damage was done by a recent freshet to the farm just above, at the great bend. The wind blowing on to the shore ate it away, trees and all. In the greatest freshet he could remember, methinks about ten years ago, the water

came up to his window-sill. His family took refuge on the hillside. His barn was moved and tipped over, his well filled up, and it took him, with help, a day or more to clear a passage through the ice from his door to his well. His trees were all prostrated by the ice. This was apparently between twenty and thirty feet above the present level. Says the railroad bridge hurts the fishing by stopping the ice and wearing away and deepening the channel near the north shore, where they fish, — draw their seines. Call it sixty rods wide, — their seines being thirty rods long, — and twenty-five feet deep in the middle.

Interesting to me are their habits and conversation who live along the shores of a great river. The shore, here some seventy or eighty feet high, is broken by gullies, more or less sandy, where water has flowed down, and the cottages rise not more than one sixth or one seventh the way up.

April 29. Return to Concord. At Natural History Rooms in Boston. Have I seen the least bittern? It is so brown above and yellowish, woolly, white beneath. The American goshawk is slate above, gray beneath; the young spotted dark and white beneath, and brown above. Fish hawk, white beneath. Young of marsh hawk, reddish-brown above, iron-rusty beneath. Summer duck with a crest. Dusky duck, not black, but rather dark brown. The velvet ducks I saw, hardly large enough for this. My whiter ducks may be the *Merganser castor*, or the red-breasted.

April 30. Concord. — Cultivated cherry in bloom.

Moses Emerson, the kind and gentlemanly man who assisted and looked after me in Haverhill, said that a good horse was worth \$75, and all above was fancy, and that when he saw a man driving a fast horse he expected he would fail soon.