

## V

APRIL, 1854

(ÆT. 36)

*April 1.* The tree sparrows, *hyemalis*, and song sparrows are particularly lively and musical in the yard this rainy and truly April day. The air rings with them. The robin now *begins* to sing sweet powerfully.

P. M. — Up Assabet to Dodge's Brook; thence to Farmer's.

April has begun like itself. It is warm and showery, while I sail away with a light southwest wind toward the Rock. Sometimes the sun seems just ready to burst out, yet I know it will not. The meadow is becoming bare. It resounds with the sprayey notes of black-birds. The birds sing this warm, showery day after a fortnight's cold (yesterday was wet too), with a universal burst and flood of melody. Great flocks of *hyemalis*, etc., pass overhead like schools of fishes in the water, many abreast. The white maple stamens are beginning to peep out from the wet and weather-beater buds. The earliest alders are just ready to bloom — to show their yellow — on the first decidedly warm and sunny day. The water is smooth at last and dark. Ice no longer forms on the oars. It is pleasant to paddle under the dripping hemlocks this dark day. They

make more of a wilderness impression than pines. The lines of sawdust from Barrett's mill at different heights on the steep, wet bank under the hemlocks rather enhance the impression of freshness and wildness, as if it were a new country. Saw a painted tortoise on the bottom. The bark of poplar boughs which have been held in the ice along the sides of the river the past winter is gnawed, probably by muskrats. Saw floating a good-sized rooster without a head, — the red stump sticking out, — probably killed by an owl. Heard a bird whose note was very much like that of the purple finch, — loud and clear. First *smelled* the muskrat. Yesterday and to-day I hear the cackle of the flicker, so agreeable from association. It brings the year about. From afar, on some blasted tree, it makes all the vale ring with [?] its swelling flicker (?). Saw, at Farmer's, his snow-grubs, — the same I had seen (*vide back*). Harris, in this week's *New England Farmer*, thinks, on comparing them with English plates, that they are the larvæ of one of the species of crane-fly (*Tipula*). I saw some still in F.'s pasture. Did they not come out from the roots of the grass prematurely in the winter, and so become food for birds? The ground in Farmer's garden was in some places whitened with the droppings of the snowbirds after seeds of weeds, — *F. hyemalis* and others. The *hyemalis* is in the largest flocks of any at this season. You see them come drifting over a rising ground just like snowflakes before a northeast wind.

I was surprised to see how Farmer's young pears,

three or four feet high, on quince stocks, had been broken down by the snow-drifts, — broken over and over, apparently the snow freezing them and then at last by its weight breaking them down.



I hear the jingle of the hyemalis from within the house, sounding like a trill.

*April 2.* P. M. — To Conantum *via* Nut Meadow Brook.

Saw black ducks in water and on land. Can see their light throats a great way with my glass. They do not dive, but dip. That liverwort<sup>1</sup> in the J. Hosmer ditch is now obvious. It has little green cups on its frond, with a fringed mouth; but I saw something similar but shorter and more orbicular yesterday, under the hemlock bank, with little black dots on it. The radical leaves of some plants appear to have started, look brighter. The shepherd's-purse (?), and plainly the skunk-cabbage. In the brook there is the least possible springing yet. A little yellow lily in the ditch and sweet flag *starting* in the brook. I was sitting on the rail over the brook, when I heard something which reminded me of the song of the robin in rainy days in past springs. Why is it that not the note itself, but something which reminds me of it, should affect me most? — the ideal instead of the actual.

At Lee's Cliff the red-stemmed moss. The slippery elm is about as forward as the common, with its rusty

<sup>1</sup> Marchantia?

buds. The saxifrage is the most springlike plant, methinks, yet.

The tree sparrows make the alders, etc., ring. They have a metallic chirp and a short canary-like warble. They keep company with the hyemalis.

*April 3.* Saw from window with glass seven ducks on meadow-water, — only one or two conspicuously white, — these, black heads, white throats and breasts and along sides, — the rest of the ducks, brownish, probably young males and females. Probably the golden-eye. Jardine says it is rare to see more than one full-plumaged male in a flock.

P. M. — To Cliffs by boat.

Did I see crow blackbirds with the red-wings and hear their harsher chattering?

The water has gone down so much that I have to steer carefully to avoid the thick hummocks left here and there on the meadow by the ice. I see the deep holes they were taken out of. A muskrat has just built a small cabin, — apparently a bushel of mouth-fuls on one. No clams up yet. I see a very little snow ice still, at a distance on the north sides of hills and walls. The wind is southeasterly. This is methinks the first hazy day, though not so warm as the 17th of March. The aspect of the woods reminds me of landscapes, and the sough of the wind in the pines sounds warmer, whispering of summer. I think I may say that Flint's broke up entirely on the first wet day after the cold spell, — *i. e.* the 31st of March, — though I have not been there lately. Fair Haven will last some days yet.

*April 4.* All day surveying a wood-lot in Acton for Abel Hosmer. He says that he has seen the small slate-colored hawk pursue and catch doves, *i. e.* the sharp-shinned. Has found some trouble in driving off a large slate-colored hawk from a hen in his yard, at which he pounced again close by him, — undoubtedly a goshawk. Has also noticed the butcher-bird catching other birds. Calls him the “mock-bird.” I observe that all the farmers have pretty much the same stories of this kind to tell. They will describe a large, bold slate-colored hawk (the goshawk) about here some two years ago, which caught some of their hens, and the like. The afternoon very pleasant.

*April 5.* This morning heard a familiar twittering over the house; looked up and saw white-bellied swallows. Another saw them yesterday.

Surveying all day for Mr. Hoar in Carlisle, near Hitchinson's and near I. [?] Green's.

See many hawks about yesterday and to-day, — marsh hawks and perhaps hen-hawks, these being pleasant days. It proved very pleasant and warm, and, while surveying in the woods with my greatcoat off, I heard a few stertorous sounds from the croaking frog. Also, as we rode along to Green's, we saw many of the large butterfly, dark with buff-edged wings, and also small reddish ones, in the dry sprout-lands. The same warm and pleasant weather brings them out to flutter along the roadside in sprout-lands, that does the hawks to sail along the meadow-side and over the wood. Saw the first frog by the roadside, — I believe a speckled,

*i. e. palustris*, — and, at the Green lot, heard the hyla. These days, when a soft west or southwest wind blows and it is truly warm, and an outside coat is oppressive, — these bring out the butterflies and the frogs, and the marsh hawks which prey on the last. Just so simple is every year. Whatever year it may be, I am surveying, perhaps, in the woods; I have taken off my outside coat, perhaps for the first time, and hung it on a tree; the zephyr is positively agreeable on my cheek; I am thinking what an elysian day it is, and how I seem always to be keeping the flocks of Admetus such days — that is my luck; when I hear a single, short, well-known stertorous croak from some pool half filled with dry leaves. You may see anything now — the buff-edged butterfly and many hawks — along the meadow; and hark! while I was writing down that field note, the shrill peep of the hylodes was borne to me from afar through the woods.

I rode with my employer a dozen miles to-day, keeping a profound silence almost all the way as the most simple and natural course. I treated him simply as if he had bronchitis and could not speak, just as I would a sick man, a crazy man, or an idiot. The disease was only an unconquerable stiffness in a well-meaning and sensible man.

Begin to look off hills, and see the landscape again through a slight haze, with warm wind on the cheek.

*April 6.* P. M. — Up Assabet.

A still warmer day than yesterday — a warm, moist rain-smelling west wind. I am surprised [to] find so

much of the white maples already out. The light-colored stamens show to some rods. Probably they began as early as day before yesterday. They resound with the hum of honey-bees, heard a dozen rods off, and you see thousands of them about the flowers against the sky. They know where to look for the white maple and when. This susurrus carries me forward some months toward summer. I was reminded *before* of those still warm summer noons when the breams' nests are left dry, and the fishes retreat from the shallows into the cooler depths, and the cows stand up to their bellies in the river. The reminiscence came over me like a summer's dream. The alders, both kinds, just above the hemlocks, have just begun to shed their pollen. They are hardly as forward as the white maples, but these are not in so warm a position as some. I am in doubt which (alder or maple) may be earliest this year. Have not looked so closely as last year. In clearing out the Assabet Spring, disturbed two small speckled (*palustris*) frogs just beginning to move. Saw flying over what I at first thought a gull, then a fish hawk. Heard the snipe over the meadows this evening; probably to be heard for a night or two; sounds on different days as if approaching or receding; — over the meadows recently become bare.

*April 7.* 6 A. M. — Down railroad to Cliffs.

The *Populus tremuloides* in a day or two. The hazel stigmas are well out and the catkins loose, but no pollen shed yet. On the Cliff I find, after long and careful search, one sedge above the rocks, low amid the with-

ered blades of last year, out, its little yellow beard amid the dry blades and few green ones, — the first *herbaceous* flowering I have detected. Fair Haven is completely open. It must have been so first either on the 5th or 6th.

*April 8. Saturday.* 6 A. M. — To Clamshell Hill.

Am surprised to find the skunk-cabbage out, shedding pollen (a few). This was probably the case in some places on the 5th and 6th. There has been very little growth visible in its spathes for a month. Its spring seems to be in the fall partly. This spring it has suffered more than usual, owing to the severe cold of the last half of March. Did I see a grass finch? Cheney's elm begins to show stamens. That remarkably warm first half of March appears to have advanced the plants very much, and as soon as the cold last half was past they burst out almost together. Spearers' lights two or three nights past.

P. M. — To Lee's Cliff *via* Clamshell.

Methinks I do not see such great and lively flocks of hyemalis and tree sparrows in the morning since the warm days, the 4th, 5th, and 6th. Perchance after the warmer days, which bring out the frogs and butterflies, the alders and maples, the greater part of them leave for the north and give place to newcomers.

At the Lyceum the other night I felt that the lecturer had chosen a theme too foreign to himself and so failed to interest me as much as formerly. He described things not in or near to his heart, but toward his ex-

tremities and superficialities. The poet deals with his privatest experience. There was no *central* nor centralizing thought in the lecture.

Some southward banks and hillsides are now considerably tinged with green, not observed at a distance. I see the celandine and catnep (?) beginning to look green along the graveyard fence. The stigmas of the hazels (beyond Clamshell) are a splendid crimson star when brought between me and the light. I cannot find any of their catkins shedding pollen yet, but they may to-morrow. On the 5th saw a man sowing rye. Heard a prolonged dream from frog (?) in the river meadow; or was it a toad? <sup>1</sup> See black ducks and hear their hoarse quacking. They commonly rise sixty rods off. They feed as often on the land as in the water, and look as clumsy there as the tame do. At Nut Meadow Brook saw, or rather heard, a muskrat plunge into the brook before me, and saw him endeavoring in vain to bury himself in the sandy bottom, looking like an amphibious animal. I stooped and, taking him by his tail, which projected, tossed him ashore. He did not lose the points of compass, but turned directly to the brook again, though it was toward me, and, plunging in, buried himself in the mud, and that was the last I saw of him. I see many yellow-spot tortoises to-day, — some of them quite rusty-looking. The alders are pretty generally [*sic*]; they are either yellowish, greenish, or reddish. At Heart-leaf Pond the croaking frogs are in full blast. I saw many on the surface, — small, ferruginous or dark brown, bodies two inches long, spread

<sup>1</sup> [Doubtless a toad. See *postea*.]

out on the surface and from time to time swimming about and toward each other, or diving. Most utter a short croak several times. Others use a peculiar squirming and nasal variation hard to imitate, somewhat like *er-wäh* (not broad *war* or *wor*) *er-wäh er-wäh er-wäh*, faster and faster, the nasal between the two syllables, something like *what what what what* spoken nasally. Then all will be silent. They have spells at it. Did I see their spawn? A turtle dove — went off with a slight whistling note. The willow near Miles's to-morrow or next day, *if fair*. That at the bridge equally early. The poplar catkins (*P. tremuloides*) on Conantum are beginning to curve downward, with their red anthers not yet open within the down, — mulberry-like. Apparently will open to-morrow, if warm; say the 10th. The polypody and marginal (?) shield fern and the spleenwort are evergreens at Lee's Cliff. The slippery elm, apparently in two or three days. Am surprised to find two crowfoot blossoms withered. They undoubtedly opened the 5th or 6th; say the last. They must be earlier here than at the Cliffs, where I have observed them the last two years. They are a little earlier than the saxifrage around them here, of which last I find one specimen at last, in a favorable angle of the rock, just opening. I have not allowed enough for the difference of localities. The columbine shows the most spring growth of any plant. What is that plant with narrow toothed leaves which has already shot up so straight four or five inches on the shelves of the rock? *Arabis lævigata*?

Saw a large bird sail along over the edge of Wheeler's

cranberry meadow just below Fair Haven, which I at first thought a gull, but with my glass found it was a hawk and had a perfectly white head and tail and broad or blackish wings. It sailed and circled along over the low cliff, and the crows dived at it in the field of my glass, and I saw it well, both above and beneath, as it turned, and then it passed off to hover over the Cliffs at a greater height. It was undoubtedly a white-headed eagle. It was to the eye but a large hawk.

Saw several yellow redpolls (*Sylvia petechia*) on the willows by the Hubbard Bridge. Am not sure I heard their note. May have mistaken it formerly for the pine warbler. Its chestnut crown would distinguish it.

Hazel, the very first male, open.

I find that I can criticise my composition best when I stand at a little distance from it, — when I do not see it, for instance. I make a little chapter of contents which enables me to recall it page by page to my mind, and judge it more impartially when my manuscript is out of the way. The distraction of surveying enables me rapidly to take new points of view. A day or two surveying is equal to a journey.

Pickereel have darted in shallows for nearly a week.

Some poets mature early and die young. Their fruits have a delicious flavor like strawberries, but do not keep till fall or winter. Others are slower in coming to their growth. Their fruits may be less delicious, but are a more lasting food and are so hardened by the sun of summer and the coolness of autumn that they keep sound over winter. The first are June-eatings, early

but soon withering; the last are russets, which last till June again.

*April 9.* I have not noticed any fox-colored sparrows for a week.<sup>1</sup> A large-catkined sallow (?) by the railroad, ten rods this side the jog on the west, *just* bursting out, with its pinkish-orange (before bursting) anthers. There is a little ice snow [*sic*] still under the north side of hills. Saw several more redpolls with their rich, glowing yellow breasts by the causeway sides. Saw a wren on the edge of Nathan Stow's wood and field, with some of the habits of a creeper, lurking along a fallen pine and birch, in and out in a restless manner with tail up, a snuff-colored bird with many white spots and a fine chirping note. Can it be the winter or the wood wren? Callitriche just started from bottom; pollywogs two inches long. Chrysosplenium out, — a few, — perhaps a day or two, where they rest just on the surface of the water. Cowslip in Hubbard's Close will open the first warm and sunny hour. Perhaps already at Second Division.<sup>2</sup> The skunk-cabbage leaves are unfolding at Brister's Hill edge, and a grass-like, groove-leaved plant three or four inches high. Nosing of skunks nowadays, and since frost out in spots. The beaked hazel stigmas out; put it just after the common. *Lycopodium lucidulum* is as green as ever.

I am surprised to find Walden completely open. When did it open? According to all accounts, it must have been between the 6th and 9th. Fair Haven must

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* 16th.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* 16th.

have opened entirely the 5th or 6th, and Walden very nearly at the same time. This proves how steadily it has been melting, notwithstanding the severe cold of the last half of March; *i. e.*, it is less affected by transient heat or cold than most ponds.

The flowers have blossomed very suddenly this year as soon as the long cold spell was over, and almost all together. As yet the landscape generally wears its November russet.

*April 10.* April rain. How sure a rain is to bring the tree sparrows into the yard, to sing sweetly, canary-like!

I bought me a spy-glass some weeks since. I buy but few things, and those not till long after I begin to want them, so that when I do get them I am prepared to make a perfect use of them and extract their whole sweet.

Saw a dead sucker yesterday.

P. M. — To Great Meadows by boat, and sail back.

There are many snipes now feeding in the meadows, which you come close upon, and then they go off with hoarse *cr-r-r-ack cr-r-r-ack*. They dive down suddenly from a considerable height sometimes when they alight. A boy fired at a blue-winged teal a week ago. A great many red-wings along the water's edge in the meadow. Some of these blackbirds quite black, and some *apparently larger* than the rest. Are they all red-wings? The crimson stigmas, like the hazel, of the white maple, generally by themselves, make handsome show.

*April 11.* A. M. — Heard the clear, rather loud and rich warble of a purple finch and saw him on an elm. Wilson says they feed on the coverings of the blossoms. It is a distinct and peculiar note, not to be confounded with anything before it. I suspect that I heard one on the 1st of April, *q. v.*

P. M. — Surveying in Lincoln.

Large ant-hills in the woods, but no ants.

Evening on river.

Fine full moon; river smooth. Hear a slight snoring of frogs on the bared meadows. Is it not the *R. palustris*? This the first moon to walk by.

*April 12. Wednesday.* Surveying for Parks in Lincoln.

A white frost this morning, after the clear moonlight.

Parks says he saw a buff-edged butterfly a month ago, *i. e.* before the 17th of March. The hazels are well out to-day, and their pollen yellows my clothes, it being a warm (off-coat) day. When I went to Mr. P.'s house at noon, he addressed me, "Now, what will you have to drink?" and soon appeared stirring a glass of gin for himself.

Waited at Lincoln depot an hour and a half. Heard the telegraph harp. I perceived distinctly that man melts at the sound of music, just like a rock exposed to a furnace heat. They need not have fabled that Orpheus moved the rocks and trees, for there is nothing more insensible than man; he sets the fashion to the rocks, and it is as surprising to see him melted, as when children see the lead begin to flow in a crucible.

I observe that it is when I have been intently, and it may be laboriously, at work, and am somewhat listless or abandoned after it, reposing, that the muse visits me, and I see or hear beauty. It is from out the shadow of my toil that I look into the light. The music of the spheres is but another name for the Vulcanic force. May not such a record as this be kept on one page of the Book of Life: "A man was melted to-day."

April 13. A clear and pleasant morning. Walked down as far as Moore's at 8 A. M. and returned along the hill. Heard the first chip-bird, sitting on an apple [tree], with its head up and bill open, jingling *tche-tche-tche-tche-tche*, etc., very fast. Hear them in various parts of the town. On the hill near Moore's hear the *F. junco*, — *phē-phē-phē-phē-phē*, *pher-phē-ē-ē-ē-ē-ē-ē-ē*. How sweet it sounds in a clear warm morning in a wood-side pasture amid the old corn-hills, or in sprout-lands, a [*sic*] clear and distinct, "like a spoon in a cup," the last part very fast and ringing. Hear the pine warbler also, and *think I see* a female red-wing flying with some males. Did I see a bay-wing? Heard a purple finch on an elm, like a faint robin.

P. M. — Sail to Bittern Cliff.

The surface of the water, toward the sun, reflecting the light with different degrees of brilliancy, is very exhilarating to look at. The red maple in a day or two. I begin to see the anthers in some buds. So much more of the scales of the buds is now uncovered that the tops of the swamps at a distance are reddened. A couple of large ducks, which, because they flew low

over the water and appeared *black* with a little white, I thought not black ducks, — possibly velvet or a merganser. The black ducks rise at once to a considerable height and often circle about to reconnoitre. The golden-brown tassels of the alder are very rich now. The poplar (*tremuloides*) by Miles's Swamp has been out — *the earliest catkins* — maybe two or three days. On the evening of the 5th the body of a man was found in the river between Fair Haven Pond and Lee's, much wasted. How these events disturb our associations and tarnish the landscape! It is a serious injury done to a stream. One or two crowfoots on Lee's Cliff, fully out, surprise me like a flame bursting from the russet ground. The saxifrage is pretty common, ahead of the crowfoot now, and its peduncles have shot up. The slippery elm is behind the common, which is fully out beside it. It will open apparently in about two days of pleasant weather.<sup>1</sup> I can see the anthers plainly in its great rusty, fusty globular buds. A small brown hawk with white on rump — I think too small for a marsh hawk — sailed low over the meadow.<sup>2</sup> Heard now, at 5.30 P.M., that faint bullfrog-like note from the meadows, — *er-er-er*. Many of the button-bushes have been broken off about eighteen inches above the present level of the water (which is rather low), apparently by the ice. Saw a piece of meadow, twelve feet in diameter, which had been dropped on the northwest side of Willow Bay on a bare shore, thickly set with button-bushes five feet high, per-

<sup>1</sup> 15th, sheds pollen in chamber. Say 18th. *Vide* 23d.

<sup>2</sup> May it have been a young male harrier?

fectly erect, which will no doubt flourish there this summer. Thus the transplanting of fluviatile plants is carried on on a very large and effective scale. Even in one year a considerable plantation will thus be made on what had been a bare shore, and its character changed. The meadow cannot be kept smooth.

The winter-rye fields quite green, contrasting with the russet.

Saw an old log, stripped of bark, either poplar or maple, four feet long, — its whole upper half covered with that handsome winkle-like fungus.<sup>1</sup> They are steel-colored and of a velvety appearance, somewhat semicircular, with concentric growths (?) of different shades, passing from quite black within through a slaty-blue to (at present) a buff edge.<sup>2</sup> Beneath cream-color. There are many minute ones a tenth of an inch in diameter, the shell-like leaf or ear springing from one side. The full-grown are sometimes united into one leaf for eight or nine inches in one level along the log, tier above tier, with a scalloped edge. They are handsomest when two or more are opposed, meeting at their bases, and make a concentric circle. They remind you of shells, also of butterflies. The great variety and regularity of the shading are very interesting. They spring from a slight base, rising by a narrow neck. They grow on stumps and other dead wood on land, even driftwood left high, just as some marine shells, their relatives, grow on driftwood. They

<sup>1</sup> *Auricularia*.

<sup>2</sup> Saw some the 16th wholly faded out to this color on an oak stump.

are a sort of dimple. Does not the whole at last fade out to the buff of the edge?

*April 14. Friday. 6 A. M. — To Nawshawtuct.*

There is a general tinge of green now discernible through the russet on the bared meadows and the hills, the green blades just peeping forth amid the withered ones. Can they be red-wings which I have seen for some time with the red-wings, — without red or buff? They have a split note, perhaps no *gurgle-ee!* There are spider-webs on the meadow lately bared. It is difficult to find the snipe, though you stand near where he alights. Saw yellow redpolls, on Cheney's elm, — a clear metallic chip and jerks of the tail.

*April 15. Morning. — Snow and snowing; four inches deep. Yesterday was very cold. Now, I trust, it will come down and out of the air. Many birds must be hard put to it. Some tree sparrows and song sparrows have got close up to the sill of the house on the south side, where there is a line of grass visible, for shelter. When Father came down this morning he found a sparrow squatting in a chair in the kitchen. Does n't know how it came there. I examined it a long time, but could not make it out. It was five or six inches long, with a somewhat finch-like bill (bluish-black above and light below); general aspect above pale brown, mottled with buffish and whitish; bay and a *little* black on the wings; the crown a faint bay, divided by an ashy line, with a broad ashy line over eye and a distinct bay or chestnut line from the angle of the*

mouth backward; legs *pale clear flesh-color*, feet *black*, claws slender; two *faint* whitish bars on wings (the tips of feathers); the breast ashy-white, with many dark or black spots edged with bay in chains; *no yellow* about it; a rounded tail, long and of a pretty uniform pale brown or bay, ashy on the inner vanes, but *no white nor black* in it; a rather slender bird. It made me *think* of the bay-wing and of the Savannah sparrow.

P. M. — This cold, moist, snowy day it is easier to see the birds and get near them. They are driven to the first bare ground that shows itself in the road, and the weather, etc., makes them more indifferent to your approach. The tree sparrows look much stouter and more chubby than usual, their feathers being puffed up and darker also, perhaps with wet. Also the robins and bluebirds are puffed up. I see the white under sides of many purple finches, busily and silently feeding on the elm blossoms within a few feet of me, and now and then their bloody heads and breasts. They utter a faint, clear chip. Their feathers are much ruffled. The yellow redpoll hops along the limbs within four or five feet of me.

Martins the 13th first. The arrival of the purple finches appears to be coincident with the blossoming of the elm, on whose blossom it feeds.

Johnson in his "Wonder-working Providence" speaks of "an army of caterpillars" in New England in 1649, so great "that the cart wheels in their passage were painted green with running over the great swarms of them."

April 16. A cold, disagreeable day, — sun not fairly out, — yet the snow of yesterday melts apace; you can almost see it melt. Each time I look out I see more of russet or green. At first the bare ground showed itself in the middle of the road and rapidly widened, giving the birds wider pasture; then the grass in the fields began to peep through and the landscape to acquire a russet hue again. The green blades under the south side of the houses and hills appear to have grown wonderfully since the snow fell, and to be several shades darker green.

P. M. — To epigæa.

Saw a fox-colored sparrow still and black ducks. There are four or five cowslips open at the Second Division Meadow, — first probably about the 11th. The buds of the shad-bush are much expanded and show considerable green or yellowish, — more than [any other] native shrub or tree that I think of.<sup>1</sup> The may-flower under the snow will not open for some days at least, — maybe a week. The winkle fungi are arranged either on the upper half of a prostrate log or one above another around a dead stump. Saw some to-day almost completely faded to a dark cream-color (or the buff of the edge of mine), though alternating with some faint steel-colored lines.

When I meet one of my neighbors these days who is ridiculously stately, being offended, I say in my mind: "Farewell! I will wait till you get your manners off. Why make politeness of so much consequence, when you are ready to assassinate with a word? I do not like

<sup>1</sup> Must be blossom-buds.

any better to be assassinated with a rapier than to be knocked down with a bludgeon. You are so grand that I cannot get within ten feet of you." Why will men so try to impose on one another? Why not be simple, and pass for what they are worth only? O such thin skins, such crockery, as I have to deal with! Do they not know that I can laugh? Some who have so much dignity that they cannot be contradicted! Perhaps somebody will introduce me one day, and then we may have some intercourse. I meet with several who cannot afford to be simple and true men, but personate, so to speak, their own ideal of themselves, trying to make the manners supply the place of the man. They are puffballs filled with dust and ashes.

*April 17.* Snows again.

It is remarkable how the American mind runs to statistics. Consider the number of meteorological observers and other annual phenomena. The Smithsonian Institution is a truly national institution. Every shopkeeper makes a record of the arrival of the first martin or bluebird to his box. Dod, the broker, told me last spring that he knew when the first bluebird came to his boxes, he made a memorandum of it: John Brown, merchant, tells me this morning that the martins first came to his box on the 13th, he "made a minute of it." Beside so many entries in their day-books and ledgers, they record these things.

Did not see a linaria the past winter, though they were the prevailing bird the winter before. There are

but few *F. hyemalis* about now; they appear to have gone north mostly on the advent of warmer weather about the 5th of April. I look up, these snowy days, and see purple finches silently feeding on the elms, when I have heard no sound. They sing somewhat like a robin, continuously, with a loud, canary-like *twee twee* and *che che che*. The tree sparrow is still the prevailing bird.

*April 18.* For three or four days the lilac buds have looked green, — the most advanced that I have seen. The earliest gooseberry still earlier in garden (though smaller buds).

P. M. — To stone-heaps by boat.

Scared up snipes on the meadow's edge, which go off with their strange zigzag, crazy flight and a distressed sound, — *craik craik* or *er-r-ack er-r-rack*. One booms now at 3 p. m. They circle round and round, and zigzag high over the meadow, and finally alight again, descending abruptly from that height. Was surprised to see a wagtail thrush, the golden-crowned,<sup>1</sup> at the Assabet Spring, which inquisitively followed me along the shore over the snow, hopping quite near. I should say this was the golden-crowned thrush without doubt, though I saw none of the gold, if this and several more which I saw had not kept close to the water. May possibly be the *aquaticus*. Have a jerk of the forked tail. The male yellow redpoll's breast and under parts are of a peculiarly splendid and lively yellow, — glowing. It is remarkable that they too are found about willows,

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* April 26. Probably hermit thrush.

etc., along the water. Saw another warbler<sup>1</sup> (*a*)<sup>2</sup> about the same size, in the same localities, — *somewhat* creeper-like, very restless, more like the Tennessee warbler than any, methinks. Light-slate or bluish-slate head and shoulders, yellowish backward, all white beneath, and a distinct white spot on the wing; a harsh grating note (?) (*b*?).<sup>3</sup> Saw two wood ducks probably; saw a white spot behind eyes; they went off with a shriller *eraiik* than the black ducks.

I now feel pretty sure that they were crow black-birds which I saw April 3d with the red-wings. They are stout fellows without any red epaulet, and go off with a hoarser *chuck chuck*, with rounded tail. They make that split singing, and, with the red-wing, feed along the water's edge. Heard a red-wing sing his *bobylee* in new wise, as if he tossed up a fourpence and it rattled on some counter in the air as it went up. Saw to-day a lesser blackbird, size of cowbird, *slaty-black*, on meadow edge. What was it?

The snow is sprinkled along the street with the large scales of buds from the trees; thus revealing what kind of *fall* is going on at this season.

April 19. Hear the tree sparrows at willow hedge-row this morning, — *ah ha ha yip yip yip yip*, or *twit-*

<sup>1</sup> Vide April 25.

<sup>2</sup> [This letter *a* and the *b* a few lines below are referred to on p. 220. The *b*, with the interrogation-point following it, was apparently inserted at a later date, and probably belongs only to the note described. Thoreau was perhaps uncertain at the time whether the note came from the bird he saw.]

<sup>3</sup> Vide April 25.

*ter twitter twe twe twe*, or *ah ha ha twitter twitter twe*, — very canary-like, yet clear, as if aspirated vowels alone, — no *t* or *r*.

Hear a pine warbler, — its note like the jingle of the *F. hyemalis*, — on an elm in the street.

Yesterday, as I was returning down the Assabet, paddling leisurely in the stern, the sun came out after two days of storm or luring weather and shone on the banks covered with snow. The water, which had been perfectly smooth all the afternoon, looked smoother yet, and I think that I never beheld so pure and refulgent a white as the upright snowy banks presented. Snow never looks so white in winter.

I had chosen to come to the river that afternoon, for there, the air being warm though the earth was covered with snow, there was least change. The few sparrows and warblers along the water's edge and on the twigs over the water seemed to forget the wintry prospect. I was surprised to find the river so full of sawdust from the pail-factory and Barrett's mill that I could not easily distinguish if the stone-heaps had been repaired. There was not a square three inches clear. And I saw the sawdust deposited by an eddy in one place on the bottom like a sand-bank a foot or more deep half a mile below the mill. That is a good stream to explore any summer weather, because the woods border it immediately and you can observe a greater variety of small birds. I can approach them more nearly in my boat than on foot. Melvin was inspecting his traps. From time to time masses of snow overhanging the water [fell] and floated saturated

down the stream. The calm, bright hour after the sun came out was very pleasant. I first saw the crescent of clear sky widening rapidly in the north-northwestern horizon, then the cheerful sunlight on hills and houses northward, and finally it shone out on the north bank and on myself and on the south shore; and one song sparrow, when he felt its influence, sang as if with a new influx of joy. How longed for by the birds! Farmer says that he saw a man catch a bluebird yesterday which was dying in the snow. As I watched the sparrow sitting in the cold shadow while the sun was already shining on the northern bank, I wondered that he did not at once fly to it, — ay, that he had not kept pace with the sun or fair weather from the first. But thus nature rules it, and these winged creatures wait to be shined on or shaded like ourselves. It was at this time, looking down the river, that I saw the two wood ducks sailing out from the shore in the smooth water, at first suspecting that they were tame. Birds are positively curious, — *e. g.* the thrush I saw that afternoon which hopped out to the end of the overhanging alders within a few feet to reconnoitre me and my boat.

This is the fifth day that the ground has been covered with snow. There first fell about four inches on the morning of the 15th. This had two thirds melted on the evening of the 16th. Then as much more fell on the 17th, with which to-night (evening of 19th) the ground is still more than half covered. There has been sleighing. I do not remember the like. The water was slightly skimmed over along the edge of the river this morning.

P. M. — To Cliffs.

The *Populus grandidentata* will not open for a day or two. There is considerable growth in the water at the Boiling Spring. The callitriche is most forward, a foot or more long, with its delicate or pretty cup-like whorls of leaves, floating on the surface. I see no signs of a blossom. What is that narrow tooth-leaved and red-stemmed plant which has grown nearly as much in the water? crosswise.<sup>1</sup> Then there is the cress next under way. Yet, on the whole, I think the columbine in the most favorable places about even with these. The latter have been less checked the last four or five days. I saw yesterday, at the bottom of the water, by the sides of the river, a *yellowish, half-unfolded* pad here and there. The green tinge from new-springing grass in the wet meadow as I looked low from my boat was much more obvious and springlike. I was struck the same day with the very rigid and sharp triangular points of a kind of sedge rising four or five inches above the water, perhaps that kind that makes the wreck in the fall. As if it were prepared to contend with the ice which forms in the night after it has started. That pretty little moss in beds on the rocks, etc., at the Cliffs shows its little reddish cup-like blossoms nowadays. A man was plowing in snow this morning. Saw a bullfrog in Hayden's pond-hole and a small green grasshopper. A turtle dove flew away from the birches and lit in his stubble-field, and each time when it flew I heard a note continuously uttered



<sup>1</sup> Veronica.

like a pigeon woodpecker or a robin at a distance. *Salix humilis* (?) out, — *i. e.* the *Salix* in Stow's field, — probably before the 15th; say 14th. The sweet-gale below Emerson's *to-day*, just out, — the male, with its amber dust.

I thought yesterday that the sparrows must rejoice to sit in the sun again and dry their feathers and feel its warmth. I read to-day that a boy found twenty-six bluebirds dead in a hollow tree on the 1st of April in Great Barrington. That was just after that long cold spell.

It is remarkable how scarce and silent the birds are even in a pleasant afternoon like this, compared with the morning. Within a few days the warblers have begun to come. They are of every hue. Nature made them to show her colors with. There are as many as there are colors and shades. In certain lights, as yesterday against the snow, nothing can be more splendid and celestial than the color of the bluebird. On the creeping juniper there appear to be buds, but not blossoms yet.

Do I ever see the marsh hawk?<sup>1</sup> Is it not the sharp-shinned which I have mistaken for it? A man came to me yesterday to offer me as a naturalist a two-headed calf which his cow had brought forth, but I felt nothing but disgust at the idea and began to ask myself what enormity I had committed to have such an offer made to me. I am not interested in mere phenomena, though it were the explosion of a planet, only as it may have lain in the experience of a human being.

<sup>1</sup> I think the early large hawk was it.

April 20. A. M. — To Nawshawtuct.

Heard on the 14th a singular note on or near the hill, like a guinea-hen or other fowl, or a squeaking pump-handle. Heard [it] again this morning, and saw two large dark birds go off from a walnut with a loud squeaking *quack*. Is it a strange large woodpecker? or possibly a teal? Heard the same at starlight, — *ker-chuck ker-chuck ker-chuck*. I think it is the red-wing only sings *bobylee*. Saw one pursuing a female (?). I am not sure whether these or the crow blackbirds are the earliest. Saw a small black-striped warbler or flycatcher (?) (e)<sup>1</sup> on a willow. Hear the *long-drawn* scold of a flicker, sounding very loud over the water.

P. M. — To Island and Hill.

A willow coming out fairly, with honey-bees humming on it, in a warm nook, — the most forward I have noticed, for the cold weather has held them in check. And now different kinds of bees and flies about them. What a sunny sight and summer sound! A striped snake on a warm, sunny bank. The painted tortoises are fairly out sunning to-day. A very pleasant and warm afternoon; the earth seems to be waking up. Frogs croak in the clear pools on the hillside where rocks have been taken out, and there is frog-spawn there, and little tadpoles are very lively in the sunny water.

I find some advantage in describing the experience of a day on the day following. At this distance it is more ideal, like the landscape seen with the head inverted, or reflections in water.

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 213.]

4 P. M. — To Moore's Swamp.

Red maple in a warm place shows anthers, and will open to-morrow if pleasant; say 22d. In the ditch in the Brown meadow, several yellow lily buds pushed up four or five inches. But water plants *on the whole* not decidedly ahead of land or air plants. The pine warbler on the oaks, running about somewhat creeper-like and now and then uttering a loud ringing *vetter vetter vetter vetter vetter vet* faster and faster, with its bright-yellow throat and forked tail.

At starlight by riverside a few faint stertorous sounds from the awakening meadow, and one or two faint bullfrogish notes, — *er-er-er*. The sound of the snipes, winnowing the evening air now at starlight, visible but for an instant high over the meadows, is heard far into the village, — *hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo*, rising higher and higher or dying away as they circle round, — a ghostly sound. Is that bittern-like squeak made by them? I do not mean the nighthawk-like squeak.

April 21. 6 A. M. — Heard the bay-wing sparrow<sup>1</sup> in the redeemed meadows. None yesterday morning. At a distance hear only the end of its strain, like the ring of a small piece of steel dropped on an anvil. A few *F. hyemalis* still about. Are not those little whorls of black pointed scales the female blossom of the *Thuja occidentalis*?

Scarcely an April shower yet.

How can a man be a wise man, if he does n't know

<sup>1</sup> ["Bay-wing" is crossed out in pencil, and "one of the seringos" written over it.]

any better how to live than other men? — if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a treadmill? Does Wisdom fail? or does she teach how to succeed by her example? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? Did Plato get his *living* in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries? Did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he merely prevail over them by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live because his aunt remembered him in her will?<sup>1</sup>

P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook.

As I was handling the arbor-vitæ to-day, an odor like strawberries came from [it]. Is that terebinthine? The lilac is beginning to open to-day. The snows go off and the lustre of the wintergreen is undiminished. The large black ants are at work on their hills. The great scalloped leaf betrays the *P. grandidentata*. How silent and deserted the woods are! I do not fairly see a chickadee even. Snow with its tracks would make it seem more inhabited. How we prize any redness on the ground! — a red stain in a stone or even a coxcomb lichen on a stump! The hellebore at the brook has shot up six or eight inches with its compact bundles and will soon catch the cabbage. It is *now* one of the most forward plants. That gooseberry at the brook is the most forward shrub or tree at present that I can find out of doors in Concord.<sup>2</sup> It shows more of a leaf than

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 462, 463; *Misc.*, Riv. 263.]

<sup>2</sup> [Later:] Excepting the spiræa. [Later still:] The thimble-berry in some places equally forward, and perhaps the honeysuckle vine.

the lilac or Missouri currant, which may come next. As I go up the hill beyond the brook, while the hylodes are heard behind, I perceive the faintest possible flower-like scent as from the earth, reminding me of anemones and houstonias. Can it be the budded mouse-cars under my feet? Downy-swaddled, they lie along flat to the earth like a child on its mother's bosom. I sit on a rock awhile just below the old trough. These are those early times when the rich golden-brown tassels of the alders tremble over the brooks — and not a leaf on their twigs. We are far north with Sir John Franklin. I see the first of that bent lake grass on the smooth surface of a flooded meadow, with a dimple at its stem. It is a warm sight. The fruit of the *O. spectabilis* (?), flowering fern, still perfect. I see on the red cedar the male blossom buds not yet quite open, and very minute hollows with whitish scales at the ends of some of the branchlets, which I take to be the female flowers.

The song of the purple finch on the elms (he also frequents firs and spruce) is rich and continuous, like, but fainter and more rapid than, that of a robin, — some of the *cherruwit* in it and a little of the warble of the martin. A martin was found dead the 18th after the snows, and many bluebirds in Brookfield.

*April 23.* A kingfisher with his *crack*, — *cr-r-r-rack*. Rain yesterday and to-day; yet this morning the robin sings and the blackbirds and, in the yard, the tree sparrow, hyemalis, and song sparrow. A rain is sure to bring the tree sparrow and hyemalis to the gardens.

I suppose it must be the seeds of weeds which they are so busily picking from the bare ground, which their sharp eyes detect. George Minott says that he used to shoot the red-headed woodpecker, and found their nests on the trees on his hillside. He used to steal up to the pigeon woodpeckers' holes and clap his hand over them and take out the old bird; then let her go.

The first April showers are even fuller of promise and a certain moist serenity than the sunny days. How thickly the green blades are starting up amid the russet! The tinge of green is gradually increasing in the face of the russet earth.

Now that the very earliest shrubs are beginning to unfold, — spiraea, gooseberry, honeysuckle vine, lilac, Missouri currant, — many herbaceous plants, not evergreen merely, make quite a show, as the skunk-cabbage in favorable places, nuphar in the *most favorable* places though muddy yellow and dilapidated, callitriche and the narrow tooth-leaved water plant, etc., etc., cowslip, columbine (cress and chrysosplenium, — are not both chiefly evergreen?), celandine, catnep, saxifrage, dandelion, clover, golden senecio, sweet flag, hellebore (the most forward buds begin to open), thistle, shepherd's-purse, meadow saxifrage, elder probably.

As for the birds, I have this to remark: The crows still frequent the meadows. The lark sings morning and evening. The blackbirds — red-wing and crow — have since their arrival kept up their *bobylee* and chattering and split notes on the willows and maples by the river and along the meadow's edge. They appear

to depend much (as well as crows and robins) on the meadow, just left bare, for their food. They are the noisiest birds yet. Both still fly in flocks, though the male red-wings have *begun* to chase the females. Robins still frequent the meadows in flocks and sing in the rain. The song sparrows not in such flocks nor singing so tumultuously along the watercourses in the morning as in the last half of March. How wary they are! They will dodge you for half an hour behind a wall or a twig, and only a stone will make them start, looking every which way in a minute. So the black-birds, both kinds, sidle till they bring a twig between me and them. The flock of black ducks which stayed by so long is now reduced to a quarter part their number. Before the 4th or 5th of April the *F. hyemalis* was apparently the most abundant bird of any, in great drifting flocks with their lively jingle, their light-colored bill against slate breasts; then, on the advent of warmer weather, the greater part departed. Have the fox sparrows gone also? I have not seen them of late. As for hawks, after the one or two larger (perhaps) hen-hawks in the winter and a smaller one in December (?), the first were *large* marsh (?) hawks on trees on the meadow edge or skimming along it; since which the eagle, the sharp-shinned, and the smaller brown and white-rumped over meadows, which may be the same, etc., etc. Have seen the black duck, golden-eye, merganser, blue(?) winged teal, wood duck. The golden-eye seems to have gone. Heard a nuthatch yesterday, April 22d. The tree sparrows are the prevailing bird on ground, and most numerous of any

for the past month except one while the *hyemalis*. They are a chubby little bird with a clear chestnut crown, a dark spot on the otherwise clear whitish breast, and two light bars on the wings. The pigeon woodpecker now scolds long and loud morning and evening. The snipes are still feeding on the meadows. The turtle dove darts solitary about as if lost, or it had lost its mate. The yellow redpoll, with a faint clear *chip*, is the commonest *yellow* bird on hills, etc., about water. The chip sparrow does not sing much in morning yet. New kinds of warblers have begun to come within a few days. I saw yesterday the smoke of the first burning of brush which I have noticed, though the leaves cannot be very dry yet.

P. M. — To Lee's Cliff on foot.

It has cleared up. At Ivy Bridge I see the honeybees entering the crypts of the skunk-cabbage, whose tips have been bitten by the frost and cold. The first sweet-gale, which opened a day or two ago on the sunny sides of brooks where the sun reached it above the bank, was an interesting sight, full of amber dust. Those are blossom, not leaf buds, so forward on the shad-bush. The myrtle-bird, — yellow-rumped warbler, — was not this warbler *c* of the 20th? — on the willows, alders, and the wall by Hubbard's Bridge, slate and white spotted with yellow. Its note is a *fine*, rapid, somewhat hissing or whistling *se se se se se ser riddler se*, somewhat like the common yellowbird's. The yellow redpolls are very common on the willows and alders and in the road near the bridge. They keep jerking their tails. I heard one male sing a jingle

like *che ve ve ve ve vè*, very fast, and accenting the last syllable. They are quite tame. I sit awhile on the lee side of Conant's Wood, in the sun, amid the dry oak leaves, and hear from time to time the *fine* ringing note of a pine warbler, which I do not see. It reminds me of former days and indescribable things. Swarms of those little fuzzy gnats now make a faint humming about the railing of the bridge. The bay-wing has a light ring at some distance around the eye. It is also too dark for my prisoner of the 15th.

Saw my white-headed eagle again, first at the same place, the outlet of Fair Haven Pond. It was a fine sight, he is mainly — *i. e.* his wings and body — so black against the sky, and they contrast so strongly with his white head and tail. He was first flying low over the water; then rose gradually and circled westward toward White Pond. Lying on the ground with my glass, I could watch him very easily, and by turns he gave me all possible views of himself. When I observed him edgewise I noticed that the tips of his wings curved upward slightly  the more, like a stereotyped  undulation. He rose very high at last, till I almost lost him in the clouds, circling or rather *looping* along west-



ward, high over river and wood and farm, effectually concealed in the sky. We who live this plodding life here below never know how many eagles fly over us.

They are concealed in the empyrean. I think I have got the worth of my glass now that it has revealed to me the white-headed eagle. Now I see him edgewise like a black ripple in the air, his white head still as ever turned to earth, and now he turns his under side to me, and I behold the full breadth of his broad black wings, somewhat ragged at the edges. I had first seen two white ducks far off just above the outlet of the pond, mistaking them for the foaming crest of a wave. These flew soon, perhaps scared by the eagle. I think they were a male and female red-breasted merganser (though I did [not] see the red of the breast), for I saw his *red bill*, and his head was not large with a crest like the golden-eye; very white on breast and sides, the female browner.<sup>1</sup> As ducks often do, they first flew directly and unhesitatingly up the stream, low over the water, for half a mile, then turned and came down, flying thirty or forty feet above the water, the male leading till they were out of sight. This is the way with them, I notice; they first fly in one direction and then go off to alight in another. When they came down the river, the male leading, they were a very good example of the peculiar flight of ducks. They appeared perfectly in a line one behind the other. When they are not they preserve perfect parallelism. This is because of their long necks and feet, — the wings appearing to be attached midway, — and moreover, in this case, of their perfectly level flight, as if learned from skimming over the water. Directly after rose two blue herons from the meadow.

I find but one red maple fairly in blossom on a few

<sup>1</sup> Certainly mergansers, probably sheldrakes.

twigs over the water to-day. I think, therefore, the 22d will do for the very earliest. Had a glimpse of a very small warbler (*b'*) on a pitch pine, and heard a pleasant and unusual whistle from him.<sup>1</sup> The slippery elm, with its dull-pinkish (?) blossoms now fully out. I think on account of the snow it could not have opened before the 18th. The sedge was abundant long before the crowfoot or saxifrage was. It must be put earlier than I have allowed. Crowfoot is not yet abundant, though it was earlier than saxifrage, which has now gone ahead. A thimble-berry under this cliff is at least as forward as any gooseberry. I find a new plant, now six or eight inches high, and which will blossom in two or three days, the *Arabis larrigata* (?).<sup>2</sup> The columbine is well budded. Some alders are still handsome. Here is a *common* one, — very handsome drooping clusters of three, four, or five reddish-brown and greenish-yellow catkins, two to three inches long, with the small reddish female blossoms stretched over them. How the hazel catkins elongate themselves at last!

April 24. Monday. A. M. — Up railroad.

The river slightly risen again owing to rain of yesterday morn and day before. Its greatest height this year was the 17th of March. This is the next rise of any consequence. As I stand still listening on the frosty sleepers at Wood's crossing by the lupines, I hear the loud and distinct *pump-a-gor* of a stake-driver. Thus he announces himself. I find the shepherd's-purse open in Cheney's garden at last. It has run up eight or

<sup>1</sup> Was it *b* of the 18th? Vide April 25.

<sup>2</sup> Vide May 1st.

ten inches in some places, and *may* have been open a week; but say just after the snow, or the 19th. After a very mild winter, like that of '52 and '53, it will be one of the very earliest flowers, — say second, or next after the chickweed, — but last winter it was killed down by the cold. Yet it is hardier and more forward now than the chickweed, which is still dead and bleached. Saw a black blackbird without red, with a purplish-green-black neck, and somewhat less than a red-wing, in company with two smaller slaty-black females (?). Can they be rusty grackles?<sup>1</sup>

P. M. — Up Assabet, and thence to Cedar Swamp.

The larch will apparently blossom in [one] or two days at least, both its low and broad purple-coned male flowers and its purple-tipped female cones.<sup>2</sup> Its little leaf-bundles are beginning to burst. Heard amid the white cedars the fine, clear singing warbler of yesterday, whose harsh note I *may* have heard the 18th, — *twer er te te, twer er te te, twer er te te t'er*, but very clear and fast. Go to new trees, like cedars and firs, and you hear new birds. They increase the strangeness. Also other strange plants are found there. I have also observed that the early birds are about the early trees, like maples, alders, willows, elms, etc.

The white cedar female blossoms are open, and as the brown male ones are loosened the next day in the house, I think the 25th may be called their first day. I find a raspberry (thickly clothed with bristles) in this swamp, as early as the thimble-berry. This, then,

<sup>1</sup> Vide May 9th.

<sup>2</sup> Vide May 1st.

might be put after the gooseberry among native plants, because this is not so much indebted to a favorable position, — the gooseberry not at all, — growing in a sheltered, *i. e.* covered, swamp. New plant<sup>1</sup> flower-budded at Cedar Swamp amid the high blueberry, paniced andromeda, clethra, etc., etc., — upright dense racemes of reddish flower-buds on reddish terminal shoots.

Saw a large thin whitish fungus or spunk, fourteen and three quarters inches by eight and a half from the tree and two or three thick, with concentric growths of various thickness, within a foot of the ground on a maple stump. There was a grape-vine and some other small plants grown directly through, which it had apparently grown round. The first red maple blossoms — so very red over the water — are very interesting. Saw a very *large* hawk, slaty above and white beneath, low over river. Was it not a goshawk? The kingfisher flies with a *crack cr-r-r-ack* and a limping or flitting flight from tree to tree before us, and finally, after a third of a mile, circles round to our rear. He sits rather low over the water. Now that he has come I suppose that the fishes on which he preys rise within reach. Are not they bank swallows<sup>2</sup> sailing so thick over the river, now at 5.30 P. M.?

April 25. A. M. — I think I hear near George Heywood's the *tull-lull* (?).<sup>3</sup> Heard and saw my warbler (?) *b'*<sup>4</sup> of the 23d and 24th on Mr. Emerson's

<sup>1</sup> Racemed andromeda.

<sup>2</sup> [Barn swallows.] *Vide* 29th.

<sup>3</sup> Yes.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* [p. 220].

pinces. It is the smallest bird I have seen this year. Sits still amid the pines not far below the top and sings very sweetly, loud and clear, and seems further off than it is, beginning first with very *fine* wiry notes and then increasing in volume and melody till it ends with *tweeter tweeter tweeter ter twe*. Some of it a martin-like warble. Has sometimes a harsh scolding note. It is all light, perhaps ashy-white, beneath; has a little narrow forked tail; ashy (?) under wings, which are considerably shorter than tail; and light above and below eye; perhaps a whitish bar on wings; olivaceous (?) above. I think it may be the *golden-crested wren*, though I hardly saw the upper parts, or *possibly* the small blue-gray flycatcher. I do not find the *male* blossoms of the red cedar open yet.

P. M. — To Indian Cedar Hill.

Quite warm and the frogs are snoring on the meadow. I swelter under my greatcoat. The *Populus grandidentata* is fairly begun; say very first the 23d. Many shad-flies in the air and alighting on my clothes. The summer approaches by almost insensibly increasing *lieferungs* of heat, each awakening some new bird or quadruped or reptile. At first we were compelled to take off our mittens, then to unbutton our greatcoat, and now, perhaps, to take it off occasionally (I have not left it at home yet), and wear thin boots. For some time we have done with little fire, nowadays let it go out in the afternoon. (To-day, 26th, I sit without any.) Each creature awaits with confidence its proper degree of heat. I think I saw a pigeon

yesterday. G. Minott says that he saw some a week ago.

Saw a golden-crested wren<sup>1</sup> in the woods near Goose Pond. (This must be my warblers *a* and *b* of April 18th, *b'* of April 23d and 24th.) It sounded far off and like an imitation of a robin,<sup>2</sup> — a long strain and often repeated. I was quite near it before I was aware of it, it sounding still like a faint imitation of a robin. Some chickadees and yellow redpolls were first apparent, then my wren on the pitch pines and young oaks. He appeared curious to observe me. A very interesting and active little fellow, darting about amid the tree-tops, and his song quite remarkable and rich and loud for his size. Begins with a very fine note, before its pipes are filled, not audible at a little distance, then *woriter weter*, etc., etc., winding up with *teter teter*, all clear and round.<sup>3</sup> This was at 4 P. M., when most birds do not sing. I saw it yesterday, pluming itself and stretching its little wings. Our smallest bird, methinks, except the hummingbird. The snuff-colored, white-spotted wren I saw some time ago was considerably larger.

Just before this saw on the low bushes, — shrub oaks, etc., — by path, a large sparrow with ferruginous-brown and white-barrèd wings, — the white-throated sparrow, — uttered a faint ringing chirp. The first partridge drums in one or two places, as if the earth's pulse now beat audibly with the increased flow of life.

<sup>1</sup> ["Golden" crossed out in pencil and "ruby" substituted.]

<sup>2</sup> And of a golden robin, which later I often mistook for him.

<sup>3</sup> His song is comical and reminds me of the thrasher.

It slightly flutters all Nature and makes her heart palpitate. Also, as I stand listening for the wren, and sweltering in my greatcoat, I hear the woods filled with the hum of insects, as if my hearing were affected; and thus the summer's quire begins. The silent spaces have begun to be filled with notes of birds and insects and the peep and croak and snore of frogs, even as living green blades are everywhere pushing up amid the sere ones. I heard that same snoring which I hear on the river meadows, on an inland meadow this afternoon, where I think no bullfrogs are. Are they not then the *palustris*, or else the shad frog? There are now many new insects in the air. Black ducks still on Flint's. The fertile fruit-stems of the sensitive fern by the side of the Flint's Pond path, more than a foot high, are a rich ornament to the ground, — brown, four or five inches long, and turned to one side, contrasting with the lighter rachis (?). Saw my thrush of the 18th by the pond. It appears dark-olive, ferruginous on rump and tail, with a dark streak slanting from each cheek and flesh-colored legs. The red cedar has fairly begun to-day; maybe the first yesterday. Put the red yesterday and the white to-day. As I approach the red cedars now, I perceive a delicious strawberry-like fragrance in the air, like that from the arbor-vitæ. The creeping juniper apparently open, but not yet open. Though I see some amber on the sweet-fern, I am in doubt whether to say to-day or to-morrow. The wild red cherry (if that is one near Everett's), privet, and buckthorn are *beginning* to leaf out. The abele will probably blossom to-morrow.

*April 26.* Heard at 8 A. M. the peculiar loud and distinct ring of the first toad, at a distance. April-morning weather, threatening showeriness.

2.30 P. M. — To Lee's Cliff on foot.

A still, warm, overcast day with a southwest wind (this is what the Indians made so much of), and the finest possible dew-like rain in the air from time to time, now more of the sun. It is now so warm that I go back to leave my greatcoat for the first time, and the cooler smell of possible rain is refreshing. The toads ring more or less.

When the toads begin to ring,  
Then thinner clothing bring,  
Or off your greatcoat fling.

It is not yet time for thin clothes. Did I hear a tree-toad to-day? As I go over Hubbard's land I see A. Wheeler burning brush, clearing up on Fair Haven. Great volumes or clouds of white smoke are blown gently northeastward, while the bright-scarlet flame is seen here and there creeping along its edge. They begin to burn on the lee side. The farmers are now busily plowing, *some* setting out roots and planting. I seem to perceive a slight fragrance in the air.

Found part of a bird's head and bill, — I think that of the thrush I saw on the 18th and yesterday. The bill (with notch) and what part of the head is left are exactly like the hermit thrush in F. Brown's collection, except that mine is yellow inside bill (but his has probably faded); and I see that the latter's legs, which W. calls dusky, are light enough for my bird, and the colors above — olivaceous, and foxy rump

and tail — are the same, but the hermit thrush's spots on breast appear darker. I think I have seen or heard of more dead birds than usual this season, — read of bluebirds, heard of a martin (both killed by cold), also seen a dead robin or two and this thrush.

The woods are full of myrtle-birds this afternoon, more common and commonly heard than any, especially along the edge of woods on oaks, etc., — their note an oft-repeated fine jingle, a *che' che, che' che, che' che*, or a *tweedle tweedle tweedle tweedle-twe*. As I heard the *tull lull* from the same quarter from time to time, I think it came from it. Perhaps it may be written, a *tea le, tea le, tea le*. These small birds — and all small birds — seen against the sky at a little distance look black. There is not breadth enough to their colors to make any impression; they are mere motes, intercepting the light, the substance of a shadow.

Birds sing all day when it is warm, still, and overcast as now, much more than in clear weather, and the hyla too is heard, as at evening. The hylodes commonly begins early in the afternoon, and its quire increases till evening. I hear now snipes far over the meadow incessantly at 3.15 P. M. The men bogging in the meadow do not hear them, and much else.

The swamp sparrow, very dark, with chestnut and black, and quirk of the tail, flits shyly under the alders along the causeway; hides or lurks behind the trunks like song sparrow and hardly rests a moment in one place.

The lark on the top of an apple tree sings a *tchea te*

*che*, then perhaps *tehe tehea*, only a plaintive clear round note. Hear the first chewink hopping and chewinking among the shrub oaks.

To-day the air is full of birds; they attend the opening of the buds. The trees *begin* to leaf, and the leaf-like wings of birds are in the air. The buds start, then the insects, then the birds. Saw probably a pigeon hawk skim straight and low over field and wood, and another the next day apparently dark slate-color. It is warm and still, almost sultry, as if there might be a thunder-shower before night. Now look down on Fair Haven. How pleasant in spring a still, overcast, warm day like this, when the water is smooth! The sweet-gale in blossom, forming islets surrounded by water, on the meadow, looks like sere brown leaves left on. At the Cliff the *Arabis lewigata*<sup>1</sup> is just out to-day; the honeysuckle will be, say, the very earliest, to-morrow.<sup>2</sup> A barberry bush quite forwardly leafing under the rock, and a young apple. The early gooseberry quite green.

9 P. M. — Quite a heavy thunder-shower, — the second lightning, I think.

The vivid lightning, as I walk the street, reveals the contrast between day and night. The rising cloud in the west makes it very dark and difficult to find my way, when there comes a flash which lights up the street for a moment almost as brightly as the day, far more so than moonlight, and I see a person on the sidewalk before me fifty rods off.

<sup>1</sup> Probably *T. stricta*.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* May 1st.

April 27. 7 A. M. — To Cliffs.

*Equisetum arvense* on the railroad; and may have been two or three days — did not look. I am at length convinced of the increased freshness (green or yellow) of the willow bark in the spring. Some a clear yellow, others a delightful liquid green. The bark peels well now; how long? The rain of last night is helping to bring down the oak leaves. The wood thrush afar, — so superior a strain to that of other birds. I was doubting if it would affect me as of yore, but it did measurably. I did not believe there could be such differences. This is the gospel according to the wood thrush. He makes a sabbath out of a week-day. I could go to hear him, could buy a pew in his church. Did he ever practice pulpit eloquence? He is right on the slavery question. The brown thrasher, too, is along. I find a thread-like stamen now between the nutlets of the callitriche — probably three or four days. Some creature appears to have eaten this plant. The yellow redpolls still numerous; sing *chill lill lill lill lill lill*. The meadow-sweet and sweet-fern are *beginning* to leaf, and the currant in garden.

Stood on Cliffs about 7 A. M. Through a warm mistiness I see the waters with their reflections in the morning sun, while the wood thrush and huckleberry-bird, etc., are heard, — an unprofaned hour. I hear the black and white creeper's note, — *seeser seeser seeser se*.<sup>1</sup> What a shy fellow my hermit thrush!<sup>2</sup> I hear the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* May 1st.

<sup>2</sup> [Probably it was the hermit thrush, not the wood thrush, for which the date is too early, whose song he had been praising.]

beat of a partridge and the spring hoot of an owl, now at 7 A. M. Hear a faint sort of oven-bird's (?) note.

It is only the irresolute and idle who have no leisure for their proper pursuit. Be preoccupied with this, devoted to it, and no accident can befall you, no idle engagements distract you. No man ever had the opportunity to postpone a high calling to a disagreeable *duty*. Misfortunes occur only when a man is false to his Genius. You cannot hear music and noise at the same time. We avoid all the calamities that may occur in a lower sphere by abiding perpetually in a higher. Most men are engaged in business the greater part of their lives, because the soul abhors a vacuum, and they have not discovered any continuous employment for man's nobler faculties. Accordingly they do not pine, because they are not greatly disappointed. A little relaxation in your exertion, a little idleness, will let in sickness and death into your own body, or your family and their attendant duties and distractions. Every human being is the artificer of his own fate in these respects. The well have no time to be sick. Events, circumstances, etc., have their origin in ourselves. They spring from seeds which we have sown. Though I may call it a European War, it is only a phase or trait in my biography that I wot of. The most foreign scrap of news which the journals report to me — from Turkey or Japan — is but a hue of my inmost thought.

Forbes says that the guides who crossed the Alps with him lost the skin of their faces, — apparently from the reflection from the snow.

It is remarkable that the rise and fall of Walden,

though unsteady, and whether periodical or merely occasional, are not completed but after many years. I have observed one rise and part of two falls. It attains its maximum slowly and surely, though unsteadily. It is remarkable that this fluctuation, whether periodical or not, requires many years for its accomplishment, and I expect that a dozen or fifteen years hence it will again be as low as I have ever known it.<sup>1</sup>

The *Salix alba* begins to leaf, and the catkins are three quarters of an inch long. The balm-of-Gilead is in bloom, about one and a half or two inches long, and some hang down straight. Quite warm to-day. In the afternoon the wind changed to east, and apparently the cool air from the sea condensed the vapor in our atmosphere, making us think it would rain every moment; but it did not till midnight.

*April 28.* 6 A. M. — Dug up two of half a dozen, the only black spruce suitable to transplant that I know hereabouts.

Rain all day, making the grass look green.

Nawshawtuct now in the rain looks about as green as a Roxbury russet; *i. e.*, the russet is yielding to the green. Perhaps the greenness of the landscape may be said to begin fairly now. For the last half of this month, indeed, a tinge of green has been discernible on the sides of hills. Saw yesterday some cows turned out to pasture on such a hillside; thought they would soon eat up all the grass. This is coincident, then, with the leafing of the gooseberry, or earliest native shrub.

<sup>1</sup> [*Walden*, p. 201; Riv. 283, 284.]

First, you may say, is the starting of a few radical leaves, etc., and grass blades in favorable localities, and the blossoming of the earliest trees and herbs.

Secondly, during the last half of April the earth acquires a distinct tinge of green, which finally prevails over the russet.

Third. Then begins the leafing of the earliest shrubs and trees and the decided greenness and floweriness of the earth, in May.

Fourth. Then the decided leafiness in June and the first great crop of the year, the leaf or grass crop.

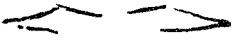
April 29. The ideal of a market is a place where all things are bought and sold. At an agricultural meeting in New York the other day, one said that he had lately heard a man inquiring for spurry seed; he wanted it to sow on drifting sand. His presumption had been that if he wanted it, *i. e.*, if there was a demand, there was a supply to satisfy that demand. He went simply to the shop instead of going to the weed itself. But the supply does not anticipate the demand.

This is the second day of rain, and the river has risen about as high as any time this year.

P. M. — To Cliffs by boat in the misty rain.

The barn swallows are very numerous, flying low over the water in the rain. I think that those which I saw on the 24th were barn and not bank swallows. What an entertainment this river affords! It is subject to so great overflows, owing to its broad intervals, that a day's rain produces a new landscape. Let it rain *heavily* one whole day, and the river will be in-

creased from half a dozen rods in width to nearly a mile in some places, and, where I walked dry-shod yesterday a-maying, I sail with a smacking breeze to-day, and fancy that I am a sailor on the ocean. It is an advantage which all towns do not possess. Off the Cliffs, I met a blue heron flying slowly downstream. He flaps slowly and heavily, his long, level, straight and sharp bill projecting forward, then his keel-like neck doubled up, and finally his legs thrust out straight behind.

His wings, as I looked after him, presented this outline:  He alighted on a rock, and stood  erect awhile.

I am surprised to find a few andromedas out, just behind the alders at the oak on Cardinal Shore. Possibly yesterday the very first, though it rained. At last I find one *houstonia* just out there.

The mouse-ear is now fairly in blossom in many places. It never looks so pretty as now in an April rain, covered with pearly drops. Its corymbs of five heads with one in the centre (all tinged red) look like a breast-pin set with pearls.

J. Farmer says that this rain will kill many caterpillars just hatched.

As nearly as I can remember and judge, plants were *generally* out at the following dates:—

White maple	April 7	Hazels	April 12
Alders	8	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	14
Skunk-cabbage	9	Crowfoot	13
Sedge	11	Saxifrage	13
Earliest willows fairly begun		Slippery elm	22
(not common till April 20)	12	Common elm	12

Cowslip	April 24	Red cedar	April 26
Sweet-gale	23	White [cedar]	27 (?)
<i>Salix humilis</i>	23	<i>Populus grandidentata</i>	26
Red maple	26	Field horse-tail	28
Larch	28 (?)	Mouse-ear	29