

VI
AUGUST, 1853

(ÆT. 36)

Aug. 1. I think that that universal crowing of the chip-bird in the morning is no longer heard. Is it the *Galium circæzans* which I have seen so long on Heywood Peak and elsewhere, with four broad leaves, low and branched? Put it early in June.

Aug. 2. Heavy, long-continued, but warm rain in the night, raising the river already eight or nine inches and disturbing the meadow haymakers. John Legross brought me a quantity of red huckleberries yesterday. The less ripe are whitish. I suspect that these are the *white* huckleberries.

Sundown. — To Nawshawtuct.

The waxwork berries are yellowing. I am not sure but the bunches of the smooth sumach berries are handsomest when but partly turned, the crimson contrasting with the green, the green berries showing a velvety crimson check. *Ceanothus Virginianum*, white avens (June to August, Gray), still in bloom by the sassafras hedge, south side of hill, looks as if it might be a white cinquefoil, with small hook-prickled burs. Put it in June. Mulgedium out. The green fruit of the carrion-flower forms dense, firm, spherical umbels (?) at the end of stems five or six inches long;

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umbels two inches in diameter, formed, one of them, of eighty-four berries, size of peas, three to six sided, closely wedged together on peduncles three quarters of an inch long. The whole feels hard and solid in the hand.

Aug. 3. To north part of Framingham, surveying near Hopestill Brown's (in Sudbury).

He said there was a tame deer in the wood, which he saw in his field the day before. Told me of an otter killing a dog and partly killing another. He sold lately a white pine tree about four feet [in] diameter at butt, which brought twenty-three dollars, not including what was used for fuel, and they sawed eighty feet in length of it. Saw the *Solidago odora* in the woods there, but not in bloom nearly; leaves full of pellucid dots and yielding, after being in my pocket all day, a very pleasant fragrance. Many farmers are now troubled to get their meadow-hay since the rise of the river. Sand cherries, probably a good while.

Aug. 4. Rain last night and to-day again. Ground-nut. The low fields which have been mown now look very green again in consequence of the rain, as if it were a second spring. Aaron's-rod, not yet. A sciyos in front of the Vose house, not quite, but probably somewhere now. *Symphytum officinale* still in bloom in front of C. Stow's, over the fence. *Polygonum Carey*, four feet high, gigantesque, bristly-glandular, with swollen joints (*poly-gonum*), many branches from near ground.

Aug. 5. Perfect dog-days. To-day is sultry, *i. e.* hot and cloudy, the air full of mist and here and there misty clouds; and you find yourself perspiring much before you are aware of it. Farmers complain that they cannot make hay this weather. I cannot dry my red huckleberries. The sun does not shine unobstructedly.

A man mowing in the Great Meadows killed a great water adder (?) the other day, said to be four feet long and as big as a man's wrist. It ran at him. They find them sometimes when they go to open their hay. I tried to see it this morning, but some boys had chopped it up and buried it. They said that they found a *great many* young ones in it. That probably accounts for its being so large round. The clintonia berries keep a long time without wrinkling in a tumbler of water. The mower on the river meadows, when [he] comes to open his hay these days, encounters some overgrown water adder full of young (?) and bold in defense of its progeny, and tells a tale when he comes home at night which causes a shudder to run through the village, — how it came at him, and he ran, and it pursued and overtook him, and he transfixed it with a pitchfork and laid it on a cock of hay, but it revived and came at him again. This is the story he tells in the shops at evening. The big snake is a sort of fabulous animal. It is always as big as a man's arm and of indefinite length. Nobody knows exactly how deadly its bite, but nobody is known to have been bitten and recovered. Irishmen introduced into these meadows for the first time, on seeing a snake, a creature which they have seen only in pictures before, lay down their

scythes and run as if it were the evil one himself, and cannot be induced to return to their work. They sigh for Ireland, where they say there is no venomous thing that can hurt you.

Inula out (how long?), roadside just beyond Garfield's. Spikenard berries near Corner Spring just begin to turn. Collinsonia, not yet. Cohush berries not quite ripe. Pennyroyal in prime on Conantum. *Aster corymbosus* pretty plainly (a day or two) in the Miles Swamp or arboretum, — *Aster dumosus*, as I have called it also elsewhere.

Aug. 6. More dog-days. The sun, now at 9 A. M., has not yet burst through the mists. It has been warmer weather for a week than for at least three weeks before, — nights when all windows were left open, though not so warm as in June. This morning a very heavy fog. The sun has not risen clear or even handsomely for some time, nor have we had a good sunset.

P. M. — To J. Farmer's Cliff.

I see the sunflower's broad disk now in gardens, probably a few days, — a true sun among flowers, monarch of August. Do not the flowers of August and September generally resemble suns and stars? — sunflowers and asters and the single flowers of the golden-rod. I once saw one as big as a milk-pan, in which a mouse had its nest.

It is remarkable how many plants turn lake — some of their leaves I mean — in the fall. Already I notice that the lower leaves of some catnep and a white vervain (2d) have so turned. They are in fact matured,

and high-colored or wine-colored like the fruits. It suggests that the whole plant tends toward an equal richness and maturity and to become one flower. It is the blush of its evening sky. Its juices are no longer crude. I have seen some red leaves on the low choke-berry. Now begins the vintage of their juices. Nature is now a Bacchanal, drunk with the wines of a thousand plants and berries.

The rudbeckia must have been out at least a week or more; half the buds have opened. Cranberries show red cheeks, and some are wholly red, like varnished cherry wood. Yesterday I ate early summer apples. The huckleberries were many of them burst open in consequence of the copious rains. And now it begins to rain again and compels us to return.

Aug. 7. Sunday. P. M. — To Fair Haven Hill via Hubbard's Grove.

The krigia has bloomed again. The purple gerardia now fairly out, which I found almost out last Sunday in another place. Elder-berries begin to be ripe, bending their stems. I also see *Viburnum dentatum* berries just beginning to turn on one side. Their turning or ripening looks like decay, — a dark spot, — and so does the rarely ripe state of the naked viburnum and the sweet; but we truly regard it as a ripening still, and not falsely a decaying as when we describe the tints of the autumnal foliage.

I think that within a week I have heard the alder cricket, — a clearer and shriller sound from the leaves in low grounds, a clear shrilling out of a cool moist

shade, an autumnal sound. The year is in the grasp of the crickets, and they are hurling it round swiftly on its axle. Some wasps (I am not sure there's more than one) are building a nest in my room, of mud, these days, buzzing loudly while at work, but at no other time. Often and often I hear the cool twitter of the goldfinch passing over, — a sound one with that of the alder cricket, — and the bobolink's *link link*. How much of spring there is brought back in a young bluebird's plaintive peep!

The tall buttercup lingers still and the houstonia, not to mention the marsh speedwell and the slender bellflower.

Now for the herbs, — the various mints. The pennyroyal is out abundantly on the hills. I do not scent these things enough. Would it not be worth the while to devote a day to collecting the mountain mint, and another to the peppermint?

How trivial and uninteresting and wearisome and unsatisfactory are all employments for which men will pay you money! The ways by which you may get money all lead downward. To have done anything by which you earned money merely is to have been truly idle. If the laborer gets no more than the wages his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself. Those services which the world will most readily pay for, it is most disagreeable to render. You are paid for being something less than a man. The state will pay a genius only for some service which it is offensive to him to render. Even the poet-laureate would rather not have to celebrate the accidents of royalty.¹

¹ [Cape Cod, and *Miscellanics*, pp. 458, 459; *Misc.*, Riv. 257, 258.]

Dangle-berries have begun. Wormwood perhaps here and not before.

It is worth the while to walk in wet weather; the earth and leaves are strewn with pearls. When I came forth it was cloudy and from time to time drizzling weather, but remarkably still (and warm enough), soothing and inducing reflection. The river is dark and smooth these days, reflecting no brightness but dark clouds, and the goldfinch is heard twittering over; though presently a thicker mist or mizzle falls, and you are prepared for rain. The river and brooks have somewhat overflowed their banks, and water inundates the grass and weeds, making it look late and cool. The stillness and the shade enable you to collect and concentrate your thoughts.

I see the leaves of the two smallest johnsworts reddening. The common johnswort is quite abundant this year and still yellows the fields. I see everywhere in sandy fields the blue-curls, knocked off by the rain, strewn the ground. As I was walking along a hillside the other day, I smelled pennyroyal, but it was only after a considerable search that I discovered a single minute plant, which I had trodden on, the only one near. When, yesterday, a boy spilled his huckleberries in the pasture, I saw that Nature was making use of him to disperse her berries, and I might have advised him to pick another dishful.¹ The three kinds of

¹ [Then there were huckleberrying parties. These were under the guidance of Thoreau, because he alone knew the precise locality of every variety of the berry. I recall an occasion when little Edward Emerson, carrying a basket of fine huckleberries, had a fall and spilt them all. Great was his distress, and our offers of berries could not

epilobium grow rankly where Hubbard burned his swamp this year, also erechthites. I think that I have observed that this last is a true fireweed.

Is it not as language that all natural objects affect the poet? He sees a flower or other object, and it is beautiful or affecting to him because it is a symbol of his thought, and what he indistinctly feels or perceives is matured in some other organization. The objects I behold correspond to my mood.

The past has been a remarkably wet week, and now the earth is strewn with fungi. The earth itself is mouldy. I see a white mould in the path. Great toadstools stand in the woods, but the mushroom growth of a night is already attacked by many worms and insects. I see in the pasture grass in many places small white roundish fungi, like eggs. Methinks the mosquitoes are not a very serious evil till the somewhat *cool* muggy dog-day nights, such as we have had of late.

I was struck by the perfect neatness, as well as elaborateness and delicacy, of a lady's dress the other day. She wore some worked lace or gauze over her bosom, and I thought it was beautiful, if it indicated an equal inward purity and delicacy, — if it was the soul she dressed and treated thus delicately.

console him for the loss of those gathered by himself. But Thoreau came, put his arm around the troubled child, and explained to him that if the crop of huckleberries was to continue it was necessary that some should be scattered. Nature had provided that little boys should now and then stumble and sow the berries. We shall have a grand lot of bushes and berries in this spot, and we shall owe them to you. Edward began to smile." — Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography*, Boston, 1904, vol. i, p. 148.]

Before I came out, I saw a bee at work in a flower again in spite of mist and cloud. And here again, far in the fields by the river-bank under Fair Haven, I heard a faint but all-pervading music, while passing with care amid the dripping bushes, but did not know whether it was a distant horn or some bee about a flower near at hand. It is so still that the bees' hum is now surely heard, for they still persist in making honey. I see the tall anemone abundant and fresh yet, — both its flower and teasel-shaped bur. Mists, but not driving.

Here is the barber sailing up the still, dark, cloud-reflecting river in the long boat which he built so elaborately himself, with two large sails set. He is quite alone thus far from town, and so quiet and so sensibly employed, — bound to Fair Haven Bay, instead of meeting comrades in a shop on the Mill-Dam or sleeping away his Sabbath in a chamber, — that I think of him as having experienced religion. I know so much good of him, at least, that one dark, still Sunday he sailed alone from the village to Fair Haven Bay. What chance was there to serve the devil by that excursion? If he had had a companion I should have had some doubts, — but being alone, it seemed communion day with him.

When I see, as now climbing Fair Haven, the hills covered with huckleberry and blueberry bushes bent to the ground with fruit, — so innocent and palatable a fruit, — I think of them as fruits fit to grow on Olympus, the ambrosia of the gods, and am reminded of *Vaccinium Vitis-Idæa*. It does not occur to me at first that where such a thought is suggested is Mt.

Olympus and that I who taste these berries am a god. Why, in his only royal moments, should man abdicate his throne?

Lespedeza capitata at Lupine Bank, maybe a day or two, but I should say later than the *polystachya*. Its leaves longer and more pointed. The birds for some weeks have not sung as in the spring. Do I not already hear the jays with more distinctness, as in the fall and winter? I hear the chewink still. The narrow-leaved violet *lespedeza*, not yet.

In the open oak wood beneath the Cliff, in the steep path and by its side, the *Gerardia quercifolia* and also *flava*. The former is glaucous and all the leaves much cut, rather pinnate, as I remember, somewhat like Roman wormwood, but the calyx-lobes triangular and not more than a third or a fourth the length of the calyx-tube. The peduncles longer than the calyx. It differs from Gray's *G. quercifolia* in the calyx-lobes not being long and linear. I will put it with *G. flava*. These are both among the most remarkable flowers at present, so large and butter-yellow. Very rich they look, with their great trumpets. A bee has eaten a round hole in the side of an unopened flower. How few flowers and fruits blossom and ripen without being deformed by worms and insects! You must search long for perfect specimens. The panicked hieracium is abundant there, and has been open probably a few days, — two or three.

I find the *Solidago odora* out by the path to foot of cliffs beyond Hayden's, maybe twenty or thirty rods into woods about the summit level. It is said to have

the odor of anise. It is somewhat like that of sassafras bark. It must be somewhat dried and then bruised. The rough goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*), a day or two. I will call that sharply serrate narrow or linear(?) lanceolate leafed, smooth-stemmed, very tall goldenrod, with a large, broad, dense pyramidal head or panicle drooping every way, which grows under the railroad bank against Ebby Hubbard's land, the *S. arguta* for the present. It has been out, say one week or more.

Aug. 8. 5 A. M. — Up railroad.

The nabalus, which may have been out one week elsewhere. Also rough hawkweed, and that large aster-like flower *Diplopappus umbellatus*, a day or two. Smooth speedwell again. Erchthites. Columbine again. The first watermelon. *Aster patens* and *Aster laevis*, both a day or two.

Aug. 9. *Sedum Telephium*, garden orpine or live-for-ever, in my pitcher.

P. M. — To hibiscus and liatris and Beck Stow's.

The hibiscus which has escaped the mowers shows a little color. I am rather surprised that it escapes the mowers at all. The river is still much swollen by the rains and cooled, and the current is swifter; though it is quite hot this afternoon, with a close, melting heat. I see an empty hay-team slowly crossing the river, in the shallowest place. The oxen are half concealed, but the driver rides high and dry. The cattle must enjoy the coolness of the water. They have not got more than half the hay out of the meadows yet, and now they

are so wet I see but one team there. Much grass will be lost. If you carelessly grasp and let slip through your hand a blade of this cut-grass as you walk, it will often cut your fingers seriously. I forded the river and, for the experiment, tried swimming with one hand while I held up all my clothes with the other, for a short distance.

The *Hieracium Canadense* is out and is abundant at Peter's well. I also find one or two heads of the liatris. Perhaps I should have seen it a few days earlier, if it had not been for the mower. It has the aspect of a Canada thistle at a little distance. How fatally the season is advanced toward the fall! I am not surprised now to see the small rough sunflower. There is much yellow beside now in the fields. How beautiful now the early goldenrods (*Solidago stricta*), rising above the wiry grass of the Great Fields in front of Peter's where I sit (which is not worth cutting), not solid yellow like the sunflower, but little pyramidal or sheaf-like golden clouds or mists, supported by almost invisible leafy columns, which wave in the wind, like those elms which run up very tall and slender without a branch and fall over like a sheaf on every side! They give a very indefinite but rich, mellow, and golden aspect to the field. They are the more agreeable for the indistinctness of their outline,—these pillars of fire, clouds which glow only on one side. The *nemorialis*, just opening, with its one-sided, curved, and dense panicle, is more concealed by the grass. The field is ripe.

Next into Heywood's blueberry swamp. I spend the forenoon in my chamber, writing or arranging my

papers, and in the afternoon I walk forth into the fields and woods. I turn aside, perchance, into some withdrawn, untrodden swamp, and find these bilberries, large and fair, awaiting me in inexhaustible abundance, for I have no tame garden. They embody for me the essence and flavor of the swamp, — cool and refreshing, of various colors and flavors. I prefer the large blue, with a bloom on them, and slightly acid ones. I taste and am strengthened. This is the season of small fruits. I trust, too, that I am maturing some small fruit as palatable in these months, which will communicate my flavor to my kind. Here they hang for many weeks unchanged, in dense clusters, half a dozen touching each other, — black, blue, and intermediate colors. Our appreciation of their flavor commonly prevents our observing their beauty, though we admire the color of the holly berries which are their neighbors. If they were poisonous, we should hear more of their beauty to the eye.

You hear the peculiar scream of young hawks nowadays, — the marsh hawks, reddish beneath, which have not their perfect plumage. I plucked a great toadstool to-day, nine inches in diameter and five high, with a stem like the bole of an oak, swelling above and below, and at the smallest one and a half inches in diameter; its top slightly curving like a great election cake. Saw pigeons the other day (August 5).

Aug. 10. 5 A. M. — I hear a warbling vireo, golden robin, red-eye, and peawais.

August, royal and rich. Green corn now, and melons

have begun. That month, surely, is distinguished when melons ripen. July could not do it. What a moist, fertile heat now! I see naked viburnum berries beginning to turn. Their whiteness faintly blushing.

Alcott spent the day with me yesterday. He spent the day before with Emerson. He observed that he had got his wine and now he had come after his venison. Such was the compliment he paid me. The question of a livelihood was troubling him. He knew of nothing which he could do for which men would pay him. He could not compete with the Irish in cradling grain. His early education had not fitted him for a clerkship. He had offered his services to the Abolition Society, to go about the country and speak for freedom as their agent, but they declined him. This is very much to their discredit; they should have been forward to secure him. Such a connection with him would confer unexpected dignity on their enterprise. But they cannot tolerate a man who stands by a head above them. They are as bad — Garrison and Phillips, etc. — as the overseers and faculty of Harvard College. They require a man who will train well *under* them. Consequently they have not in their employ any but small men, — trainers.

P. M. — To Walden and Saw Mill Brook.

These days are very warm, though not so warm as it was in June. The heat is furnace-like while I am climbing the steep hills covered with shrubs on the north of Walden, through sweet-fern as high as one's head. The goldfinch sings *er, twe, twotter twotter*. I see again the *Aster patens* (*amplexicaulis* of Bigelow),

though this has no branches nor minute leaves atop. Yet it differs from the *A. undulatus*, not yet out plainly, in that the latter's lower leaves are petioled and hearted, with petioles winged at base. Find the *Arabis Canadensis*, or sickle-pod, on Heywood Peak, nearly out of bloom. Never saw it before. New plants spring up where old woods are cut off, having formerly grown here, perchance. Many such rarer plants flourish for a few years in such places before they are smothered. I have also found here, for example, round-leaved and naked-flowered desmodium and *Desmodium laxigatum* (??) and *Gnaphalium decurrens* and quera. Toadstools, which are now very abundant in the woods since the rain, are of various colors, — some red and shining, some polished white, some regularly brown-spotted, some pink, some light-blue, — buttons. The *Ranunculus repens* numerous out about Britton's Spring. A small red maple there, seven or eight feet high, all turned scarlet. It is glorious to see those great shining high blackberries, now partly ripe there, bending the bushes in moist, rocky sprout-lands, down amid the strong, bracing scented, tender ferns, which you crush with your feet. The whorled polygala in the Saw Mill Brook Path, beyond the *Desmodium paniculatum*, may have been out as long as the caducous. Is not that small narrow fern I find on Conantum about rocks ebony spleenwort? Now in fruit. The trillium fruit (varnished and stained cherry wood) now ripe. Boehmeria in prime, for long time. Colush berries ripe. By Everett's wall beyond Cheney's, small rough sunflowers, six feet high, with many branches and flowers. Saw an

alder locust this morning. Hear a quail now. Of late, and for long time, only the *link, link* of bobolink.

Aug. 11. 5 A. M. — Up North Branch.

A considerable fog. The weeds still covered by the flood, so that we have no *Bidens Beckii*. *B. chrysanthemoides* just out. The small, dull, lead-colored berries of the *Viburnum dentatum* now hang over the water. The *Amphicarpæa monoica* appears not to have bloomed. Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) appears the most constant flower and most regardless of seasons. Cerastium blooms still. Button-bush and mikania now in prime, and cardinals. Lilies rather scarce (?), but methinks less infested with insects. The river sprinkled with meadow-hay afloat.

P. M. — To Conantum.

This is by some considered the warmest day of the year thus far; but, though the weather is melting hot, yet the river having been deepened and cooled by the rains, we have none of those bathing days of July, '52. Yesterday or day before, I heard a strange note, methought from somebody's poultry, and looking out saw, I think a bittern, go squawking over the yard — from the river southwestward. A bittern, flying over, mingles its squawk with the cackling of poultry. Did I not hear a willet yesterday? At the Swamp Bridge Brook, flocks of cow troopials now about the cows. These and other blackbirds, flying in flocks now, make a great chattering, and also the bobolinks. What a humming of insects about the sweet-scented clethra blossoms, —

honey-bees and others, and flies and various kinds of wasps!

I see some naked viburnum berries red and some purple now. There are berries which men do not use, like choke-berries, which here in Hubbard's Swamp grow in great profusion and blacken the bushes. How much richer we feel for this unused abundance and superfluity! Nature would not appear so rich, the profusion so rich, if we knew a use for everything.

Plums and grapes, about which gardeners make such an ado, are in my opinion poor fruits compared with melons.

The great rains have caused those masses of small green high blueberries, which commonly do not get ripe, to swell and ripen, so that their harvest fulfills the promise of their spring. I never saw so many, — even in swamps where a fortnight ago there was no promise.

What a helpless creature a horse is out of his element or off his true ground! Saw John Potter's horse mired in his meadow, which has been softened by the rains. His small hoofs afford no support. He is furious, as if mad, and is liable to sprain himself seriously. His hoofs go through the crust like stakes, into the soft batter beneath, though the wheels go well enough. Woodbine is reddening in some places, and ivy too. *Collinsia* just begun.

Found ——— rather garrulous (his breath smelled of rum). Was complaining that his sons did not get married. He told me his age when he married (thirty-odd years ago), how his wife bore him eight children and

then died, and in what respect she proved herself a true woman, etc., etc. I saw that it was as impossible to speak of marriage to such a man — to the mass of men — as of poetry. Its advantages and disadvantages are not such as they have dreamed of. Their marriage is prose or worse. To be married at least should be the one poetical act of a man's life. If you fail in this respect, in what respect will you succeed? The marriage which the mass of men comprehend is but little better than the marriage of the beasts. It would be just as fit for such a man to discourse to you on the love of flowers, thinking of them as hay for his oxen.

The difference between men affects every phase of their lives, so that at last they cannot communicate with each other. An old man of average worth, who spoke with the downrightness and frankness of age, not exaggerating aught, said he was troubled about his water, etc., — altogether of the earth.

Evening draws on while I am gathering bundles of pennyroyal on the further Conantum height. I find it amid the stubble mixed with blue-curls and, as fast as I get my hand full, tie it into a fragrant bundle. Evening draws on, smoothing the waters and lengthening the shadows, now half an hour or more before sundown. What constitutes the charm of this hour of the day? Is it the condensing of dews in the air just beginning, or the grateful increase of shadows in the landscape? Some fiat has gone forth and stilled the ripples of the lake; each sound and sight has acquired ineffable beauty. How agreeable, when the sun shines at this angle, to stand on one side and look down on flourish-

ing sprout-lands or copses, where the cool shade is mingled in greater proportion than before with the light! Broad, shallow lakes of shadow stretch over the lower portions of the top of the woods. A thousand little cavities are filling with coolness. Hills and the least inequalities in the ground begin to cast an obvious shadow. The shadow of an elm stretches quite across the meadow. I see pigeons (?) in numbers fly up from the stubble. I hear some young bluebird's plaintive warble near me and some young hawks uttering a pulsing scream from time to time across the pond, to whom life is yet so novel. From far over the pond and woods I hear also a farmer calling loudly to his cows, in the clear still air, "Ker, ker, ker, ker."

What shall we name this season? — this very late afternoon, or very early evening, this severe and placid season of the day, most favorable for reflection, after the insufferable heats and the bustle of the day are over and before the dampness and twilight of evening! The serene hour, the Muses' hour, the season of reflection! It is commonly desecrated by being made tea-time. It begins perhaps with the very earliest condensation of moisture in the air, when the shadows of hills are first observed, and the breeze begins to go down, and birds begin again to sing. The pensive season. It is earlier than the "chaste eve" of the poet. Bats have not come forth. It is not twilight. There is no dew yet on the grass, and still less any early star in the heavens. It is the turning-point between afternoon and evening. The few sounds now heard, far or near, are delicious. It is not more dusky and obscure, but clearer than

before. The clearing of the air by condensation of mists more than balances the increase of shadows. Chaste eve is merely *preparing* with "dewy finger" to draw o'er all "the gradual dusky veil." Not yet "the ploughman homeward plods his weary way," nor owls nor beetles are abroad. It is a season somewhat earlier than is celebrated by the poets. There is not such a sense of lateness and approaching night as they describe. I mean when the first emissaries of Evening come to smooth the lakes and streams. The poet arouses himself and collects his thoughts. He postpones tea indefinitely. Thought has taken her siesta. Each sound has a broad and deep relief of silence.

Aug. 12. 9 A. M. — To Conantum by boat, berrying, with three ladies.

You now see and hear no red-wings along the river as in spring. See the blue herons opposite Fair Haven Hill, as if they had bred here. This and the last day or two *very* hot. Now at last, methinks, the most melting season of this year, though I think it is hardly last year's *bathing* time, because the water is higher. There is very little air over the water, and when I dip my head in it for coolness, I do not feel any coolness. The *Eupatorium sessilifolium* has been out a day or two on the side-hill grove at Bittern Cliff; very similar its leaves and form to the small sunflower. *Desmodium Canadense* (?), apparently a good while; perhaps with the earliest. Never saw it before. Has dense racemes of large flowers and pods. In the same place. I find, on the Cliff there, a *Gerardia quercifolia* which answers to

the book (Gray), though I have not perhaps the *lowest* leaves. It has the linear-lanceolate segments of calyx. My last had not, though it was glaucous and was much more cut-leaved. There are varieties of the glaucous, then. They are both less densely spiked than the *flava*. Panicked cornel berries begin. The river cornel berries just beginning in this sunny place. *Chelone glabra* also. The round-leaved desmodium, a good while, and still on the hillside beyond the elm: perhaps ten days. Was that a thistle-down over the river, without the seed? ¹ Carried watermelons for drink. What more refreshing and convenient! This richest wine in a convenient cask, and so easily kept cool! No foreign wines could be so grateful. The first muskmelon to-day. If you would cool a watermelon, do not put it in water, which keeps the heat in, but cut it open and set it in a cellar or in the shade. ² If you have carriage, carry these green bottles of wine. A good many lilies yet rested in the shade under the bridges.

Aug. 13. The last was a melting night, and a carnival for mosquitoes. Could I not write meditations under a bridge at midsummer? The last three or four days less dogdayish. We paused under each bridge yesterday, — we who had been sweltering on the quiet waves, — for the sake of a little shade and coolness, holding on by the piers with our hands. Now and then a muskrat made the water boil, which dove or came up near by. They will move so suddenly in the water when alarmed as to make quite a report.

¹ Yes.

² Or in a draught.

P. M. — To hibiscus by boat.

Hibiscus just beginning to open, its large cylindrical buds, as long as your finger, fast unrolling. They look like loosely rolled pink cigars. Rowed home in haste before a black approaching storm from the northeast, which was slightly cooling the air. How grateful when, as I backed through the bridges, the breeze of the storm blew through the piers, rippling the water and slightly cooling the sultry air! How fast the black cloud came up, and passed over my head, proving all wind! Gardeners complain that their fruit is fast rotting. We have had such wet and then moist, sultry weather that apples and plums ripen and decay very fast. Sicyos well out, and probably began when I saw it before.

Aug. 14. Sunday. 5 A. M. — To Cliffs.

The toads probably ceased about the time I last spoke of them. Bullfrogs, also, I have not heard for a long time.

I perceive the scent of the *earliest* ripe apples in my walk. How it surpasses all their flavors! *Lespedeza violacea* var. *angustifolia* at Cliffs, a day or two. The bushy gerardia makes a show there now. When I came out on to the wet rock by the juniper, all green with moss and with the driving mists beneath me, — for the sun did not come out till seven, — it reminded me of mountain-tops which I have visited.

P. M. — To Walden, Saw Mill Brook, Flint's Pond.

Locust days, — sultry and sweltering. I hear them even till sunset. The usually invisible but far-heard

locust. In Thrush Alley a lespedeza out of bloom, with downy stem two feet high, and oblanceolate leaves one half by one and three quarters inches, and dry pods the whole length in the axils, as if between *L. capitata* and *violacea*.

I find on Heywood Peak two similar desmodiums of apparently the same date,—one that of July 31st, which I will call for the present *D. Dillenii*, two or three feet high, curving upward, many stems from a centre, with oval-lanceolate leaves, one to two inches long, and a long, loose, open panicle of flowers, which turn blue-green in drying, stem somewhat downy and upper sides of leaves smooth and silky to the lips; the other, which I will call *D. Marylandicum*, of similar habit (and date), but a little smaller and the leaves rhombic ovate and blunt, and some of the lower round, about three quarters of an inch long, and *stem quite smooth*, or some a little roughened; also by Woodside Path to White Pond; flowers turn blue-green in drying.

In the low woodland paths full of rank weeds, there are countless great fungi of various forms and colors, the produce of the warm rains and muggy weather of a week ago, now rapidly dissolving. One great one, more than a foot in diameter, with a stem $2\frac{1}{2}$ + inches through and 5 inches high, and which has sprung up since I passed here on the 10th, is already sinking like lead into that portion already melted. The ground is covered with foul spots where they have dissolved, and for *most of my walk* the air is tainted with a musty, carrion-like odor, in some places very offensive, so that I at first suspected a dead horse or cow. They impress me

like humors or pimples on the face of the earth, toddy-blossoms, by which it gets rid of its corrupt blood. A sort of excrement they are. It never occurred to me before to-day that those different forms belong to one species. Some I see just pushing up in the form of blunt cones, thrusting the leaves aside, and, further along, some which are perfectly flat on top, probably the same in full bloom, and others decaying and curved up into a basin at the edges. This misty and musty dog-day weather has lasted now nearly a month, as I remember, beginning gradually from the middle of July.

The *Desmodium paniculatum* ¹ which was not out on the 10th, now, say the 12th, by Saw Mill Brook Path. The *Aster acuminatus* in the copse near by. I found it last year, but where? ² I find no grass balls yet. The dangle-berry found now, on tall glaucous-leaved bushes in low ground, is the handsomest of our gaylussacias, — smooth, round, and blue, larger than most, but with a tough skin and perhaps a slight astringency. Altogether a very handsome bush and berry. I hear no wood thrushes for a week. The peawai still, and sometimes the golden robin. Methinks the reign of the milkweeds is over.

Aug. 15. Rain again in the night, but now clear. Though the last week has been remarkably warm, the warmest in the year, the river, owing to the rains, has not been warm enough for perfect bathing, as in July,



¹ Vide August 16th.

² On Pack Monadnock; also near *Aster Radula* in Potter's Swamp, three feet high.

'52. It was lowest (thus far) in July this year, before these rains. It has been melting weather; hundreds sunstruck in New York. Sultry, mosquitoey nights, with both windows and door open, and scarcely a sheet to be endured. But now it is cooler at last.

P. M. — To White Pond *via* Dugan's.

The air is somewhat cooler and beautifully clear at last after all these rains. Instead of the late bluish mistiness, I see a distinct, dark shade under the edge of the woods, the effect of the luxuriant foliage seen through the clear air. The vision goes bounding buoyantly far over the plains. It is a pleasure to look at the washed woods far away. You see every feature of the white pine grove with distinctness, — the stems of the trees, then the dark shade, then their fresh sunlit outsides. The mists are washed and cleared away, and behind them is seen the offspring of the rank vegetation which they nourished, an inky darkness as of night under the edge of the woods and the hedges, now at noonday heralding the evening of the year. The fields are remarkably green with a short, firm sward, and the crickets chirp with a still more autumnal sound.

Bathed at Clamshell Hill. There are perhaps four clams there under each foot. It will be long before the native clam will be extinct, like the Wellfleet oysters. That long,  crinkled red gull on shrub oak  stems. *Bidens frondosa*. More of the *Desmodium Marylandicum* (it is pretty plainly this), in the wood-side path to White Pond. The leaves of a rubus scored by some worm or insect, *i. e.* eaten half through, leaving whitish, serpen-

tine, ribbon-like lines, doubling on themselves. Some have looked [to] find some mystic alphabet in such things. Hips are reddening.

Aug. 16. P. M. — To Flint's Pond with Mr. Conway.

Started a woodcock in the woods. Also saw a large telltale, I think yellow-shanks, whose note I at first mistook for a jay's, giving the alarm to some partridges. The *Polygonum orientale*, probably some days, by Turnpike Bridge, a very rich rose-color large flowers, distinguished by its salver-shaped upper sheaths. It is a color as rich, I think, as that of the cardinal-flower. *Desmodium paniculatum* in the wood-path northeast of Flint's Pond. Its flowers turn blue-green in drying.

Yesterday also in the Marlborough woods, perceived everywhere that offensive mustiness of decaying fungi.

How earthy old people become, — mouldy as the grave! Their wisdom smacks of the earth. There is no foretaste of immortality in it. They remind me of earthworms and mole crickets.¹

Aug. 17. Rain in forenoon.

The high blackberries are now in their prime; the richest berry we have. That wild black currant by Union Turnpike ripe (in gardens some time). The knapweed now conspicuous, like a small thistle. Did I set it down too early? Rain, rain, rain again! Good for grass and apples; said to be bad for potatoes, making them rot; makes the fruit now ripening decay, — apples, etc.

¹ [Channing, p. 327.]

Aug. 18. Rain again.

P. M. — To Great Fields.

Many leaves of the cultivated cherry are turned yellow, and a very *few* leaves of the elm have fallen, — the dead or prematurely ripe. The abundant and repeated rains since this month came in have made the last fortnight and more seem like a rainy season in the tropics, — warm, still copious rains falling straight down, contrasting with the cold, driving spring rains. Now again I am caught in a heavy shower in Moore's pitch pines on edge of Great Fields, and am obliged to stand crouching under my umbrella till the drops turn to streams, which find their way through my umbrella, and the path up the hillside is all afloat, a succession of puddles at different levels, each bounded by a ridge of dead pine-needles. An Irishman, getting out stumps and roots in Moore's Swamp, at first squatted behind a wood-pile, but, being wet to his skin, now stands up and moves about for warmth. Melons crack open before they are sweet. Is not that variety of the ambrosia going to seed by Brown's bars in Sleepy Hollow the *heterophylla*?¹ with short, pyramidal purplish spikes and dark-green entire lanceolate leaves above.

What means this sense of lateness that so comes over one now, — as if the rest of the year were down-hill, and if we had not performed anything before, we should not now? The season of flowers or of promise may be said to be over, and now is the season of fruits; but where is our fruit? The night of the year is approaching. What have we done with our talent? All nature

¹ No; one form of the common.

prompts and reproves us. How early in the year it begins to be late! The sound of the crickets, even in the spring, makes our hearts beat with its awful reproof, while it encourages with its seasonable warning. It matters not by how little we have fallen behind; it seems irretrievably late. The year is full of warnings of its shortness, as is life. The sound of so many insects and the sight of so many flowers affect us so, — the creak of the cricket and the sight of the prunella and autumnal dandelion. They say, "For the night cometh in which no man may work."

Aug. 19. *Friday.* 9 A. M. — To Sudbury by boat with W. E. C.

Cooler weather. Last Sunday we were sweltering here and one hundred died of the heat in New York; to-day they have fires in this village. After more rain, with wind in the night, it is now clearing up cool. There is a broad, clear crescent of blue in the west, slowly increasing, and an agreeable autumnal coolness, both under the high, withdrawn clouds and the edges of the woods, and a considerable wind wafts us along with our one sail and two umbrellas, sitting in thick coats. I was going to sit and write or mope all day in the house, but it seems wise to cultivate animal spirits, to embark in enterprises which employ and recreate the whole body. Let the divine spirits like the huntsman with his bugle accompany the animal spirit that would fain range the forest and meadow. Even the gods and goddesses, Apollo and Diana, are found in the field, though they are superior to the dog and the deer.

The river is full and overflowing, though there are still a few lilies and pontederias left. The wind comes from the northwest and is bracing and encouraging, and we can now sail up the stream. Flocks of bobolinks go tinkling along about the low willows, and swallows twitter, and a kingbird hovers almost stationary in the air, a foot above the water. The weeds which rise above the water now bend up-stream. The rich red *Polygonum amphibium* var. *terrestre* (?), — I suppose, for it rises sometimes two feet erect and is slightly hairy and leaves not commonly heart-shaped. Also probably the variety *aquaticum* just appearing above water in midstream, where it floats.¹ Both of these probably two or three days at most: but all weeds are wholly or partially drowned. Start up three blue herons in the meadow under Fair Haven, which fly heavily like bitterns, with their breast-bones projecting like a broad keel, — or was it their necks curled up?

Mowing in Conant's meadow by Fair Haven. These mowers must often find the bittern's eggs. On entering Fair Haven with a fair wind, scare up two ducks behind the point of the Island. Saw three or four more in the afternoon. Also I hear from over the pond the clear metallic scream of young hawks, so common at this season, probably marsh hawks. Buttercups² are now abundant in Lee's meadow. Is it the *repens*? The pads are mostly eaten through and through and covered with water, and I see many of their wrecks drifting down the stream, and the pontederia leaves are already

¹ Doubtful if I have yet distinguished them.

² Were they not fall dandelions?

half of them turned brown and shrivelled dry, before any frosts! Why should they decay so soon, like skunk-cabbage leaves? The fall has come to them. Thistle-down is seen in the air sometimes. *Epilobium* down has been flying some time also.

The sun comes out now about noon, when we are at Rice's, and the water sparkles in the clear air, and the pads reflect the sun. The dog-days seem now fairly past. The lower rank of polygonums is nearly drowned, but the higher, the *hydropiperoides*, rises still a foot or two, with its white spike and its broader leaves bending south before the wind and reflecting the light. There is much trumpet-weed along the shore.

We have passed men at work in the water a foot or more deep, saving the grass they had cut, and now we enter the broader Sudbury meadows. How clear and bright the air! The stems of trees at a distance are absolutely black and the densest shades [*sic*]. We scare up blue herons here also. As many as half a dozen different blue herons in our voyage. They are the most common large bird we see. They have got the grass from not more than a third of the meadows here, for there is much more water on them than in Concord. We left men mowing in Conant's meadow, which is as wet as the average of ours, but here we sail across the meadow, cutting off the bends in the river. Many tons stand cocked up, blackened and lost, in the water, and probably (?) they will not get the grass now standing. Either their meadows are lower referred to the river, or the river has risen higher there, — I think the former.

There are broad fields of sium with its umbels now going to seed, exactly like carrots, half a dozen rods in width along the stream, all through this meadow. The bulrushes are turning brown and falling. I see floating or just beneath the surface, along the side of the river, masses of the *Ranunculus Purshii*,¹ four or five feet through and many rods long, as if rolled together, washed up and off. The great arundo is now green with a reddish top and blades one inch wide. Methinks it is not long out of bloom.

We landed at the first cedar hills above the causeway and ate our dinner and watermelon on them. A great reddish-brown marsh hawk circling over the meadow there. How freshly, beautifully green the landscape after all these rains! The poke-berry ripe. Hear the incessant cricket of the fall now. Found a swamp full of high blueberries there, and from the hill near by looked to Nobscot, three or four miles distant. It was seen to advantage, rising green or with a glaucous tint above the slope of a near pasture which concealed all the intervening country. The great Sudbury meadows, looking north, appear elevated. Every blade and leaf has been washed by the rains, and the landscape is indescribably bright. It is light without heat, Septemberish, as if reflected from the earth, such as is common in the fall. The surface of the meadows and the whole earth is like that of a great reflector to the sun, but reflecting his light more than his heat.

It is a glorious and ever-memorable day. We observe attentively the first beautiful days in the spring, but not

¹ Is it not *Bidens Beckii*?

so much in the autumn. We might expect that the first fair days after so much rain would be remarkable. It is a day affecting the spirits of men, but there is nobody to enjoy it but ourselves. What do the laborer ox and the laborer man care for the beautiful days? Will the haymaker when he comes home to-night know that this has been such a beautiful day? This day itself has been the great phenomenon, but will it be reported in any journal, as the storm is, and the heat? It is like a great and beautiful flower unnamed. I see a man trimming willows on the Sudbury causeway and others raking hay out of the water in the midst of all this clarity and brightness, but are they aware of the splendor of this day? The mass of mankind, who live in houses or shops, or are bent upon their labor out of doors, know nothing of the beautiful days which are passing about and around them. Is not such a day worthy of a hymn? It is such a day as mankind might spend in praising and glorifying nature. It might be spent as a natural sabbath, if only all men would accept the hint, devoted to unworldly thoughts. The first bright day of the fall, the earth reflector. The dog-day mists are gone; the washed earth shines; the cooler air braces man. No summer day is so beautiful as the fairest spring and fall days.

Went through a potato-field overrun and concealed by Roman wormwood as high as our heads. Returning, we row all the way. On the narrow meadow in Sudbury between Sherman's Bridge and the Jenkins Bend, opposite the oaks, found a new flower, the *Coreopsis rosea*, a small purplish or pale-red flower, somewhat

like a mayweed at a distance, but with linear leaves; maybe a fortnight since, for some were gone to seed. It was now nearly covered with the water. The only coreopsis I have found; rose-flowered coreopsis. It interests me not a little from its resemblance to the coreopsis of the gardens.

Entered Fair Haven at sunset. A large hawk sat on the very top of a tall white pine in Lee's Wood, looking down at us. He looked like an eagle with his full breast, or like a great cone belonging to the tree. It is their habit thus to perch on the top of the pines, and they are not readily detected. I could see him nearly half a mile off.

As the rays of the sun fell horizontally across the placid pond, they lit up the side of Baker's Pleasant Meadow Wood, which covers a hill. The different shades of green of different and the same trees, — alders, pines, birch, maple, oak, etc., — melting into one another on their rounded bosky edges, made a most glorious soft and harmonious picture, only to be seen at this season of the day and perhaps of the year. It was a beautiful green rug with lighter shadings and rounded figures like the outlines of trees and shrubs of different shades of green. In the case of a single tree there was the dark glossy green of the lower, older leaves, — the spring growth, — which hang down, fading on every side into the silvery hoariness of the younger and more downy leaves on the edges, — the fall growth, — whose under sides are seen, which stand up, and more perhaps at this hour. This was also the case with every bush along the river, — the larger glossy

dark-green watery leaves beneath and in the recesses, the upright hoary leaves whose under sides were seen on the shoots which rose above. I never saw a forest-side look more luxuriantly and at the same time freshly beautiful. These lighter shades in the rug had the effect of watered silks, — the edges lit, the breasts dark-green, almost the cast on green crops seen by moonlight.

As toward the evening of the day the lakes and streams are smooth, so in the fall, the evening of the year, the waters are smoothed more perfectly than at any other season. The day is an epitome of the year. The smaller, or green, bittern goes over. Now, while off Conantum, we have a cool, white, autumnal twilight, and as we pass the Hubbard Bridge, see the first stars.

I have already seen the cores of white pine cones stripped by the squirrels (?).

Aug. 20. P. M. — To Great Meadows.

Bidens connata (?) by pond-hole beyond Agricultural Ground; no rays yet at least. No traces of fringed gentian can I find. The liatris now in prime, — purple with a bluish reflection. A *Desmodium Canadense* (?) with large flowers spreading ascendant in the liatris hollow. Was that *Neottia* or *Spiranthes gracilis*, fifteen inches high there, without apparent leaf?

They have got nearly all the grass from the meadow. I walk down the firm bank of the river, that broad, flat firm strip between the meadow with its poor cut-grass and the stream, on which a better but wiry kind of grass grows. There is not nearly so much water here

as in Sudbury. The river is higher than it has been since spring.


This day, too, has that autumnal character. I am struck by the clearness and stillness of the air, the brightness of the landscape, or, as it were, the reflection of light from the washed earth, the darkness and heaviness of the shade, as I look now up the river at the white maples and bushes, and the smoothness of the stream. If they are between you and the sun, the trees are more black than green. It must be owing to the clearness of the air since the rains, together with the multiplication of the leaves, whose effect has not been perceived during the mists of the dog-days. But I cannot account for this peculiar smoothness of the dimpled stream — unless the air is stiller than before — nor for the peculiar brightness of the sun's reflection from its surface. I stand on the south bank, opposite the black willows, looking up the full stream, which, with a smooth, almost oily and sheeny surface, comes welling and dimpling onward, peculiarly smooth and bright now at 4 p. m., while the numerous trees seen up the stream — white maples, oaks, etc. — and the bushes look absolutely black in the clear, bright light.

Aug. 21. 6 A. M. — To Island by boat.

Aster macrophyllus. Appear not to blossom generally this year.

P. M. — To Jenny Dugan's and Conantum.

Saw one of those light-green locusts about three quarters of an inch long on a currant leaf in the garden. It kept up a steady shrilling (unlike the interrupted

creak of the cricket), with its wings upright on its shoulders, all indistinct, they moved so fast. Near at hand it made my ears ache, it was so piercing, and was accompanied by a hum like that of a factory. The wings are transparent, with marks somewhat like a letter. 

That which I had mistaken for *Mentha Canadensis* at Mrs. Hosmer's brook is apparently *M. piperita*, or peppermint, naturalized. It may have been in bloom a fortnight. It is higher-scented, with dark leaves and dark-purplish stems, and a short spike of flowers above, and not in the axils of the leaves. What I take to be *Aster patens* is a handsome light-blue aster, now abundant on the hillside by J. Hosmer's pines. The choke-cherries, which are now, and have been for some time, as ripe as they will be, actually fur the mouth, and the juice of these taken into the mouth, mixed with the saliva, is feathered like tea into which sour cream has been poured. They are a rich, fatty-looking fruit. That must be the *Aster puniceus* (which I have falsely called *longifolius*), four or five feet high and coarse and rough, commonly with a reddish stem, filling the brook behind Dugan's; out two or three days, very pale purplish. I see aphides like a white mildew on the alders. The *Polygonum articulatum* not yet. The *Aster laevis* is one of the most beautiful I have seen yet, especially when there are ten or twelve in a panicle, making a small rounded bunch. The *Viburnum Lentago* berries are but just beginning to redden on one cheek. The *Cornus paniculata* are fairly white in some places. The polygonatum berries have been a bluish-green some time. Do they turn still?

Methinks I have not heard a robin sing morning or evening of late, but the peawai still, and occasionally a short note from the gold robin.

The river was as low as in July, last year at this time. It is now *perhaps* two feet higher than then. The river plants are thus subject to unusual accidents. I think it was lowest this year the latter part of July before the rains.

An aster beyond Hubbard's Grove which I should call *A. Radula*, but the calyx-scales not appressed.

Aug. 22. Monday. P. M. — Up Assabet to Yellow Rocket Shore.

A still afternoon with a prospect of a shower in the west. The immediate edge of the river is for the most part respected by the mowers, and many wild plants there escape from year to year, being too coarse for hay. The prevailing flowers now along the river are the mikania, polygonums, trumpet-weed, cardinal, arrow-head, *Chelone glabra*, and here and there veronica. The button-bush is out of bloom and its balls browning. On the steep hillside where the Leaning Hemlocks grow slanted over the river and from year to year falling into it, I am surprised to see that many are leaning and falling up the hill, owing to a slide which has carried their roots forward toward the water. I hear the muttering of thunder and the first drops dimple the river.

I hear but few notes of birds these days; no singing, but merely a few hurried notes or screams or twittering or peeping. I will enumerate such as I hear or see this still louring and showery afternoon. A hurried anxious

note from a robin. Heard perhaps half a dozen afterward. They flit now, accompanied by their young. A sharp, loud *che-wink* from a ground-robin. A goldfinch twitters over; several more heard afterward. A blue jay screams, and one or two fly over, showing to advantage their handsome forms, especially their regular tails, wedge-formed. Surprised to hear a very faint *bobolink* in the air; the *link, link*, once or twice later. A yellow-bird flew over the river. Swallows twittering, but flying high, — the chimney swallows and what I take to be the bank ditto. Scared up a green bittern from an oak by the riverside. Hear a peawai whose note is more like singing — as if it were still incubating — than any other. Some of the warble of the golden robin. A kingfisher, with his white collar, darted across the river and alighted on an oak. A peewee flew along the shore and uttered its peculiar note. Their wings appear double as they fly by you, while their bill is cumbrously carried pointing downward in front. The chipping of a song sparrow occasionally heard amid the bushes. A single duck scared up. And two nighthawks flying high over the river. At twilight many bats after the showers. These birds were heard or seen in the course of three or four hours on the river, but there were not sounds enough to disturb the general stillness.

The scarlet thorn berry has been turning some time and is now edible, — an oblong squarish fruit, scarlet with yellowish specks or spaces. The black willow has already lost some of its freshness and greenness, as if burnt; it is a little yellow or brownish. It is a tree apparently without stem, light masses of foliage resting on

the water, and is badly named black willow except as descriptive of its winter and spring appearance, being one of the most buoyant and ethereal of trees.

Methinks I have seen thus far this year only the *Polygonum amphibium* var. *terrestre*. The species is not abundant, but is very interesting to me, occurring at this later cooler and darker season. There is one rarely dense bed of them in the Assabet just beyond the rock by Hosmer's bound. The smooth green leaves are surmounted by very dense rich rose-red—or a very dark shade of pink—spikes three inches or more in length, six inches to two and a half feet from the water. This little red streak is detected afar. Methinks it is the handsomest of our indigenous polygonums.

The scream of young marsh hawks sounds like some notes of the jay.

Aug. 23. 6 A. M. — To Nawshawtuct.

A very clear but cool morning, all white light. The feverwort berries are yellowing and yellowed; barberries have begun to redden, and the prinos,—some of the last quite red. The *Spiranthes gracilis*, with its leafless stalk, is very common now on grassy hillsides.

August has been thus far dog-days, rain, oppressive sultry heat, and now beginning fall weather.

P. M. — Clematis Brook *via* Conantum.

Neottia or rather *Spiranthes cernua*, a few days, bank by Hubbard's meadow, by oak beyond ivy pass. This low, with long lanceolate leaves, and in low ground compared with the taller *gracilis*. More and larger by

meadow path beyond swimming-place. Have we the *latifolia*? The *gracilis* has its crystalline white flowers arranged in a dense spiral cone like the thread of a screw, standing out nearly at right angles with the stem, curved downward a little.

Squirrels have commenced on hazelnuts.

Observing the blackness of the foliage, especially between me and the light, I am reminded that it begins in the spring, the dewy dawn of the year, with a silvery hoary downiness, changing to a yellowish or light green,—the saffron-robed morn,—then to a pure, spotless, glossy green with light under sides reflecting the light,—the forenoon,—and now the dark green, or early afternoon, when shadows begin to increase, and next it will turn yellow or red,—the sunset sky,—and finally sere brown and black, when the night of the year sets in.

Carrion-berries just begin to be ripe. Potato-fields are full of Roman wormwood now. I am braced and encouraged by the rank growth of this aromatic plant, concealing the potato vines which are already nearly half decayed. By path from meadow through Hubbard's rear wood and sprout-lands. The now purple naked viburnum berries—numerous drooping cymes of purple berries—are now very handsome seen against the green leaves in sprout-lands. I see to-day—and may add to yesterday's list—the blue heron launch off from an oak by the river and flap or sail away with lumbering flight; also kingbirds and crows. The red-eye may be heard *faintly* in the morning.

The *Solidago nemoralis* now yellows the dry fields

with its recurved standard a little more than a foot high, —marching to the Holy Land, a countless host of crusaders. That field in the woods near Well Meadow, where I once thought of squatting, is full of them. The patches of rhexia or meadow-beauty which have escaped the mowers in the low grounds, where rowen is now coming forward apace, look like a little bright purple on one side of Nature's pallet, giving place to some fresh green which Nature has ground. The traveller leaves his dog to worry the woodchuck, though he himself passes on, so little advanced has man from the savage state. Anon he will go back to save him, and legislatures perchance will pass laws for his protection. Arum berries. *Smilacina racemosa* [berries] now are reddish and minutely red speckled; its leaves are commonly eaten or decayed. The *Smilacina bifolia* in some places red. Of late I notice that saw-like grass gone to seed, —a flattened row of seeds two or three inches long under a flat, leaf-like stalk, — an autumnal sight.

Pickering, in his "Races," suggests that savages, going naked, do not disperse seeds so much as civilized men. Beggar-ticks and burs (I say) do not adhere to the bare skin. Weeds especially accompany civilization. I hesitated to collect some desmodium seeds because they looked green and the plant was still in flower, but before I had gone far I found [I] had brought away many on my clothes, which suggested to me that probably as soon as the hooked hairs were stiff enough, clinging to foreign surfaces, to overcome the adherence of the pods to their stems, it will do to pluck them for seed.

I am again struck by the perfect correspondence of a day — say an August day — and the year. I think that a perfect parallel may be drawn between the seasons of the day and of the year. Perhaps after middle age man ceases to be interested in the morning and in the spring.

I see the late flowers of the cistus again!

Poke stems are now ripe. I walked through a beautiful grove of them, six or seven feet high, on the side of Lee's Cliff, where they have ripened early. Their stems are a deep, rich purple with a bloom, contrasting with the clear green leaves. Every part but the leaves is a brilliant purple (lake (?) -purple); or, more strictly speaking, the racemes without the berries are a brilliant lake-red with crimson flame-like reflections. Hence the *lacca*. Its cylindrical racemes of berries of various hues from green to dark purple, six or seven inches long, are drooping on all sides, beautiful both with and without berries, all afire with ripeness. Its stalks, thus full of purple wine, are one of the fruits of autumn. It excites me to behold it. What a success is its! What maturity it arrives [at], ripening from leaf to root! May I mature as perfectly, root and branch, as the poke! Its stems are more beautiful than most flowers. It is the emblem of a successful life, a not premature death, — whose death is an ornament to nature. To walk amid these upright branching casks of purple wine, which retain and diffuse a sunset glow, for nature's vintage is not confined to the vine! I drink it with my eyes. Our poets have sung wine, the product of a foreign plant which they never saw, as if our own plants

had no juice in them more than our poets. Here are berries enough to paint the western sky with and play the Bacchanal if you will. What flutes its ensanguined stems would make, to be used in the dance! It is a royal plant. I could spend the evening of the year musing amid the poke stems.¹

Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each. Let them be your only diet drink and botanical medicines. In August live on berries, not dried meats and pemmican, as if you were on shipboard making your way through a waste ocean, or in a northern desert. Be blown on by all the winds. Open all your pores and bathe in all the tides of Nature, in all her streams and oceans, at all seasons. Miasma and infection are from within, not without. The invalid, brought to the brink of the grave by an unnatural life, instead of imbibing only the great influence that Nature is, drinks only the tea made of a particular herb, while he still continues his unnatural life, — saves at the spile and wastes at the bung. He does not love Nature or his life, and so sickens and dies, and no doctor can cure him. Grow green with spring, yellow and ripe with autumn. Drink of each season's influence as a vial, a true panacea of all remedies mixed for your especial use. The vials of summer never made a man sick, but those which he stored in his cellar. Drink the wines, not of your bottling, but Nature's bottling; not kept in goat-skins or pig-skins, but the skins of a myriad

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 254, 255; Riv. 311-313. See also *Journal*, vol. ii, pp. 489, 490.]

fair berries. Let Nature do your bottling and your pickling and preserving. For all Nature is doing her best each moment to make us well. She exists for no other end. Do not resist her. With the least inclination to be well, we should not be sick. Men have discovered — or think they have discovered — the salutariness of a few wild things only, and not of all nature. Why, "nature" is but another name for health, and the seasons are but different states of health. Some men think that they are not well in spring, or summer, or autumn, or winter; it is only because they are not *well* in them.¹

How handsome now the cymes of *Viburnum Lentago* berries, flattish with red cheeks! The great bidens is only partially out, by the side of the brook that comes out of Deacon Farrar's Swamp and runs under the causeway east of the Corner Bridge. The flowers are all turned toward the westering sun and are two to two and a half or more inches in diameter, like sun-flowers, hieroglyphics of the seasons, only to be read by the priests of Nature. I go there as to one of autumn's favorite haunts. Most poems, like the fruits, are sweetest toward the blossom end. The milkweed leaves are already yellowing. The clematis is most interesting in its present feathery state, — light, silvery, shining green. A solidago some time out, say a week, on side of Mt. Misery, like the *S. alta*, but smooth-stemmed and commonly dark-purplish. Call it *ulmifolia* for the present, though the leaves are not so broad as the elm nearly and it is not there in low ground. Looking

¹ [See *Walden*, pp. 153, 154; Riv. 216, 217.]

down the river valley now from Mt. Misery, an hour before sundown, I am struck with nothing so much as the autumnal coolness of the landscape and the predominance of shade. The pale yellowish-green side-saddle-flower, probably the var. *heterophylla*, is common enough in our meadows. A sweet-william pink at bottom of Wheildon's field. I find the pods of the amphicarpea at last. It may have blossomed three weeks ago.

Aug. 24. Another cool, autumn-like morning, also quite foggy. Rains a little in the forenoon and cloudy the rest of the day.

P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook via Trillium Woods.

A cool breeze blows this cloudy afternoon, and I wear a thicker coat.

The mulgedium by railroad is seven feet high, with great panicles of a regular, somewhat elliptic-lanceolate (?) form, two and a half feet long by ten inches. The *Prinos laevigatus* berries begin to redden. The farmers are beginning to clear out their ditches now.

Blue-stemmed goldenrod, apparently a few days in some places. The goldenrods which I have observed in bloom this year are (I do not remember the order exactly): (1) *stricta*, (2) *lanccolata*, (3) *arguta* (?), (4) *nemorialis*, (5) *bicolor*, (6) *odora*, (7) *altissima*, (8) *ulmifolia* (?), (9) *casia*. The 4th is the prevailing one and much the most abundant now. The 1st perhaps next, though it may be getting old. The *altissima* (7th) certainly next. It is just beginning to be abundant. Its tops a foot or more broad, with numerous recurved racemes on every

side, with yellow and yellowing triangular points. It is the most conspicuous of all. The *bicolor* (5th) next, though not conspicuous. The 3d, 8th, 2d, and 6th perhaps never abundant. The *casia* (9th) just begun.

The asters and diplopappi are about in this order: (1) *Radula*, (2) *D. cornifolius* (?), (3) *A. corymbosus*,¹ (4) *patens*, (5) *lævis*, (6) *dumosus* (?), (7) *miser*, (8) *macrophyllus*, (9) *D. umbellatus*, (10) *A. acuminatus*, (11) *puniceus*. The *patens* (4), of various forms, some lilac, is the prevailing blue or bluish one now, middle-sized and very abundant on dry hillsides and by wood-paths; the *lævis* next. The 1st, or *Radula*, is not abundant. (These three are all the distinctly blue ones yet.) The *dumosus* is the prevailing white one, very abundant; *miser* mixed with it. *D. umbellatus* is conspicuous enough in some places (low grounds), and *A. puniceus* beginning to be so. But *D. cornifolius*, *A. corymbosus*, *macrophyllus*, and *acuminatus* are confined to particular localities. *Dumosus* and *patens* (and perhaps *lævis*, not common enough) are the prevailing asters now.

The common large osmunda (?) is already considerably imbrowned, but the odorous dicksonia (?), which, like most ferns, blossoms later, is quite fresh. This thin, flat, beautiful fern it is which I see green under the snow.² I am inclined to call it the lace fern. (Peaches fairly begun.) It is a triangular web of fine lace-work surpassing all the works of art.

Solidago latifolia not yet. I see roundish silvery slate-colored spots, surrounded by a light ring, near the base of the leaves of an aster (*miser* ?), one beneath

¹ Or *cordifolius*.

² [A mistake. See *postea*.]

another like the dropping of a bird, or as if some tincture had fallen from above. Some of the leaves of the *A. patens* are red. The alternate cornel berries, which are particularly apt to drop off early, are a dark, dull blue, not china-like. I see those of maple-leaved viburnum merely yellowish now. There grows by Saw Mill Brook a long firmer, thimble-shaped high blackberry with small grains, with more green ones still on it, which I think like the New Hampshire kind. I see some black and some greenish light slate-colored fungi. This certainly is the season for fungi. I see on the shrub oaks now caterpillars an inch and a half or more long, black with yellowish stripes, lying along the petioles, — thick living petioles. They have stripped off the leaves, leaving the acorns bare. The *Ambrina* (*Chenopodium*, Bigelow) *Botrys*, Jerusalem-oak, a worm-seed, by R. W. E.'s heater piece. The whole plant is densely branched — branches spike-like — and appears full of seed. Has a pleasant, more distinct wormwood-like odor. In a dry sprout-land (Ministerial Lot), what I will call *Solidago puberula*¹ will open in a day or two, — upright and similar to *stricta* in leaves, with a purple stem and smooth leaves, entire above, and a regular oblong appressed panicle. *Bidens chrysanthemoides*, of a small size and earlier, by Turnpike, now in prime there. I see cattle coming down from up-country. Why? Yellow Bethlehem-star still. *A. miser* (?), with purplish disk and elliptic-lanceolate leaves, serrate in middle, may be as early as *dumosus*.

¹ *Vide* Sept. 1st.

Aug. 25. Warmer to-day. Surveying Tuttle's farm. From the extreme eastern side of his farm, looking up the valley of the Mill Brook, in which direction it is about two miles to anything that can be called high ground (say at E. Wood's), I was surprised to see the whole outline and greater part of the base of Wachusett, though you stand in a low meadow. It is because of the great distance of the hills westward. It is a fuller view of this mountain than many of our hills afford. Seen through this lower stratum, the mountain is a very dark blue.

I am struck by the rank growth of weeds at this season. Passing over Tuttle's farm, only one field removed from the Turnpike, where various kinds of tall, rank weeds are rampant, half concealing the lusty crops, — low ground which has only been cultivated twice before, where turnips and algæ (?) contend for places, fire-weeds (*senecio*), thoroughwort, *Eupatorium purpureum*, and giant asters, etc., suggest a vigor in the soil, an Ohio fertility, which I was not prepared for, which on the sandy turnpike I had not suspected, — it seemed to me that I had not enough frequented and considered the products, perchance, of these fertile grounds which the farmers have enriched. He is continually selecting a virgin soil and adding the contents of his barn-yards to it.

Aug. 26. The fall dandelion is as conspicuous and abundant now in Tuttle's meadow as buttercups in the spring. It takes their place. Saw the comet in the west to-night. It made me think of those imperfect

white seeds in a watermelon, — an immature, ineffectual meteor.

Aug. 27. *Saturday*. P. M. — To Walden.

Topping corn now reveals the yellowing pumpkins. Dangle-berries very large in shady copses now; seem to love wet weather; have lost their bloom. *Aster undulatus*. The decurrent gnaphalium has not long shown yellow. Perhaps I made it blossom a little too early.

September is at hand; the first month (after the summer heat) with a *burr* to it, month of early frosts; but December will be tenfold rougher. January relents for a season at the time of its thaw, and hence that liquid *r* in its name.

Aug. 28. *Sunday*. P. M. — To Cliffs.

See many sparrows in *flocks* with a white feather in tail! The smooth sumach leaves are fast reddening. The berries of the dwarf sumach are not a brilliant crimson, but as yet, at least, a *dull* sort of dusty or mealy crimson. As they are later, so their leaves are more fresh and green than those of the smooth species. The acorns show now on the shrub oaks. A cool, white, autumnal evening.

Aug. 29. The 25th and 26th I was surveying Tuttle's farm. The northeast side bounds on the Mill Brook and its tributary and is very irregular. I find, after surveying accurately the windings of several brooks and of the river, that their meanders are not such regular serpentine

curves as is commonly supposed, or at least represented. They flow as much in a zigzag as serpentine manner. The eye is very much deceived when standing on the brink, and one who had only surveyed a brook so would be inclined to draw a succession of pretty regular serpentine curves. But, accurately plotted, the regularity disappears, and there are found to be many straight lines and sharp turns. I want no better proof of the inaccuracy of some maps than the regular curving meanders of the streams, made evidently by a sweep of the pen. No, the Meander no doubt flowed in a very crooked channel, but depend upon it, it was as much zigzag as serpentine. This last brook I observed was doubly zigzag, or compoundly zigzag; *i. e.*, there was a zigzag on a large scale including the lesser. To the eye this meadow is perfectly level. Probably all streams are (generally speaking) far more meandering in low and level and soft ground near their mouths, where they flow slowly, than in high and rugged ground which offers more obstacles. The meadow being so level for long distances, no doubt as high in one direction as another, how, I asked myself, did the feeble brook, with all its meandering, ever find its way to the distant lower end? What kind of instinct conducted it forward in the right direction? How unless it is the relict of a lake which once stood high over all these banks, and knew the different levels of its distant shores? How unless a flow which commenced above its level first wore its channel for it? Thus, in regard to most rivers, did not lakes first find their mouths for them, just as the tide now keeps open the mouths of

sluggish rivers? And who knows to what extent the sea originally channelled the submerged globe?

Walking down the street in the evening, I detect my neighbor's ripening grapes by the scent twenty rods off; though they are concealed behind his house, every passer knows of them. So, too, ever and anon I pass through a little region possessed by the fragrance of ripe apples.

Aug. 30. Tuesday. In low ground by Turnpike, a tall aster, *A. longifolius* (?), a day or two perhaps (*salicifolius* of Bigelow).¹ Saw some by river in the afternoon with sharply serrate leaves. I think that the very small and dense-flowered white or whitish aster by roadsides and riversides, with pointed scales and disk turning purplish-brown, with very many flowers on the sides of the branches or branchlets, must be *A. Tradescanti*, sometimes quite high. I have thus far confounded it with what I have called the *dumosus*, and am not sure which is the earliest. The latter has larger flowers, not so crowded, one at the end of each branchlet, and the scales more abruptly pointed.

11 A. M. — Up river to Fair Haven.

River one or two feet higher than in July. A very little wind from the south or southwest, but the water quite smooth at first. The river foliage is slightly crisped and imbrowned; I mean the black willows, button-bushes, and polygonums. The pads are for the most part eaten, decayed, and wasted away, — the white last the longest, — and the pontederias are already

¹ Abundant in Moore's Swamp, Aug. 31st.

mostly dry and blackened. Only three or four white lilies and pontederia blossoms left. The *Polygonum hydropiperoides* and the narrow-leaved and mikania are the prevailing conspicuous flowers. Others are the trumpet-weed, yellow lilies (*Kalmiana* drowned), cardinals (rather scarce), whorled utricularia, one purple one, *Polygonum amphibium*, etc. Bathed at Hubbard's Bend. The water now cold and bracing, for it has contrived to rain more or less all the month. Men raking cranberries in the meadows. Ivy berries are crisped and whitish on the rock at Bittern Cliff. The polygonatum berries are green with a bluish bloom. *Polygonum dumetorum*, apparently not long, very abundant in Tarbell's cleared swamp by roadside, also by Peter's Path, running up a tree eight or nine feet at this Cliff. Some of the river cornel berries are almost clear white on one side, the other china-blue. These and the *Viburnum Lentago* berries are now common and handsome.

The *Solidago odora* grows abundantly behind the Minott house in Lincoln. I collected a large bundle of it. Its flower is stale for the most part and imbrowned. It grows in such thick tufts that you can easily gather it. Some haws are now edible. Grapes are already ripe; I smelled them first. As I went along from the Minott house to the Bidens Brook, I was quite bewildered by the beauty and variety of the asters, now in their prime there, — *A. laevis* (large and handsome with various leaves), *patens*, *linariifolius*, etc. The bidens has not yet reached its greatest profusion. Why so many asters and goldenrods now? The sun has shone on the

earth, and the goldenrod is his fruit. The stars, too, have shone on it, and the asters are their fruit.

The purple balls of the carrion-flower, now open a little beneath, standing out on all sides six or eight inches from the twining stem, are very handsome. They are covered with a blue bloom, and when this is rubbed off by leaves, are a shining blackish.

Set sail homeward about an hour before sundown. The breeze blows me glibly across Fair Haven, the last dying gale of the day. No wonder men love to be sailors, to be blown about the world sitting at the helm, to shave the capes and see the islands disappear under their sterns, — gubernators to a piece of wood. It disposes to contemplation, and is to me instead of smoking.

Saw an *Aster undulatus* (?) with a very densely [?] flowered and branched top, small, pale purple. What is the *Solidago* like an *altissima* but a simple raceme and leaves much less cut? ¹ It is as early as *S. altissima*. *Galium circazans*, the broad-leaved, is now in fruit.

Nature made a highway from southwest to northeast through this town (not to say county), broad and beautiful, which attracted Indians to dwell upon it and settlers from England at last, ten rods wide and bordered by the most fertile soil in the town, a tract most abounding in vegetable and in animal life; yet, though it passes through the centre of the town, I have been upon it the livelong day and have not met a traveller. Out of twenty-odd hundred dwellers near its banks, not one has used this highway to-day for a distance of four miles at least.

¹ Probably a variety of same?

I find at this time in fruit: (1) *Polypodium vulgare*, (2) *Struthiopteris Germanica* (ostrich fern), (3) *Pteris aquilina* (common brake) (have not looked for fruit), (4) *Adiantum pedatum* (have not looked for fruit), (5) *Asplenium Trichomanes* (dwarf spleenwort), also (6) *A. ebeneum* (ebony spleenwort), (7) *Dicksonia punctilobula*, (8) *Dryopteris marginalis* (marginal shield fern), (9) *Polystichum acrostichoides* (terminal shield fern), (10) *Onoclea sensibilis* (?) (sensitive fern) (think I saw the fruit August 12th at Bittern Cliff), (11) *Lygodium palmatum* (probably still in fruit, was when I last saw it), (12) *Osmunda spectabilis* (flowering fern) (out of fruit), (13) *Osmunda cinnamomea* (?) (tall osmunda) (also out of fruit). Nos. 1, 5, 6, and 8 common at Lee's Cliff. No. 2 behind Trillium Woods, 4 at Miles Swamp, 9 at Brister's Hill. The dwarf spleenwort grows in the sharp angles of the rocks in the side of Lee's Cliff, its small fronds spreading in curved rays, its matted roots coming away in triangular masses, moulded by the rock. The ebony spleenwort stands upright against the rocks.

Aug. 31. P. M. — To Moore's Swamp.

Bidens cernua well out, the flowering one. The asters and goldenrods are now in their prime, I think. The rank growth of flowers (commonly called weeds) in this swamp now impresses me like a harvest of flowers. I am surprised at their luxuriance and profusion. The *Solidago altissima* is now the prevailing one, *i. e.* goldenrod, in low grounds where the swamp has been cleared. It occupies acres, densely rising as high as your head, with the great white umbel-like tops of the *Diplopappus*

umbellatus rising above it. There are also intermixed *Solidago stricta*, crechthites (fire-weed), *Aster puniceus* and *longifolius*, *Galium asprellum* in great beds, thoroughwort, trumpet-weed, *Polygonum Hydropiper*, *Epilobium molle*, etc., etc. There has been no such rank flowering up to this. One would think that all the poison that is in the earth and air must be extracted out of them by this rank vegetation. The ground is quite mildewy, it is so shaded by them, cellar-like.

Raspberries still fresh. I see the first dogwood turned scarlet in the swamp. Great black cymes of elderberries now bend down the bushes. Saw a great black spider an inch long, with each of his legs an inch and three quarters long, on the outside of a balloon-shaped web, within which were young and a great bag. *Viola pedata* out again. Leaves of *Hypericum mutilum* red about water. *Cirsium muticum*, in Moore's Swamp behind Indian field, going out of flower; *perhaps* out three weeks. Is that very dense-flowered small white aster with short branched racemes *A. Tradescanti*?—now begun to be conspicuous. A low aster by Brown's Ditch north of Sleepy Hollow like a *Radula*, but with narrower leaves and more numerous, and scales without herbaceous tips. An orange-colored fungus.

Baird, in Patent Office Report, says, "In all deer, except, perhaps, the reindeer, if the male be castrated when the horns are in a state of perfection, these will never be shed; if the operation be performed when the head is bare, they will never be reproduced; and if done when the secretion is going on, a stunted, ill-formed, permanent horn is the result."