

IX

AUGUST, 1854

(ÆT. 37)

Aug. 1. 6 A. M. On river. — *Bidens Beckii*. Bass probably out of bloom about a week. Corallorhiza, some days at Fair Haven Pond.

P. M. — To Peter's.

Sunflower. Meadow-haying begun for a week. Erechthites, begun for four or five days in Moore's Swamp. Two turtle doves in the stubble beyond. *Hieracium Canadense*, apparently a day or two. Do not see stamens of thyme-leaved pinweed, but *perhaps* petals. Ground-nut well out.

Aug. 2. Wednesday. Surveying in Lincoln.

Solidago lanceolata, two or three days. Decodon. *Polygonum arifolium* in swamp. *Chenopodium hybridum* probably now open. Surveyed east part of Lincoln.

5 P. M. — To Conantum on foot.

My attic chamber has compelled me to sit below with the family at evening for a month. I feel the necessity of deepening the stream of my life; I must cultivate privacy. It is very dissipating to be with people too much. As C. says, it takes the edge off a man's thoughts to have been much in society. I cannot

spare my moonlight and my mountains for the best of man I am likely to get in exchange.

I am inclined now for a pensive evening walk. Me-thinks we think of spring mornings and autumn evenings. I go *via* Hubbard Path. Chelone, say two days, at Conant's meadow beyond Wheeler's. July has been to me a trivial month. It began hot and continued drying, then rained some toward the middle, bringing anticipations of the fall, and then was hot again about the 20th. It has been a month of haying, heat, low water, and weeds. Birds have grown up and flown more or less in small flocks, though I notice a new sparrow's nest and eggs and perhaps a catbird's eggs lately. The woodland quire has steadily diminished in volume.

At the bass I now find that that memorable hum has ceased and the green berries are formed. Now blueberries, huckleberries, and low blackberries are in their prime. The fever-bush berries will not be ripe for two or three weeks. At Bittern Cliff the *Gerardia quercifolia* (?), apparently four or five days at least. How interesting the small alternate cornel trees, with often a flat top, a peculiar ribbed and green leaf, and pretty red stems supporting its harmless blue berries inclined to drop off! The sweet viburnum, not yet turning. I see apparently a thistle-down over the river at Bittern Cliff; it is borne toward me, but when it reaches the rock some influence raises it high above the rock out of my reach. What a fall-like look the decayed and yellow leaves of the large Solomon's-seal have in the thickets now! These, with skunk-

cabbage and hellebore, suggest that the early ripeness of leaves, etc., has somewhat normal in it, — that there is a fall already begun. *Eupatorium sessilifolium*, one or two stamens apparently for two days; its smooth leaf distinguishes it by the touch from the sunflower.

I sat on the Bittern Cliff as the still eve drew on. There was a man on Fair Haven furling his sail and bathing from his boat. A boat on a river whose waters are smoothed, and a man disporting in it! How it harmonizes with the stillness and placidity of the evening! Who knows but he is a poet in his yet obscure but golden youth? Few else go alone into retired scenes without gun or fishing-rod. He bathes in the middle of the pond while his boat slowly drifts away. As I go up the hill, surrounded by its shadow, while the sun is setting, I am soothed by the delicious stillness of the evening, save that on the hills the wind blows. I was surprised by the sound of my own voice. It is an atmosphere burdensome with thought. For the first time for a month, at least, I am reminded that thought is possible. The din of trivialness is silenced. I float over or through the deeps of silence. It is the first silence I have heard for a month. My life had been a River Platte, tinkling over its sands but useless for all great navigation, but now it suddenly became a fathomless ocean. It shelved off to unimagined depths.

I sit on rock on the hilltop, warm with the heat of the departed sun, in my thin summer clothes. Here are the seeds of some berries in the droppings of some bird on the rock. The sun has been set fifteen minutes, and a long cloudy finger, stretched along the northern

horizon, is held over the point where it disappeared. I see dark shadows formed on the south side of the woods east of the river. The creaking of the crickets becomes clear and loud and shrill, — a sharp tinkling, like rills bubbling up from the ground. After a little while the western sky is suddenly suffused with a pure white light, against which the hickories further east on the hill show black with beautiful distinctness. Day does not furnish so interesting a ground. A few sparrows sing as in the morning and the spring; also a peawai and a chewink. Meanwhile the moon in her first quarter is burnishing her disk. Now suddenly the cloudy finger and the few scattered clouds glow with the parting salute of the sun; the rays of the sun, which has so long sunk below the convex earth, are reflected from each cloudy promontory with more incomparable brilliancy than ever. The hardhack leaves stand up so around the stem that now, at first starlight, I see only their light under sides a rod off. Do they as much by day?

The surface of the forest on the east of the river presents a singularly cool and wild appearance, — cool as a pot of green paint, — stretches of green light and shade, reminding me of some lonely mountain-side. The nighthawk flies low, skimming over the ground now. How handsome lie the oats which have been cradled in long rows in the field, a quarter of a mile uninterruptedly! The thick stub ends, so evenly laid, are almost as rich a sight to me as the graceful tops. A few fireflies in the meadows. I am uncertain whether that so large and bright and high was a fire-

fly or a shooting star. Shooting stars are but fireflies of the firmament. The crickets on the causeway make a *steady* creak, on the dry pasture-tops an *interrupted* one. I was compelled to stand to write where a soft, faint light from the western sky came in between two willows.

Fields to-day sends me a specimen copy of my "Walden." It is to be published on the 12th *inst.*

Aug. 4. Friday. P. M. — *Via* Turnpike to Smith's Hill.

A still, cloudy day with from time to time a gentle August rain. Rain and mist contract our horizon and we notice near and small objects. The weeds — fleabane, etc. — begin to stand high in the potato-fields, overtopping the potatoes. This hardhack interests me with its bedewed pyramid. Rue is out of bloom. Sicyos, apparently in a few days. The buttonwoods are much improved this year and may recover. Sonchus in one place out of bloom. Purple gerardia, by brook. The autumnal dandelion is now more common. *Ranunculus aquatilis* var. *fluvialis*, white petals with a yellow claw, small flowers on surface of Hosmer's ditch, west end, by Turnpike. A new plant. Say July 1st. Is it open in sunny weather? The lower leaves of the sharp-angled lycopus are a dull red and those of the elodea are a fine, clear, somewhat crimson red. Fragrant everlasting. The swamp blackberry on high land, ripe a day or two. I hear the pigeon woodpecker still, — *wickoff, wickoff, wickoff, wickoff*, from a neighboring oak. See a late rose still in flower. On this hill (Smith's) the bushes are black with huckle-

berries. They droop over the rocks with the weight and are very handsome. Now in their prime. Some glossy black, some dull black, some blue; and patches of *Vaccinium vacillans* intermixed. *Hieracium paniculatum* in woods by Saw Mill Brook, a day or two. The leaves of some weeds, perhaps goldenrods, are eaten in a ribbon character like some strange writing apparently half-way through the leaf, often along the edge. This for some time. *Goodyera pubescens*, a day or two. *Hieracium scabrum*, apparently two or three days. It is already fall in low swampy woods where the cinnamon fern prevails. There are the sight and scent of beginning decay. I see a new growth on oak sprouts, three to six inches, with reddish leaves as in spring. Some whole trees show the lighter new growth at a distance, above the dark green. *Cannabis sativa*.

After sunset, a very low, thick, and flat white fog like a napkin, on the meadows, which ushers in a foggy night.

Aug. 5. Saturday. 8.30 A. M.—By boat to Coreopsis Bend.

A general fog in the morning, dispersed by 8 o'clock. At first the air still and water smooth, afterward a little breeze from time to time, — judging from my sail, from the north-northeast. A platoon of haymakers has just attacked the meadow-grass in the Wheeler meadow.

Methinks the river's bank is now ¹ in its most in-

¹ Vide Aug. 15.

teresting condition. On the one hand are the light, lofty, and wide-spread umbels of the sium, pontederias already past their prime, white lilies perhaps not diminished in number, heart-leaf flowers, etc.; on the other the *Salix Purshiana*, full-foliaged, but apparently already *slightly* crisped and imbrowned or yellowed with heat, the button-bush in full blossom, and the mikania now covering it with its somewhat hoary bloom. The immediate bank is now most verdurous and florid, consisting of light rounded masses of verdure and bloom, and the river, slightly raised by the late rains, takes all rawness from the brim. Now, then, the river's brim is in perfection, after the mikania is in bloom and before the pontederia and pads and the willows are too much imbrowned, and the meadows all shorn. But already very many pontederia leaves and pads have turned brown or black. The fall, in fact, begins with the first heats of July. Skunk-cabbage, hellebores, convallarias, pontederias, pads, etc., appear to usher it in. It is one long acclivity from winter to midsummer and another long declivity from midsummer to winter. The mower's scythe, however, spares a fringe of to him useless or noxious weeds along the river's edge, such as sium, wool-grass, various sedges and bulrushes, pontederias, and polygonums. The pontederia leaves have but a short life, the spring so late and fall so early. Smaller flowers I now observe on or by the river are yellow lilies, both kinds; the larger polygonum (*hydropiperoides*), with slender white spikes, and the small front-rank rose-colored one; the *Bidens Beckii*, three to six or seven

inches above the surface, on that very coarse, stout-stemmed, somewhat utricularia-like weed which makes dense beds in the water; the three water utricularias especially the purple; the cardinal-flower; water asclepias; and a few late roses. As I go past the white ash, I notice many small cobwebs on the bank, shelf above shelf, promising a fair day.

I find that we are now in the midst of the meadow-haying season, and almost every meadow or section of a meadow has its band of half a dozen mowers and rakers, either bending to their manly work with regular and graceful motion or resting in the shade, while the boys are turning the grass to the sun. I passed as many as sixty or a hundred men thus at work to-day. They stick up a twig with the leaves on, on the river's brink, as a guide for the mowers, that they may not exceed the owner's bounds. I hear their scythes crouching the coarse weeds by the river's brink as I row near. The horse or oxen stand near at hand in the shade on the firm land, waiting to draw home a load anon. I see a platoon of three or four mowers, one behind the other, diagonally advancing with regular sweeps across the broad meadow and ever and anon standing to whet their scythes. Or else, having made several bouts, they are resting in the shade on the edge of the firm land. In one place I see one sturdy mower stretched on the ground amid his oxen in the shade of an oak, trying to sleep; or I see one wending far inland with a jug to some well-known spring.

There is very little air stirring to-day, and that seems to blow which way it listeth. At Rice's Bend the river

is for a long distance clogged with weeds, where I think my boat would lodge in midstream if I did not more than guide it. The potamogeton leaves almost bridge it over, and the bur-reed blades rise a foot or more above the surface. The water weeps, or is strained, through. Though yesterday was rainy, the air to-day is filled with a blue haze. The coreopsis is (many) fairly but yet freshly out, I think not more than a week, from one foot to a foot and a half high, some quite white, commonly the petals reflexed a little, just on the edge of or in the water. The meadow-grass not yet cut there. In crossing the meadow to the Jenkins Spring at noon, I was surprised to find that the dew was not off the deep meadow-grass, but I wet the legs of my pants through. It does not get off, then, during the day. I hear these days still those familiar notes — of a virco? — *somewhat* peawai-like, — two or more, *we-tar che*. Near Lee's (returning), saw a large bittern, pursued by small birds, alight on the shorn meadow near the pickerel-weeds, but, though I rowed to the spot, he effectually concealed himself.

Now Lee and his men are returning to their meadow-haying after dinner, and stop at the well under the black oak in the field. I too repair to the well when they are gone, and taste the flavor of black strap on the bucket's edge. As I return down-stream, I see the haymakers now raking with hand or horse rakes into long rows or loading, one on the load placing it and treading it down, while others fork it up to him; and others are gleaning with rakes after the forkers. All farmers are anxious to get their meadow-hay as

soon as possible for fear the river will rise. On the 2d, Hagar told me he had done all his haying, having little or no meadow, and now the chief business was to kill weeds in the orchard, etc. Formerly they used to think they had nothing to do when the haying was done and might go a-fishing for three weeks.

I see very few whorled or common utricularias, but the purple ones are exceedingly abundant on both sides the river, apparently from one end to the other. The broad pad field on the southwest side of Fair Haven is distinctly purpled with them. Their color is peculiarly high for a water plant. In Sudbury the huckleberries, etc., appeared to be dried up. At Lee's Cliff, I meet in the path a woodchuck, — probably [a] this year's one, — which stood within seven feet and turned the side of its head to me as if deaf of one ear, and stood listening till I advanced. A very large flock of blackbirds, — perhaps grackles and cowbirds and maybe (?) young red-wings, — with a roar of wings, flying from this side the river to that and alighting on the sedge and willows and ground.

Aug. 6. P. M. — To Tarbell Hills by boat.

Rather cool with a strong wind, before which we glide. The rippled surface of the water and the light under sides of the white maples in rounded masses bordering the stream, and also the silvery tops of the swamp white oaks, give a pleasing breezy aspect to the shores, etc. Surprised to see the hibiscus just out nearer Flint's and also at Ball's Hill Bend. Apparently always earlier in those places. I noticed yesterday

that the fields of *Juncus militaris* on the south side of Fair Haven showed a stripe six or eight inches wide next the water and bounded by a very level line above of a different color, more or less reddish or as if wet, as if there had been a subsidence of the water to that extent. Yet it has actually risen, rather. The sun is quite hot to-day, but the wind is cool and I question if my thin coat will be sufficient. Methinks that after this date there is commonly a vein of coolness in the wind. The Great Meadows are for the most part shorn. Small light-green sensitive ferns are springing up full of light on the bank. I see some smaller white maples turned a dull red, — crimsonish, — a slight blush on them. Grape-vines, the downy under sides of their leaves turned up by the wind,¹ are methinks more conspicuous now at a distance along the edge of the meadow, where they round and mass the trees and bushes, — long, irregular bowers, here and there marked with the white, downy under sides of the leaves. The wind is very unsteady and flirts our sail about to this side and that. We prefer to sail to-day (Sunday) because there are no haymakers in the meadow.

Landed at Tarbell's Hills. I am more pleased with the form of the ground there than with anything else, — with the huckleberry hills, and hollows, the cow-paths, and perhaps the old corn-hills. There are very agreeable slopes and undulations, and the light is very agreeably reflected from the barren surface of the earth. It is at length cloudy, and still behind the hills, and very grateful is this anticipation of the fall, —

¹ *Vide* Aug. 20.

coolness and cloud, and the crickets steadily chirping in mid-afternoon. The huckleberries are somewhat shrivelled and drying up. As I look westward up the stream, the oak, etc., on Ponkawtasset are of a very dark green, almost black, which, methinks, they have worn only since midsummer. Has this anything to do with the bluish mistiness of the air? or is it an absolute deepening of their hue? We row back with two big stones in the stern. Interesting here and there the tall and slender zizania waving on the shore, with its light panicle eighteen inches or more in length.

Aug. 7. It is inspiriting at last to hear the wind whistle and moan about my attic, after so much trivial summer weather, and to feel cool in my thin pants.

Do you not feel the fruit of your spring and summer beginning to ripen, to harden its seed within you? Do not your thoughts begin to acquire consistency as well as flavor and ripeness? How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed-time of character? Already some of my small thoughts — fruit of my spring life — are ripe, like the berries which feed the first broods of birds; and other some are prematurely ripe and bright, like the lower leaves of the herbs which have felt the summer's drought.

Seasons when our mind is like the strings of a harp which is swept, and we stand and listen. A man may hear strains in his thought far surpassing any oratorio.

Sicyos.

P. M. — To Peter's, Beck Stow's, and Walden.

Liatris. Still autumnal, breezy with a cool vein in

the wind; so that, passing from the cool and breezy into the sunny and warm places, you begin to love the heat of summer. It is the contrast of the cool wind with the warm sun. I walk over the pinweed-field. It is just cool enough in my thin clothes. There is a light on the earth and leaves, as if they were burnished. It is the glistening autumnal side of summer. I feel a cool vein in the breeze, which braces my thought, and I pass with pleasure over sheltered and sunny portions of the sand where the summer's heat is undiminished, and I realize what a friend I am losing. The pinweed does not show its stamens — I mean the *L. thymifolia*. It was open probably about July 25. This off side of summer glistens like a burnished shield. The waters now are some degrees cooler. Winds show the under sides of the leaves. The cool nocturnal creak of the crickets is heard in the mid-afternoon. Tansy is apparently now in its prime, and the early goldenrods have acquired a brighter yellow. From this off side of the year, this imbricated slope, with alternating burnished surfaces and shady ledges, much more light and heat are reflected (less absorbed), methinks, than from the springward side. In mid-summer we are of the earth, — confounded with it, — and covered with its dust. Now we begin to erect ourselves somewhat and walk upon its surface. I am not so much reminded of former years, as of existence prior to years.

From Peter's I look over the Great Meadows. There are sixty or more men in sight on them, in squads of half a dozen far and near, revealed by their white

shirts. They are alternately lost and reappear from behind a distant clump of trees. A great part of the farmers of Concord are now in the meadows, and toward night great loads of hay are seen rolling slowly along the river's bank, — on the firmer ground there, — and perhaps fording the stream itself, toward the distant barn, followed by a troop of tired haymakers.

The very shrub oaks and hazels now look curled and dry in many places. The bear oak acorns on the former begin to be handsome. Tansy is in *full blaze* in some warm, dry places. It must be time, methinks, to collect the hazelnuts and dry them; many of their leaves are turned. The Jersey tea fruit is blackened. The bushy gerardia is apparently out in some places. Blueberries pretty thick in Gowing's Swamp. Some have a slightly bitterish taste.

A wasp stung me at one high blueberry bush on the forefinger of my left hand, just above the second joint. It was very venomous; a white spot with the red mark of the sting in the centre, while all the rest of the finger was red, soon showed where I was stung, and the finger soon swelled much below the joint, so that I could not completely close the finger, and the next finger sympathized so much with it that at first there was a *little* doubt which was stung. These insects are effectively weaponed. But there was not enough venom to prevail further than the finger.

Trillium berry.

Aug. 8. P. M. — To Annursnack *via* Assabet.

A great spider three quarters of an inch long, with

large yellow marks on the sides, in middle of a flat web. This is a day of sunny water. As I walk along the bank of the river, I look down a rod and see distinctly the fishes and the bottom. The cardinals are in perfection, standing in dark recesses of the green shore, or in the open meadow. They are fluvatile, and stand along some river or brook, like myself. I see one *large white* maple crisped and tinged with a sort of rosaceous tinge, just above the Golden Horn. The surface is very glassy there. The foliage of most trees is now not only most dense, but a very dark green, — the swamp white oak, clethra, etc. The *Salix Purshiana* is remarkable for its *fine* and narrow leaves, — feathers, — of a very light or yellowish green, as if finely cut, against the dark green of other trees, yet not drooping or curved downward, but remarkably concealing its stems. Some silky cornel leaves are reddish next water. Very many leaves on hills are crisped and curled with drought. Black cherry ripe. The meadow-hay is sprinkled here and there on the river. On Annursnack I scare up many turtle doves from the stubble. Hear a supper horn — J. Smith's? — far away, blown with a long-drawn blast, which sounds like a strain of an æolian harp. The distance has thus refined it. I see some slight dun clouds in the east horizon, — perhaps the smoke from burning meadows.

Aug. 9. *Wednesday*. — To Boston.

"Walden" published. Elder-berries. Waxwork yellowing.

Aug. 10. 4.30 A. M. — To Cliffs.

A high fog. As I go along the railroad, I observe the darker green of early-mown fields. A cool wind at this hour over the wet foliage, as from over mountain-tops and uninhabited earth. The large primrose conspicuously in bloom. Does it shut by day? The woods are comparatively still at this season. I hear only the faint peeping of some robins (a few song sparrows on my way), a wood pewee, kingbird, crows, before five, or before reaching the Springs. Then a chewink or two, a cuckoo, jay, and later, returning, the *link* of the bobolink and the goldfinch. That is a peculiar and distinct hollow sound made by the pigeon woodpecker's wings, as it flies past near you. The *Aralia nudicaulis* is another plant which for some time, and perhaps more generally than any, yellows the forest floor with its early fall, or turning, as soon as its berries have ripened, along with hellebore, skunk-cabbage, convallarias, etc. Ambrosia. At length, as I return along the back road, at 6.30, the sun begins to eat through the fog.

The tinkling notes of goldfinches and bobolinks which we hear nowadays are of one character and peculiar to the season. They are not voluminous flowers, but rather nuts, of sound, — ripened seeds of sound. It is the tinkling of ripened grains in Nature's basket. It is like the sparkle on water, — a sound produced by friction on the crisped air.

For a day or two I have inclined to wear a thicker, or fall, coat.

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

A cloudy afternoon and rather cool, but not threatening rain soon. Dangle-berries ripe how long? — one of the handsomest berries.

On the southwest side of Conant's Orchard Grove, saw from twenty rods off some patches of purple grass,¹ which painted a stripe of hillside next the woods for half a dozen rods in length. It was as high-colored and interesting, though not so bright, as the patches of rhexia. On examination I found it to be a kind of grass a little less than a foot high, with but few green blades and a fine spreading purple top in seed; but close at hand it was but a dull purple and made but little impression on the eye, was even difficult to detect where thin. But, viewed in a favorable light fifteen rods off, it was of a fine lively purple color, enriching the earth very much. It was the more surprising because grass is commonly of a sombre and humble color. I was charmed to see the grass assume such a rich color and become thus flower-like. Though a darker purple, its effect was similar to that of the rhexia.²

Hardly any dog-days yet. The air is quite clear now. *Aster macrophyllus* near beaked hazel by roadside, some time. That sort of sweet-william (?) pink, with viscidness below the joints, but not pubescent, against the Minott house; how long?

The *Arum triphyllum* fallen some time and turned

¹ *Poa hirsuta* according to Russell, now in bloom, abundant; in the J. Hosmer hollow.

² [*Excursions*, p. 252; Riv. 309. There the name of the grass appears as *Eragrostis pectinacea*.]

quite white. *Asclepias Cornuti* leaves begun to yellow; and brakes, etc. *Rhus Toxicodendron* along the Minott house ditch in the midst of its fall, almost all its leaves burnt brown and partly yellow.

First muskmelon in garden.

Mr. Loomis says that he saw a mockingbird at Fair Haven Pond to-day.

Aug. 11. P. M. — To Assabet Bath.

I have heard since the 1st of this month the steady creaking cricket. Some are digging early potatoes. I notice a new growth of red maple sprouts, small reddish leaves surmounting light-green ones, the old being dark-green. Green lice on birches. *Aster Tradescanti*, two or three days in low ground; flowers smaller than *A. dumosus*, densely racemed, with short peduncles or branchlets, calyx-scales narrower and more pointed. *Ammannia humilis* (?) (a new plant), perhaps three weeks at northeast end of Wheeler's brush fence meadow, like an erect isardia, *i. e.* *Ludwigia palustris*, with small wrinkled yellowish petals with a purplish vein.

Aug. 12. Saturday. Watermelon.

P. M. — To Conantum by boat.

Methinks I heard a few toads till about the middle of July. To-day there is an uncommonly strong wind, against which I row, yet in shirt-sleeves, trusting to sail back. It is southwest. I see twelve painted tortoises on a rail only five feet long, and perhaps some were scared off before I observed them. The *Bidens*

Beckii yellows the side of the river just below the Hubbard Path, but is hardly yet in fullest flower generally. I see goldfinches nowadays on the lanceolate thistles, apparently after the seeds. It takes all the heat of the year to produce these yellow flowers. It is the 3 o'clock p. m. of the year when they begin to prevail, — when the earth has absorbed most heat, when melons ripen and early apples and peaches. The cranberry cheeks begin to redden. *Viburnum dentatum* berries. Hazelnut husks now have a reddish edge, being ripe. Is not this a sign? It is already the yellowing year.

Viburnum nudum berries generally green, but some, higher and more exposed, of a deep, fiery pink on one cheek and light green on the other, and a very few dark purple or without bloom, black already. I put a bunch with only two or three black ones in my hat, the rest pink or green. When I got home more than half were turned black, — and ripe!! A singularly sudden chemical change. Another cluster which had no black ones was a third part turned. It is surprising how very suddenly they turn from this deep pink to a very dark purple or black, when the wine which they contain is mature. They are a very pretty, irregularly elliptical berry, one side longer than the other, and particularly interesting on account of the mixture of light-green, deep-pink, and dark-purple, and also withered berries, in the same cyme.

The wind is autumnal and at length compels me to put on my coat. I bathe at Hubbard's. The water is rather cool, comparatively. As I look down-stream

from southwest to northeast, I see the red under sides of the white lily pads about half exposed, turned up by the wind to [an] angle of 45° or more. These hemispherical red shields are so numerous as to produce a striking effect on the eye, as of an endless array of forces with shields advanced; sometimes four or five rods in width. Off Holden Woods a baffling counter wind as usual (when I return), but looking up-stream I see the great undulations extending into the calm from above, where the wind blows steadily. I see no maples changed yet along this stream. There are but few haymakers left in the meadows.

On Conantum saw a cow looking steadily up into the sky for a minute. It gave to her face an unusual almost human or wood-god, faun-like expression, and reminded me of some frontispieces to Virgil's *Bucolics*. She was gazing upward steadily at an angle of about 45°. There were only some downy clouds in that direction. It was so unusual a sight that any one would notice it. It suggested adoration.

The woodbine on rocks in warm and dry places is now more frequently turned, a few leaflets bright-scarlet.

The now quite common goldenrods fully out are what I have called *stricta* and also the more strict *puberula* (?). The *arguta* and *odora* are not abundant enough to make an impression. The *Solidago nemoralis* is not yet generally out. The common asters now are the *patens*, *dumosus*, *Radula*, and *Diplopappus umbellatus*. This is a famous year for huckleberries, etc. They are now drying up for the most part before spoiling.

The bushes on Conantum are quite black with them. They are clustered like *Vaccinium vacillans* apparently. High blackberries are in prime. And I see some great low blackberries on long peduncles, lifted above the huckleberries, composed of great grains, as large as the largest high blackberries. Poke berries, also poke stems, are purple; not yet peduncles. Plucked a small *Hieracium scabrum*, hairy, which I may have called *Gronovii*.

I think I should not notice the shadow of Conantum Cliff now; perhaps because the grass is so sere and russet. It should be a tender green.

For birds:—

I think that I begin to see a few more hawks than of late. A white-rumped to-day.

Partridges fly in packs.

Bluebirds sound oftener plaintively.

Larks are still seen.

Blackbirds fly in great flocks.

Robin peeps occasionally.

Song sparrow sings clearly in morning, etc.

Hear pigeon woodpecker's *wickoff* still occasionally.

Pigeons begin to be seen.

Hear rush sparrow still.

No seringos for some time.

Turtle doves common in small flocks in stubble.

White-bellied swallows still.

Barn swallows still.

Perhaps chip-sparrows are silent.

Have not heard a wood thrush since last week of July.

Catbird and thrasher done singing.

Chewink still heard.

Wood pewee “

No night-warbler,¹ or tweezer, or evergreen-forest note; nor vceery.

¹ Hear one at evening, Aug. 14.

Kingbird twitters still.

No red-eyes¹ nor tanagers heard since 5th.

Goldfinch common.

Cherry-bird heard.

Cuckoo.

Gold robin sometimes heard partially.²

Aug. 13. First *marked* dog-day; sultry and with misty clouds. For ten days or so we have had comparatively cool, fall-like weather.

I remember only with a pang the past spring and summer thus far. I have not been an early riser. Society seems to have invaded and overrun me. I have drunk tea and coffee and made myself cheap and vulgar. My days have been all noontides, without sacred mornings and evenings. I desire to rise early henceforth, to associate with those whose influence is elevating, to have such dreams and waking thoughts that my diet may not be indifferent to me.

P. M. — To Bare Hill, Lincoln, *via* railroad.

I have not chanced to hear the bullfrogs trump much, if any, since the middle of July. This is a quite hot day again, after cooler weather. A *few* small red maples about ³ blush now a dull red. For about a month I think I have particularly noticed the light under sides of leaves, especially maples. I see small flocks of grass-birds, etc. In Macintosh's field (pasture),

¹ Hear one to-day.

² The nighthawk squeaks at sunset and the whip-poor-will sings, Aug. 14. The screech owl screams at evening.

³ Pond? [This, written in pencil, evidently at a later date, seems to indicate that at the time he inserted it he had forgotten just where the trees were.]

some dwarf acalypha some time out. The crechthites down begins to fly. Some of these plants are six feet high. I see where the pasture thistles have apparently been picked to pieces (for their seeds? by the goldfinch?), and the seedless down strews the ground.

Huckleberries begin to be wormy, but are still sound on Bare Hill. Now the mountains are concealed by the dog-day haze, and the view is of dark ridges of forest, one behind the other, separated by misty valleys. Squirrels have begun to eat hazelnuts, and I see their dry husks on the ground turned reddish-brown.

The change, decay, and fall of the brakes in woods, etc., is perhaps more autumnal than any sight. They make more show than the aralia. Some are quite brown and shrivelled, others yellow, others yellow and brown, others yellow, brown, and green, making a very rich and parti-colored or checkered work, as of plaited straw, — bead or straw work or ivory; others are still green with brown spots. In respect to these and many other plants of this size and habit, it is already fall. They stand yellow and yellowing all through the woods, — none perhaps so conspicuous as the brake. At Thrush Alley, was surprised to behold how many birch leaves had turned yellow, — every other one, — while clear, fresh, leather-colored ones strewed the ground with a pretty thick bed under each tree. So far as the birches go it is a perfect autumnal scene there.

Aug. 14. No rain, — only the dusty road spotted with the few drops which fell last night, — but there

is quite a high and cool wind this morning. Since August came in, we have begun to have considerable wind, as not since May, at least. The roads nowadays are covered with a light-colored, powdery dust (this yesterday), several inches deep, which also defiles the grass and weeds and bushes, and the traveller is deterred from stepping in it. The dusty weeds and bushes leave their mark on your clothes.

Mountain-ash berries orange (?), and its leaves half yellowed in some places.

3 P. M. — To climbing fern with E. Hoar.

It takes a good deal of care and patience to unwind this fern without injuring it. Sometimes same frond is half leaf, half fruit. E. talked of sending one such leaf to G. Bradford to remind him that the sun still shone in America. The uva-ursi berries beginning to turn.

6 P. M. — To Hubbard Bath and Fair Haven Hill.

I notice now that saw-like grass¹ seed where the mowers have done. The swamp blackberries are quite small and rather acid. Though yesterday was quite a hot day, I find by bathing that the river grows steadily cooler, as yet for a fortnight, though we have had no rain here. Is it owing solely to the cooler air since August came in, both day and night, or have rains in the southwest cooled the stream within a week? I now, standing on the shore, see that in sailing or floating down a smooth stream at evening it is an advantage to the fancy to be thus slightly separated from

¹ *Paspalum ciliatifolium*.

the land. It is to be slightly removed from the commonplace of earth. To float thus on the silver-plated stream is like embarking on a train of thought itself. You are surrounded by water, which is full of reflections; and you see the earth at a distance, which is very agreeable to the imagination.

I see the blue smoke of a burning meadow. The clethra must be one of the most conspicuous flowers not yellow at present. I sit three-quarters up the hill. The crickets creak strong and loud now *after sunset*. No word will spell it. It is a short, strong, regular ringing sound, as of a thousand exactly together, — though further off some alternate, — repeated regularly and in rapid time, perhaps twice in a second. Methinks their quire is much fuller and louder than a fortnight ago. Ah! I need solitude. I have come forth to this hill at sunset to see the forms of the mountains in the horizon, — to behold and commune with something grander than man. Their mere distance and unprofanedness is an infinite encouragement. It is with infinite yearning and aspiration that I seek solitude, more and more resolved and strong; but with a certain genial weakness that I seek society ever. I hear the nighthawk squeak and a whip-poor-will sing. I hear the tremulous squealing scream of a screech owl in the Holden Woods, sounding somewhat like the neighing of a horse, not like the snipe. Now at 7.45, perhaps a half-hour after sunset, the river is quite distinct and full of light in the dark landscape, — a silver strip of sky, of the same color and brightness with the sky. As I go home by Hayden's I smell the burning

meadow. I love the scent. It is my pipe. I smoke the earth.

Aug. 15. Tuesday. 5.15 A. M. — To Hill by boat.

By 5.30 the *fog* has withdrawn from the channel here and stands southward over the Texas Plain, forty or fifty feet high.

Some birds, after they have ceased to sing by day, continue to sing faintly in the morning now as in spring. I hear now a warbling vireo, a robin (half strain), a golden robin whistles, bluebirds warble, pigeon woodpecker; not to mention the tapping of a woodpecker and the notes of birds which are heard through the day, as wood peawai, song sparrow, cuckoo, etc. On the top of the Hill I see the goldfinch eating the seeds (?) of the Canada thistle. I rarely approach a bed of them or other thistles nowadays but I hear the cool twitter of the goldfinch about it. I hear a red squirrel's reproof, too, as in spring, from the hickories. Now, just after sunrise, I see the western steeples with great distinctness, — tall white lines. The fog eastward over the Great Meadows appears indefinitely far, as well as boundless. Perhaps I refer it to too great a distance. It is interesting when the fluvial trees begin to be seen through it and the sun is shining above it. By 6 o'clock it has risen up too much to be interesting.

The button-bush is now nearly altogether out of bloom, so that it is too late to see the river's brink in its perfection. It must be seen between the blooming of the mikania and the going out of bloom of the button-

bush, before you feel this sense of lateness in the year, before the meadows are shorn and the grass of hills and pastures is thus withered and russet.

9 A. M. — Walk all day with W. E. C., northwest into Acton and Carlisle.

A dog-day, comfortably cloudy and cool as well as still. The river meadows, where no mowing, have a yellowish and autumnal look, especially the wool-grass. I see large flocks of bobolinks on the Union Turnpike. Are the darker ones with some yellowish (?) on side heads young red-wings or male bobolinks changing? Forded the Assabet at the bathing-place. Saw carrion-flower berries just begun to turn; say in a day or two. Panicked cornel berries on College Road. Many of the trees in Barrett's orchard on Annursnack touch the ground all around like a dish cover, weighed down with fruit, and the branches are no thicker over head than around. Is not this the best form for an apple tree, — a hollow hemisphere nearly resting on the earth, the branches equally dispersed over the superficies, and light and air equally admitted? Hills and pastures are now dry and slippery. They seem as completely russet as in winter. I associate the mist of this dog-day with the burning of meadows. Crossed from top of Annursnack to top of Strawberry Hill, past a pigeon-bed. Measured the great chestnut. At about seven feet from ground, the smallest place I could find, it is $14\frac{3}{4}$ feet in circumference; at six feet from ground, $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet in circumference; at



five feet, $15\frac{4}{12}$; at one foot from ground not including some bulgings, 22 feet in circumference. It branches first at about nine feet from ground. The top has some dead limbs and is not large in proportion to trunk. There are great furrows in the bark. *Desmodium Marylandicum* on Strawberry Hill by wall, some days out. We took our dinner on the north side of the wall on top of the Hill. The dog-day haze conceals the distant hills and mountains, but some new and nearer elms, etc., stand out with new distinctness against it.

It is remarkable how far and widely the smoke of a meadow burning is visible, and how hard to locate. That in the meadow near Joe Merriam's,¹ half a dozen miles off, which has lasted some days, appears to possess the whole east horizon, as if any man who lived two or three miles east of this must smell it and know all about [it], but most who live within a mile of it may not have noticed it. It impresses me as if all who dwell in the eastern horizon must know of it and be interested in it, — as if it were a sort of public affair and of moment to a whole town, — yet hardly the next neighbors observe it, and the other day, when I passed within half a mile of it, it did not make nearly so great a show as from this very distant eminence. The white smoke is now seen slanting upward across half a township and gradually mingled and confounded with the haze of the day, so that it may even seem to have produced the latter. West, by Nagog, is a dense dark, almost black smoke, and another less dark in the south. The owner of the meadow little thinks how

¹ It is the Brooks meadow on fire. *Vide* Aug. 23.

far the smoke of his burning is seen by the inhabitants of the country and by travellers, filling their horizon and giving a character to their day, shutting out much sky to those who dwell half a dozen miles away. So far a man's deformities are seen by and affect his fellows. They help to blot out the sky to those [who] dwell far away.

Looking from this Strawberry Hill to the long range behind William Brown's, northeast by east, I see that it and other hills are marked finely by many parallel lines, apparently the edges of so many terraces, arranging the crops and trees in dark lines, as if they were the traces of so many lake-shores. Methinks this is an almost universal phenomenon. When farthest inland we are surrounded by countless shores or beaches, terrace above terrace. It is the parallelism of green trees, bushes, and crops which betrays them at a distance. The locomotive whistle, far southwest, sounds like a bell. *Lycopodium dendroideum* pollen, apparently some days.

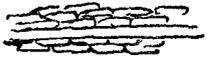
From this hill we steered northeast toward the east point of a wood in the direction of Hutchinson's, perhaps two miles off. Before starting on this walk I had studied the map to discover a new walk, and decided to go through a large wooded tract west and northwest of the Paul Dudley house, where there was no road, there at last to strike east across the head of Spencer Brook Meadow, perhaps to the old Carlisle road. A mile and a half northeast of Strawberry Hill, two or three large and very healthy and perfect sassafras trees (three large at least), very densely clothed

with dark-green lemon (?) or orange (?) tree shaped leaves, singularly healthy. This half a mile or so west of the Dudley house. Comparatively few of the leaves were of the common form, *i. e.* three-lobed, but rather simple. There was much mountain sumach close by, turning scarlet, and sweet-ferns also browning and yellowing. Keeping on through a somewhat swampy upland, we fell into a path, which Channing preferring, though it led us through woods widely out of our course westward, I soon corrected it, and, descending through swampy land, at length saw through the trees and bushes into a small meadow completely surrounded by woods, in which was a man haying only eight or ten rods off. We felt very much like Indians stealing upon an early settler, and naturally inclined to one side to go round the meadow through the high blueberry bushes. The high blueberries were from time to time very abundant, but have acquired a dead and flat taste, lost their raciness. Soon after, we followed an indistinct path through a dense birch wood, leading quite out of our course, *i. e.* westward. We were covered from head to foot with green lice from the birches, especially conspicuous on dark clothes, but going through other woods soon brushed them off again.

At length, when I endeavored to correct my course by compass, it pointed so that I lost my faith in it, and we continued to go out of our way, till we came out on a side-hill immediately overlooking a stream and mill and several houses and a small mill-pond undoubtedly on the Nashoba in the northern part of

Acton, on the road to Chelmsford. We were completely lost, and saw not one familiar object. At length saw steeples which we thought Westford, but the monument proved it Acton. Took their bearings, calculated a new course, and pursued it at first east-northeast, then east, and finally southeast, along rocky hillsides covered with weeds, where the fall seemed further advanced than in Concord, with more autumnal colors, through dense oak woods and scrub oak, across a road or two, over some pastures, through a swamp or two, where the cinnamon fern was as high as our heads and the dogwood, now fruiting, was avoided by C. After travelling about five miles, for the most part in woods, without knowing where we were, we came out on a hill from which we saw, far to the south, the open valley at head of Spencer Brook.

In the meanwhile we came upon another pigeon-bed, where the pigeons were being baited, a little corn, etc., being spread on the ground, and, [as?] at the first, the bower was already erected. What I call *Solidago arguta* is exceedingly handsome, a pyramidal head with rather horizontal branchlets with a convex surface of erect flowers; quite a splendid flower it would be in a garden. *Aster miser*. In Carlisle, on high land, that kind of viburnum with smaller, darker (with rusty patches), and less oblong berries and more obtuse leaves (at both ends), — a large spreading bush eight or nine feet high at least. Russell said it was the *V. prunifolium*, but the leaves are not sharply serrate but nearly entire, only crenate at most, commonly short and broad, the peduncle not half an inch long.

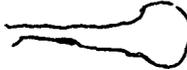
At evening, Mr. Russell showed his microscope at Miss Mackay's. Looked at a section of pontederia  leaf. Saw what answered to the woody fibre and the cells on each side, also the starch in potato, lime in rhubarb, fern seeds (so called), and lichen ditto, of which last there were fifty or sixty in one little wart  this size. The power of this glass was nine hundred diameters. All the objects were transparent and had a liquid look, crystalline, and reminded me of the moon seen through a telescope. They suggested the significance or insignificance of size, and that the moon itself is a microscopic object to us, so little it concerns us.

Aug. 16. 8 A. M. — To climbing fern with John Russell.

He says that my winkle fungus is a *Boletus* of Linnaeus, *Polyporus* of others, *Auricularia* (ear-like) now. My beautiful purple grass, now in flower, the *Poa hirsuta*.

Peppermint has just begun. Walked along the Dennis shore. That sedge by edge of river with three-ranked linear leaves is *Dulichium spathaceum*. My wool-grass is a trichophorum. Says that in Chelmsford they rub the pigeon bait with the *Solidago odora* to attract pigeons. That fuzzy-topped sedge with slender spikes in straw-colored ovate heads, arranged umbel-like, he thought *Scirpus* (probably *Cyperus*) *strigosus*. *Aster puniceus*, a day or two. That saw-like spiked grass which is an autumnal



sight in the mown fields is *Paspalum ciliatifolium*. Choke-cherry leaves are now many reddened. *Scirpus capillaris*, turned yellow, only two or three inches high, now covers the sand on Lupine Hill. A bluet still. *Aster longifolius*, a day or two. A pear-formed puff-ball (*Lycoperdon*), in Yellow Thistle Meadow, now dry, buff-colored.  That concave, chocolate-colored one

 I have is a *Lycoperdon bovi* (something), — from being in pastures. That potamogeton in Nut Meadow Brook at the watering-place beyond Jenny's is *P. Claytoni*, with many long, linear, pellucid immersed leaves half an inch wide and some floating. My stag-horn lichen is the [*Parmelia*] *Borreri*. The former grows on the ground and is more like a cladonia. *Aster laevis*, two or three days, if I have not mentioned it before. *Hypnum riparium* in the Harrington trough. *Viola pedata* again. Uva-ursi berries reddened, but R. says not ripe or soft till spring. Saw the variolaria on the white pines on Harrington Road, and opegrapha, like Arab characters. Showed me the Prussian eagle in the stem of the brake. *Aster corymbosus* (?), some time by this road. (Russell thought it *cordifolius*, but the flowers are white and petioles not winged.) In the T. Wheeler pasture, showed me the *Cladonia rangiferina* (the common white one), the *C. sylvestris* (the green one with it), also the *furcata*, and spoke of the *alpina* as common in woods.

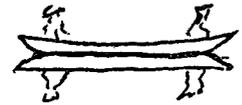
This day and yesterday, and when I was last on the river, the wind rose in the middle of the day, blow-

ing hardest at noon, — quite hard, — but went down toward night. Pointed out an *Erigeron strigosus* without rays. He had read of it as a variety. Some had small rays, leaves narrower. Above Rogers house, on right.

P. M. — With Russell to Fair Haven by boat.

That coarse, somewhat *B. Beckii*-looking weed, standing upright under water in the river, is hornwort (*Ceratophyllum echinatum*). That moss on the button-bushes is a fontinalis or else dichelyma. A coarser species is on the bridges. Cannot see the fruit now for some reason. On the rock at Bittern Cliff, the *Parmelia detonsa*. R. mistook a black pony in the water with a long mane behind some weeds for a heron. *Nuphar lutea* pads nearly all eaten, mere skeletons remaining. Saw where a partridge had dusted herself at a woodchuck's hole. Methinks that for about three weeks past the light under sides of the upper leaves of maples, swamp oak, etc., etc., have been permanently conspicuous, while in June to middle of July they were observable only when there was more wind than usual. As if, owing to the dry weather and heat, those leaves were permanently held up, like those of the hardhack, etc., — various weeds and shrubs on dry land, — perhaps had risen in the night and had not vitality enough to fall again. Now, accordingly, I see the dark-green upper sides of the lower leaves alone, and various agreeable shades of green thence upward. Now is the season to observe these various shades, especially when the sun is low in the west. At the steam-mill

sand-bank was the distinct shadow of our shadows, — first on the water, then the double one on the bank bottom to bottom, one being upside down,



— three in all, — one on water, two on land or bushes. R. showed me the ginseng in my collection. Thinks that one of my Maine asters is a northern form of the *cordifolius*.

No haymakers in meadows now.

Prince's-feathers, how long? Woodcock in garden. *Polygonum dumetorum* at Bittern Cliff.

Aug. 18. Warbling vireo in morning, — one.

Russell thought it was the *Salix discolor* or else *eriocephala* which I saw, not *sericea*, which is not common; also that my cone-bearing one was *S. humilis*. Barratt the best acquainted with them. That the *Rubus triflorus* was badly described. That we had three gooseberries, — the common smooth, the prickly fruited, and the prickly branched. Said we had two strawberries, the *Virginiana* and the *vesca*, — the last not uncommon. That the *Thalictrum dioicum* was only about a foot high. That the seed of flowering fern was heavy, and hence it fell in circles and so grew. That the *Crataegus Crus-Galli* was a variety of the white thorn. Best time for seaside flowers middle of July, for White Mountains 4th of July. Robbins of Uxbridge best acquainted now with the potamogetons. Tuckerman thought it would be impossible to arrange them at present, European specimens being inaccessible or fragmentary. That the smaller sparganium

was my taller one of the river and should rather be called *minor*, being only narrower. That we had but one urtica hereabouts. Of the rose-colored water-lily in a pond-hole in Barnstable, into which Parker stripped and went; and the farmer dug it all up and sold it. The Spanish moss is a lily, — *Tillandsia*, — so named by Linnæus because it dislikes moisture as much as his friend Tillands the sea. All these spots on my collection of leaves — crimson, etc. — are fungi. The transparent globes on the hornwort are an alga, — *Nostoc*.

Almost impossible to find fishworms now it is so dry. I cannot find damp earth anywhere but where there is water on the surface or near.

P. M. — Over Great Meadows.

A great drought now for several weeks. The hay-makers have been remarkably uninterrupted this year by rain. Corn and potatoes are nearly spoiled. Our melons suffer the more because there was no drought in June and they ran to vine, which now they cannot support. Hence there is little fruit formed, and that small and dying ripe. Almost everywhere, if you dig into the earth, you find it all dusty. Even wild black cherries and choke-cherries are drying before fairly ripe, all shrivelled. Many are digging potatoes half grown. Trees and shrubs recently set out, and many old ones, are dying. A good time to visit swamps and meadows. I find no flowers yet on the amphicarpeæ.

In a ditch behind Peter's a small *Cistudo Blandingii* swimming off rapidly. Its shell is four and a quarter inches long by three and a quarter wide in

rear, three wide in front; and its depth is nearly two inches, with a slight dorsal ridge, which the large one has not. I distinguished it from the *Emys guttata* at first glance by its back being sculptured concentrically about the rear side, leaving a smooth space within, a half-inch in diameter. My large one is almost entirely smooth on back, being sculptured only an eighth of an inch wide on circumference of each scale. It has small, rather indistinct yellow spots, somewhat regularly arranged in the middle of each scale. Head peppered with dull-yellow spots above; head, legs, and tail black above; head light-yellow beneath, and also legs about roots, passing into a dirty white. It is a very restless and active turtle, not once inclosing itself or using its valve at all, at once walking off when put down, keeping its head, legs, and tail out, continually running out its neck to its full extent, and often bending it backward over the shell. Its neck with the loose skin about it has a squarish form. Readily turns itself over with its head when on its back. Upper shell black; sternum light-brown, with a large black blotch on the outside after part of each scale and about half its area; five claws on fore feet, four and a rudiment or concealed one on hind feet. In this small one, the sculptured part occupies nearly the whole scale and is from a half to three quarters of an inch wide, while in the large one it is only an eighth of an inch wide, — a mere border. Apparently as it grows the smooth rear is extended or shoves forward and a portion of the sculptured part scales off.

In this ditch an interesting green jelly, conferva-

like at a little distance, perhaps a kind of frog-spawn, but without any *eyes* in it, of various forms, floating; often a sort of thick ring made of a hollow cylinder. Was that a proserpinaca in that ditch with all but two or three small leaves at top, pectinate? Saw there the large semipellucid, waved, heart-shaped radical leaves of a heart-leaf, green and purplish, sometimes all purplish, more delicate than the waved radical leaves of yellow lilies, etc., — a dimple of leaves. We can walk across the Great Meadows now in any direction. They are quite dry. Even the pitcher-plant leaves are empty. [The meadows] are covered with spatular sundew. Saw a snipe. There are fifteen or twenty haymakers here yet, but almost done. They and their loads loom at a distance. Men in their white shirts look taller and larger than near at hand.

I have just been through the process of killing the *cistudo* for the sake of science; but I cannot excuse myself for this murder, and see that such actions are inconsistent with the poetic perception, however they may serve science, and will affect the quality of my observations. I pray that I may walk more innocently and serenely through nature. No reasoning whatever reconciles me to this act. It affects my day injuriously. I have lost some self-respect. I have a murderer's experience in a degree.

The bobolinks alight on the wool-grass. Do they eat its seeds? The *zizania* on the north side of the river near the Holt, or meadow watering-place, is very conspicuous and abundant. Surprised to find the *Ludwigia sphaerocarpa* apparently some time out (say

August 1st), in a wet place about twenty rods off the bars to the path that leads down from near Pedrick's; two to two and a half feet high, with a thick but unbroken bark about the base much like the *decodon*; no petals; yellowish seed-vessels. I think I saw a mockingbird on a black cherry near Pedrick's. Size of and like a catbird; bluish-black side-head, a white spot on closed wings, lighter breast and beneath; but he flew before I had fairly adjusted my glass. There were brown thrashers with it making their clicking note. The leaves of the paniced cornel are particularly curled by the heat and drought, showing their lighter under sides. Low blackberry vines generally are reddening and already give an October aspect to some dry fields where the early *potentilla* grows, as that plain of Pedrick's.

At Beck Stow's on new Bedford road, what I had thought a *utricularia* appears to be *Myriophyllum ambiguum*. One is floating, long and finely capillary leaves, with very few emersed and pectinate; another variety is on the mud, short, with linear or pectinate leaves. Perhaps they are the varieties *natans* and *limosum*. The last out some days, the first perhaps hardly yet. The green bittern there, leaving its tracks on the mud.

The *Solidago nemoralis* is now abundantly out on the Great Fields.

Aug. 19. P. M. — To Flint's Pond *via* railroad with Mr. Loomis.

The hills and fields generally have such a russet,

withered, wintry look that the meadows by the railroad appear to have got an exceedingly fresh and tender green. The near meadow is very beautiful now, seen from the railroad through this dog-day haze, which softens to velvet its fresh green of so many various shades, blending them harmoniously, — darker and lighter patches of grass and the very light yellowish-green of the sensitive fern which the mowers have left. It has an indescribable beauty to my eye now, which it could not have in a clear day. The haze has the effect both of a wash or varnish and of a harmonizing tint. It destroys the idea of definite distance which distinctness suggests. It is as if you had painted a meadow of fresh grass springing up after the mower, — here a dark green, there lighter, and there again the yellowish onoclea, — then washed it over with some gum like a map and tinted the paper of a fine misty blue. This is an effect of the dog-days.

There is now a remarkable drought, some of whose phenomena I have referred to during several weeks past, *q. v.* Of large forest trees the red maples appear to suffer most. Their leaves are very generally wilted and curled, showing the under sides. Perhaps not only because they require so much moisture, but because they are more nearly ripe, and there is less life and vigor in them. The *Populus grandidentata* perhaps suffers equally, and its leaves hang down wilted; even many willows. Many white birches long since lost the greater part of their leaves, which cover the ground, sere and brown as in autumn. I see many small trees quite dead, — birches, etc. I see amelan-

chier leaves scarlet, and black birch and willow yellowing. Various ferns are yellow and brown.

When I see at the brick-sand cutting how thin a crust of soil and darker sand, only three or four feet thick, there is above the pure white sand which appears to compose the mass of the globe itself, and this apparently perfectly dry, I am surprised that the trees are not all withered, and wonder if such a soil could sustain a large growth. After digging through ordinary soil and yellow sand three or four feet, you come to a pure white sand very evenly, abruptly, and distinctly separated from the former, and this is laid open to the depth of ten feet, — I know not how much deeper it extends, — so that the forest grows as it would in a wholly artificial soil made on a rock, perchance. I presume you would not now anywhere on these plains find any moisture in that four-foot crust, and there is never any in the sand beneath. I am surprised to see how shallow and dry all the available earth is there, in which the forest grows.

So like tinder is everything now that we passed three places within a mile where the old sleepers heaped up by the track had just been set on fire by the engine, — in one place a large pile.

Plenty of *Polygonum arifolium* in the ditch in the second field. Some barberries are red, and some thorn berries. A linear-leaved epilobium in Baker's, *i. e.* Mackintosh's, Swamp.

Flint's Pond has fallen very much since I was here. The shore is so exposed that you can walk round, which I have not known possible for several years,

and the outlet is dry. But Walden is not affected by the drought. There is such a haze we see not further than our Annursnack, which is blue as a mountain. *Lobelia Dortmanna* is still abundantly in flower, and hedge-hyssop, etc.; some clethra. There is a good deal of wind, but I see where the waves have washed ten feet further within an hour or two over the south shore. The wet sand is covered with small bird-tracks, perhaps peetweets', and is marked all over with the galleries of some small creatures, — worms or shellfish perhaps, — of various sizes, — some quite large, — which have passed under the surface like a meadow mouse. Are not these food for the water-birds? I find growing densely there on the southeast shore and at the *ball* shore, where it appears to have been covered with water recently, the *Myriophyllum tenellum*, another species of that of which I found two varieties yesterday; perhaps since August 1st. A new plant.

The *balls* again, *somewhat* stale, left high and dry apparently a month ago. Some five inches in diameter.

I find here and there, washed up, what I take to be the inner scales of a tortoise, and, in one place, where it fitted over the edge of the shell, thin and transparent like isinglass or parchment.

Plucked, about 4.30, one bunch of *Viburnum nudum*

berries, all green, with very little pink tinge even. When



I got home at 6.30, nine were turned blue, the next morning thirty. It seems that they do not always pass through the deep-pink stage. They are quite sweet to eat, like raisins.

I noticed these birds in this walk:—

A lark, which sang.

White-bellied swallows on telegraph-wire.

Barn swallows, I think.

Nighthawks, which squeaked.

Heard a chewink *chewink*.

Saw cherry-birds flying lower over Heywood meadow like swallows, apparently for flies, and heard them, cricket-like.

Kingbirds quite common, twittering; one on telegraph-wire.

Bluebirds, saw and heard.

Chickadees, lipping note.

Jays, scream.

A woodcock, in wood-path, goes off with rattling sound.

Wilson's thrush's *yorrick*.

Saw crows.

Grouse.

Song sparrows, chirp.

Grass-bird and perhaps another sparrow.

Goldfinch, heard.

Aug. 20. *Sunday*. I hear no trilling of birds early. 5.15 A. M. — To Hill.

I hear a gold robin, also faint *song* of common robin. Wood pewee (fresh); red-wing blackbird with fragmentary trill; bobolinks (the males apparently darker and by themselves); kingbirds; nuthatch heard; yellow-throated vireo, heard and saw, on hickories (have I lately mistaken this for red-eye?); goldfinch; slate-colored hawk (with white rump and black wing-tips). The grape leaves even at this hour, after a dewy night, are still many of them curled upward, showing their

light under-sides, and feel somewhat crisped by the drought. This, I think, is one with that permanent standing up of the leaves of many trees at this season. Prinos berries have begun to redden. When the red-eye ceases generally, then I think is a crisis, — the woodland quire is dissolved. That, if I remember, was about a fortnight ago. The concert is over. The pewees sit still on their perch a long time, returning to the same twig after darting at an insect. The yellow-throated vireo is very restless, darting about. I hear a sound as of green pignuts falling from time to time, and see and hear the chickaree thereabouts!!

P. M. — Up Assabet by boat to Bath.

A warm but breezy day, wind west by south. Water clear and sunny. I see much of my fresh-water sponge just above the Island, attached to the bottom, rocks, or branches under water. In form it reminds me of some cladonia lichens, for it has many branches like a lichen, being a green, porous, spongy substance, with long, slender, pointed fingers or horns, pointed upward or outward, the thickest about half an inch in diameter, and emits a peculiar, penetrating, strong, rank scent like some chemicals. The whole mass perhaps eight or ten inches in diameter. When raised to the surface it slowly sinks again. The bottom of the south branch is in many places almost covered with the short cut leaves of the sium, — as I call it. On the sandy bottom in midstream (mussel shoals), a dozen rods above the Rock, I notice a small (?) green

clam which must be the same with or similar to that which Perkins showed me in Newburyport. It has bright-green rays from the eye (?) on a light-green ground. Found in pure sand. Saw three. The rays show through to the inside. It is handsomer without than the common.

Some chickadees on the pitch pines over water near the Hemlocks look longer than usual, hanging back downward. See a strange bird about size of cedar-bird also on the pitch pine, perhaps greenish-olive above, whitish or ashy beneath, with a yellow vent and a dark line on side-head.¹ Saw a wood pewee which had darted after  an insect over the water in this position in the air:  It often utters a continuous *pe-e-e*.

The *Polygonum amphibium* at Assabet Rock, apparently several days, rising two or more feet above water. In many places I notice oaks stripped by caterpillars nowadays. Saw yesterday one of those great light-green grubs with spots. I see to-day many — more than a half-dozen — large wood tortoises on the bottom of the river, — some apparently eight to nine inches long in shell, some with their heads out. Are they particularly attracted to the water at this season? They lie quite still on the bottom.

Off Dodge's Brook, saw a fish lying on its side on the surface, with its head downward, slowly steering toward the shore with an undulating motion of the tail. Found it to be a large sucker which had apparently been struck by a kingfisher, fish hawk, or heron

¹ Could it have been the female rose-breasted grosbeak?

and got away. (The mill is not a-going to-day, Sunday.) It had been seized near the tail, which for three inches was completely flayed and much torn, lacerated, a part of the caudal fin being carried off. It had also received a severe thrust midway its body, which had furrowed its side and turned down a large strip of skin. It was breathing its last when I caught it. It was evidently too powerful for the bird which had struck it. I brought it home and weighed and measured it. It weighed two pounds and two ounces and was nineteen and a quarter inches long. Above, it was a sort of blue black or slate-color, darkest on the head, with blotches of the same extending down its sides, which were of a reddish golden, passing into white beneath. There were a few small red spots on the sides, just behind the gills. It had what I should call a gibbous head, but no horns; a line of fine mucous pores above and below eye; eyes at least one and a half inches apart; great corrugated ears on the lower lip; fins all dark like the back; nostrils double; opercula not golden; irides golden; scales on lateral line sixty-five (about), those near tail gone with skin. Fin rays, as I counted: pectoral, seventeen; ventral, ten; anal, nine; dorsal, thirteen; caudal, some wanting. Looking down on it, it was very broad at base of head, tapering thence gradually to tail. It had a double bladder, nearly six inches long by one inch at widest part. I think it must have been a kingfisher, it was so much lacerated at the tail.

Now, at 4 P. M., hear a croaking frog¹ near the

¹ Mole cricket. [See *postea*.]

water's edge, sounding like the faint quacking of a duck with more of the *r* in it, — something like *crack crack crack*, rapidly repeated. Though I knew that I must be within three feet of it, as I looked from the boat upon the shore, I could see nothing, but several times I interrupted him and caused him to jump. It is surprising how perfectly they are concealed by their color, even when croaking under one's eyes. It was *Rana palustris*, though I did not see it when it croaked. I after heard them further off, just before sunset, along the edge of the river, and saw that I had often mistaken their note for that of a cricket. So similar are these two earth-sounds. The cricket-like note of this little frog in the meadow ushers in the evening.

A man tells me to-day that he once saw some black snake's eggs on the surface of a tussock in a meadow just hatching, some hatched. The old one immediately appeared and swallowed all the young. Assabet quite low. Those beds of dirty green ostrich-feather potamogetons are much exposed and dry at top.

I perceive quite a number of furrows of clams in the sand, all leading from the side toward the middle of the river, with the clams at that end. Can they be going down now? They have not moved opposite Hubbard Bath, where they are in middle as well as by shore. Their position in the furrows is on their sharp edges, with what I will call their two eyes forward.

We had a very little drizzling rain on the 4th, and I think that was the last drop.

There is so thick a bluish haze these dog-days that single trees half a mile off, seen against it as a light-

colored background, stand out distinctly a dark mass, — almost black, — as seen against the more distinct blue woods. So, also, when there is less haze, the distinct wooded ridges are revealed one behind another in the horizon.

Aug. 21. P. M. — To Conantum *via* Hubbard Bath.

Leaves of small hypericums begin to be red. The river is warmer than I supposed it would become again, yet not so warm as in July. A small, wary dipper, — solitary, dark-colored, diving amid the pads. The same that lingered so late on the Assabet. Red choke-berries are dried black; ripe some time ago. In Hubbard's meadow, between the two woods, I cannot find a pitcher-plant with any water in it. Some of the Hubbard aster are still left, against the upper Hubbard Wood by the shore, which the mowers omitted. It looks like a variety of *A. Tradescanti*,¹ with longer, less rigid, and more lanceolate toothed cauline leaves, with fewer and more distant branchlets, and the whole plant more simple and wand-like. The bayonet rush has not generally blossomed this year. What has, long ago. Have noticed winged grasshoppers or locusts a week or more. Spikenard berries are now mahogany-color. Trillium berries bright-red. I see a woodchuck at a distance, cantering like a fat pig, ludicrously fat, first one end up, then the other. It runs with difficulty. The fever-bush berries are partly turned red, perhaps prematurely. Now, say, is hazel-

¹ *Vide* July 26, '56.

nut time. I think that my *Aster corymbosus* — at least the early ones — are *A. cordifolius*, since Wood makes this to vary to white and to have a flexuous stem. I see robins in small flocks and pigeon woodpeckers with them. Now see in pastures tufts of grass which have been pulled up by cattle, withered, quite thickly strewn. *Spiranthes cernua*, a day or two. Brought home a great *Eupatorium purpureum* from Miles's Swamp (made species *fistulosum* by Barratt). It is ten and a half feet high and one inch in diameter; said to grow to twelve feet. The corymb, eighteen and a half inches wide by fifteen inches deep; the largest leaves, thirteen by three inches. The stem hollow throughout. This I found, to my surprise, when I undertook to make a flute of it, trusting it was closed at the leaves; but there is no more pith there than elsewhere. It would serve many purposes, as a water-pipe, etc. Probably the Indians knew it and used. They might have blowed arrows through a straight one. It would yield an available hollow tube six feet long.

Did I see the yellow redpoll back? Head not conspicuously reddish.

Aug. 22. The haze, accompanied by much wind, is so thick this forenoon that the sun is obscured as by a cloud. I see no rays of sunlight.

A bee much like a honey-bee cutting rounded pieces out of rose leaves.

P. M. — To Great Meadows on foot along bank into Bedford meadows; thence to Beck Stow's and Gowing's Swamp.

Walking may be a science, so far as the direction of a walk is concerned. I go again to the Great Meadows, to improve this remarkably dry season and walk where in ordinary times I cannot go. There is, no doubt, a particular season of the year when each place may be visited with most profit and pleasure, and it may be worth the while to consider what that season is in each case.

This was a prairial walk. I went along the river and meadows from the first, crossing the Red Bridge road to the Battle-Ground. In the Mill Brook, behind Jones's, was attracted by one of those handsome high-colored masses of fibrous pink roots of the willow in the water. It was three or four feet long, five or six inches wide, and four or five inches thick, — long parallel roots nearly as big as a crow-quill, with innumerable short fibres on all sides, all forming a dense mass of a singular bright-pink color. There are three or four haymakers still at work in the Great Meadows, though but very few acres are left uncut. Was surprised to hear a phœbe's *pewet pewee* and see it. I perceive a dead mole in the path half-way down the meadow.

At the lower end of these meadows, between the river and the firm land, are a number of shallow muddy pools or pond-holes, where the yellow lily and pontederia, *Lysimachia stricta*, *Ludwigia sphaerocarpa*, etc., etc., grow, where apparently the surface of the meadow was floated off some spring and so a permanent pond-hole was formed in which, even in this dry season, there is considerable water left. The great roots of

the yellow lily, laid bare by the floating off of the surface crust last spring, two and a half or three inches in diameter and a yard or more of visible length, look like great serpents or hydras exposed in their winter quarters. There lie now little heaps or collections of the singularly formed seed-vessels of the pontederia, as they have fallen on the mud, directly under the nodding but bare spikes.

In these shallow muddy pools, but a few inches deep and few feet in diameter, I was surprised to observe the undulations produced by pretty large fishes endeavoring to conceal themselves. In one little muddy basin where there was hardly a quart of water, caught half a dozen little breams and pickerel, only an inch long, as perfectly distinct as full grown, and in another place, where there was little else than mud left, breams two or three inches long still alive. In many dry hollows were dozens of small breams, pickerel, and pouts, quite dead and dry. Hundreds, if not thousands, of fishes had here perished on account of the drought.

Saw a blue heron — apparently a young bird, of a brownish blue — fly up from one of these pools, and a stake-driver from another, and also saw their great tracks on the mud, and the feathers they had shed, — some of the long, narrow white neck-feathers of the heron. The tracks of the heron were about six inches long. Here was a rare chance for the herons to transfix the imprisoned fish. It is a wonder that any have escaped. I was surprised that any dead were left on the mud, but I judge from what the book says that they do not touch dead fish. To these remote shallow

and muddy pools, usually surrounded by reeds and sedge, far amid the wet meadows, — to these, then, the blue heron resorts for its food. Here, too, is an abundance of the yellow lily, on whose seeds they are said to feed. There, too, are the paths of muskrats.

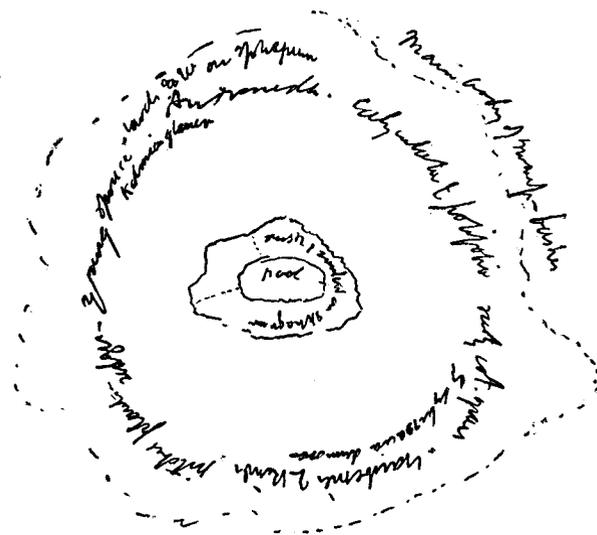
In most of the small hollows formed by the crust being carried off in the spring, the *proserpinaca* grows abundantly. There are now hopping all over this meadow small *Rana palustris*, and also some more beautifully spotted *halecina* or shad frogs. There is a pretty strong wind from the north-northwest. The haze is so thick that we can hardly see more than a mile. The low blue haze around the *distant* edge of the meadow looks even like a low fog, *i. e.* at a sufficient distance. I find at length a pitcher-plant with a spoonful of water in it. It must be last night's dew. It is wonderful that in all this drought it has not evaporated. Arum berries ripe. High blueberries pretty thick, but now much wilted and shrivelled.

Thus the drought serves the herons, etc., confining their prey within narrower limits, and doubtless they are well acquainted with suitable retired pools far in the marshes to go a-fishing in. I see in Pedrick's bushy and weedy meadow dense fields of *Solidago arguta*, *stricta* or *puberula* (?), and *altissima*, etc., now in its prime. Corn-stalks begin to be cut and stacked, it is so dry.

I hear that Brooks's meadow (it is what I called the burning by Joe Merriam's) is on fire and cannot be put out. Are not most ardeas (herons and bitterns) seen at this season?

Aug. 23. Wednesday. P. M. — To Gowing's Swamp and Hadlock Meadows.

I improve the dry weather to examine the middle of Gowing's Swamp. There is in the middle an open pool, twenty or thirty feet in diameter, nearly full of sphagnum and green froth on the surface (frog-spittle), and what other plants I could not see on account of the danger in standing on the quaking ground; then a dense border, a rod or more wide, of a peculiar rush (?),



with clusters of seed-vessels, three together, now going to seed, a yellow green, forming an abrupt edge next the water, this on a dense bed of quaking sphagnum, in which I sink eighteen inches in water, upheld by its matted roots, where I fear to break through. On

this the spatulate sundew abounds. This is marked by the paths of muskrats, which also extend through the green froth of the pool. Next comes, half a dozen rods wide, a dense bed of *Andromeda calyculata*, — the *A. Polifolia* mingled with it, — the rusty cotton-grass, cranberries, — the common and also *V. Oxy-coccus*, — pitcher-plants, sedges, and a few young spruce and larch here and there, — all on sphagnum, which forms little hillocks about the stems of the andromeda. Then ferns, now yellowing, high blueberry bushes, etc., etc., etc., — or the bushy and main body of the swamp, under which the sphagnum is now dry and white.

I find a new cranberry on the sphagnum amid the *A. calyculata*, — *V. Oxy-coccus*, of which Emerson says it is the "common cranberry of the north of Europe," cranberry of commerce there, found by "Oakes on Nantucket, in Pittsfield, and near Sherburne." It has small, now purplish-dotted fruit, flat on the sphagnum, some turned scarlet partly, on terminal peduncles, with slender, thread-like stems and small leaves strongly revolute on the edges.¹

One of the Miss Browns (of the factory quarter) speaks of the yellow-flowered asclepias in that neighborhood. Crossed the Brooks or Hadlock meadows, which have been on fire (spread from bogging) several weeks. They present a singularly desolate appearance. Much of the time over shoes in ashes and cinders. Yellowish peat ashes in spots here and there. The peat beneath still burning, as far as dry, making

¹ Vide Aug. 30, '56.

holes sometimes two feet deep, they say. The surface strewn with cranberries burnt to a cinder. I seemed to feel a dry heat under feet, as if the ground were on fire, where it was not.

It is so dry that I walk lengthwise in ditches perfectly dry, full of the proserpinaca, now beginning to go to seed, which usually stands in water. Its pectinate lower leaves all exposed. On the baked surface, covered with brown-paper conferva.

Aug. 24. P. M. — To Fair Haven Pond by boat.

A strong wind from the south-southwest, which I expect will waft me back. So many pads are eaten up and have disappeared that it has the effect of a rise of the river drowning them. This strong wind against which we row is quite exhilarating after the stiller summer. Yet we have no rain, and I see the blue haze between me and the shore six rods off.

The bright crimson-red under sides of the great white lily pads, turned up by the wind in broad fields on the sides of the stream, are a great ornament to the stream. It is not till August, methinks, that they are turned up conspicuously. Many are now turned over completely. After August opens, before these pads are decayed (for they last longer than the nuphars of both kinds), the stronger winds begin to blow and turn them up at various angles, turning many completely over and exposing their bright crimson(?) red under sides with their ribs. The surface being agitated, the wind catches under their edges and turns them up and holds them commonly at an angle of 45°. It is

a very wholesome color, and, after the calm summer, an exhilarating sight, with a strong wind heard and felt, cooling and condensing your thoughts. This has the effect of a ripening of the leaf on the river. Not in vain was the under side thus colored, which at length the August winds turn up.

The soft pads eaten up mostly; the pontederias crisped and considerably blackened, only a few flowers left. It is surprising how the maples are affected by this drought. Though they stand along the edge of the river, they appear to suffer more than any trees except the white ash. Their leaves — and also those of the alders and hickories and grapes and even oaks more or less — are permanently curled and turned up on the upper three quarters of the trees; so that their foliage has a singularly glaucous hue in rows along the river. At a distance they have somewhat of the same effect with the silvered tops of the swamp white oak. The sight suggests a strong wind constantly blowing. I went ashore and felt of them. They were more or less crisped and curled permanently. It suggests what to a slight extent occurs every year. On the Cliffs so many young trees and bushes are withered that from the river it looks as if a fire had run over them. At Lee's Cliff larger ash trees are completely sere and brown, — burnt up. The white pines are parti-colored there.

Now, methinks, hawks are decidedly more common, beating the bush and soaring. I see two circling over the Cliffs. See a blue heron standing on the meadow at Fair Haven Pond. At a distance before you, only

the two waving lines appear, and you would not suspect the long neck and legs.

Looking across the pond, the haze at the water's edge under the opposite woods looks like a low fog. To-night, as for at least four or five nights past, and to some extent, I think, a great many times within a month, the sun goes down shorn of his beams, half an hour before sunset, round and red, high above the horizon. There are no variegated sunsets in this dog-day weather.

Aug. 25. I think I never saw the haze so thick as now, at 11 A. M., looking from my attic window. I cannot quite distinguish J. Hosmer's house, only the dark outline of the woods behind it. There appears to be, as it were, a thick fog over the Dennis plains. Between me and Nawshawtuct is a very blue haze like smoke. Indeed many refer all this to smoke.

Tortoise eggs are nowadays dug up in digging potatoes.

P. M. — Up Assabet by boat to Bath.

I think that the *Polygonum hydropiperoides* is now in its prime. At the poke-logan opposite the bath place, the pools are nearly all dry, and many little pollywogs, an inch long, lie dead or dying together in the moist mud. Others are covered with the dry brown-paper conferva. Some swamp white oaks are yellowish and brown, many leaves. The *Viburnum nudum* berries, in various stages, — green, deep-pink, and also deep-blue, not purple or ripe, — are very abundant at Shad-bush Meadow. They appear to be now in their prime

and are quite sweet, but have a large seed. Interesting for the various colors on the same bush and in the same cluster. Also the choke-berries are very abundant there, but mostly dried black. There is a large field of rhexia there now almost completely out of bloom, but its scarlet leaves, reddening the ground at a distance, supply the place of flowers.

We still continue to have strong wind in the middle of the day. The sun is shorn of his beams by the haze before 5 o'clock P. M., round and red, and is soon completely concealed, apparently by the haze alone. This blue haze is not dissipated much by the night, but is seen still with the earliest light.

Aug. 26. For a week we have had warmer weather than for a long time before, yet not so warm nearly as in July. I hear of a great many fires around us, far and near, both meadows and woods; in Maine and New York also. There *may* be some smoke in this haze, but I doubt it.

P. M. — To Dugan Desert.

I hear part of a phœbe's strain, as I go over the railroad bridge. It is the voice of dying summer. The pads now left on the river are chiefly those of the white lily. I noticed yesterday where a large piece of meadow had melted and sunk on a sandy bottom in the Assabet, and the weeds now rose above the surface where it was five feet deep around. It is so dry that I take the left of the railroad bridge and go through the meadows along the river. In the hollows where the surface of the meadow has been taken out within a year or two, spring

up pontederias and lilies, proserpinaca, polygonums, *Ludwigia palustris*, etc., etc. *Nasturtium hispidum* still in bloom, and will be for some time. I think I hear a red-eye. Rudbeckia, — the small one, — still fresh.

The *Poa hirsuta* is left on the upper edge of the meadows (as at J. Hosmer's), as too thin and poor a grass, beneath the attention of the farmers. How fortunate that it grows in such places and not in the midst of the rank grasses which are cut! With its beautiful fine purple color, its beautiful purple blush, it reminds me and supplies the place of the rhexia now about done.¹ Close by, or held in your hand, its fine color is not obvious, — it is but dull, — but [at] a distance, with a suitable light, it is exceedingly beautiful. It is at the same time in bloom. This is one of the most interesting phenomena of August.²

I hear these afternoons the faint, cricket-like note of the *Rana palustris* squatting by the side of the river, easily confounded with that of the interrupted cricket, only the last is more ringing and metallic.³ How long has it been heard? The choke-cherry leaves are, some of them, from scarlet inclining to crimson. Radical leaves of the yellow thistle spot the meadow.

Opened one of my snapping turtle's eggs. The egg was not warm to the touch. The young is now larger and darker-colored, shell and all, more than a hemisphere, and the yolk which maintains it is much re-

¹ Leaving off, though I see some pretty handsome Sept. 4th.

² [*Excursions*, pp. 252, 253; Riv. 309, 310. The name of the grass appears there as *Eragrostis pectinacea*.]

³ [See pp. 460, 461.]

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duced. Its shell, very deep, hemispherical, fitting close to the shell of the egg, and, if you had not just opened the egg, you would say it could not contain so much. Its shell is considerably hardened, its feet and claws developed, and also its great head, though held in for want of room. Its eyes are open. It puts out its head, stretches forth its claws, and liberates its tail, though all were enveloped in a gelatinous fluid. With its great head it has already the ugliness of the full-grown, and is already a hieroglyphic of snappishness. It may take a fortnight longer to hatch it.

How much lies quietly buried in the ground that we wot not of! We unconsciously step over the eggs of snapping turtles slowly hatching the summer through. Not only was the surface perfectly dry and trackless there, but blackberry vines had run over the spot where these eggs were buried and weeds had sprung up above. If Iliads are not composed in our day, snapping turtles are hatched and arrive at maturity. It already thrusts forth its tremendous head, — for the first time in this sphere, — and slowly moves from side to side, — opening its small glistening eyes for the first time to the light, — expressive of dull rage, as if it had endured the trials of this world for a century. When I behold this monster thus steadily advancing toward maturity, all nature abetting, I am convinced that there must be an irresistible necessity for mud turtles. With what tenacity Nature sticks to her idea! These eggs, not warm to the touch, buried in the ground, so slow to hatch, are like the seeds of vegetable life.¹

¹ [Channing, p. 283.]

Grapes ripe, owing to the hot dry weather.

Passing by M. Miles's, he told me he had a mud turtle in a box in his brook, where it had lain since the last of April, and he had given it nothing to eat. I wished he had known that I caught some in the spring and let them go. He would have bought them of me. He is very fond of them. He bought one of the turtles which Ed. Garfield caught on Fair Haven in the spring, and paid him seventy-five cents for it. Garfield was in his boat and saw two fighting on the pond. I approached carefully and succeeded in catching both, and getting them into the boat. He got them home by first carrying one along a piece, then putting him down and, while he was crawling off, going back for the other. One weighed forty-three or forty-four pounds and the other forty-seven. Miles gave me the shell of the one he bought, which weighed forty-three or forty-four. It is fifteen and six eighths inches long by fourteen and a half broad, of a roundish form, broadest backward. The smaller ones I have seen are longer in proportion to their length [*sic*], and points larger also. The upper shell is more than five and a half inches deep and would make a good door to bail out a boat with. Above it is a muddy brown composed of a few great scales. He said he had trouble in killing them. It was of no great use to cut their heads. He thrust his knife through the soft tissue in their sternum and killed them at once. Told me of one Artemas (?) Wheeler of Sudbury who used to keep fifteen or twenty in a box in a pond-hole, and to take them and eat them from time to time, having a great

appetite for them. Some years ago, in a January thaw, many came out on the Sudbury meadows, and, a cold snap suddenly succeeding, a great many were killed. One man counted eighty or more dead, some of which would weigh eighty to a hundred pounds. Miles himself found two shells on his river meadow of very large ones. Since then they have been scarce. Wheeler, he thought, used to go a-hunting for them the 2d (?) of May. It increases my respect for our river to see these great products of it. No wonder the Indians made much of them. Such great shells must have made convenient household utensils for them.

Miles once saw a large bullfrog jump at and catch a green snake ten inches long, which was running along the edge of the water, and hold it crosswise in its mouth, but the snake escaped at last.

Even the hinder part of a mud turtle's shell is scalloped, one would say rather for beauty than use.

Pigeons with their *quivet* dashed over the Dugan Desert.

Hear by telegraph that it rains in Portland and New York.

In the evening, some lightning in the horizon, and soon after a *little* gentle rain, which —

(Aug. 27) I find next day has moistened the ground about an inch down only. But now it is about as dry as ever.

P. M. — To Pine Hill *via* Turnpike and Walden.

Small *Bidens chrysanthemoides*, some time by Turnpike. The leaves of the smallest hypericum are very

many of them turned to a somewhat crimson red, sign of the ripening year. What I have called the Castile-soap gall, about one inch in diameter, handsomely variegated with a dirty white or pale tawny on a crimson ground; hard and perfectly smooth; solid and hard except a very small cavity in the centre containing some little grubs; full of crimson juice (which runs over the knife, and has stained this page¹ and blues my knife with its acid) for an eighth of an inch from the circumference, then lighter-colored.² Many red oak acorns have fallen.³ The great green acorns in broad, shallow cups. How attractive these forms! No wonder they are imitated on pumps, fence and bed posts. Is not this a reason that the pigeons are about? The yellow birch is yellowed a good deal, the leaves spotted with green. The dogbane a clear yellow. The cinnamon ferns hardly begun to turn or fall. The lice on the birches make it very disagreeable to go through them. I am surprised to find the brook and ditches in Hubbard's Close remarkably full after this long drought, when so many streams are dried up. Rice and others are getting out mud in the pond-hole opposite Breed's. They have cut down straight through clear black muck, perfectly rotted, eight feet, and it is soft yet further. Button-bushes, andromeda, proserpinaca, hardhack, etc., etc., grow atop. It looks like a great sponge. Old trees buried in it. On the Walden road some maples are yellow and some chestnuts brownish-yellow and also sere. From Heywood's

¹ [A brown stain on the page.]

² *Vide* [pp. 482, 483].

³ Were they not cast down?

Peak I am surprised to see the top of Pine Hill wearing its October aspect, — yellow with changed maples and here and there faintly blushing with changed red maples. This is the effect of the drought. Among other effects of the drought I forgot to mention the fine dust, which enters the house and settles everywhere and also adds to the thickness of the atmosphere. Fences and roadside plants are thickly coated with it. I see much froth on alders. As I go up Pine Hill, gather the shrivelled *Vaccinium vacillans* berries, many as hard as if dried on a pan. They are very sweet and good, and not wormy like huckleberries. Far more abundant in this state than usual, owing to the drought. As I stand there, I think I hear a rising wind rustling the tops of the woods, and, turning, see what I think is the rear of a large flock of pigeons. Do they not eat many of these berries? Hips of the early rose changed. Some *Viburnum Lentago* berries, turned blue before fairly reddening. Blue-stemmed goldenrod, a day or two.

When I awake in the morning, I remember what I have seen and heard of snapping turtles, and am in doubt whether it was dream or reality. I slowly raise my head and peeping over the bedside see my great mud turtle shell lying bottom up under the table, showing its prominent ribs, and realize into what world I have awaked. Before I was in doubt how much prominence my good Genius would give to that fact. That the first object you see on awakening should be an empty mud turtle's shell!! Will it not make me of the earth earthy? Or does it not indicate that I am of the earth

earthy? What life, what character, this has shielded, which is now at liberty to be turned bottom upward! I can put specimens of all our other turtles into this cavity. This too was once an infant in its egg. When I see this, then I am sure that I am not dreaming, but am awake to this world. I do not know any more terrene fact. It still carries the earth on its back. Its life is between the animal and vegetable; like a seed it is planted deep in the ground and is all summer germinating. Does it not possess as much the life of the vegetable as the animal?

Would it not be well to describe some of those rough all-day walks across lots? — as that of the 15th, picking our way over quaking meadows and swamps and occasionally slipping into the muddy batter midleg deep; jumping or fording ditches and brooks; forcing our way through dense blueberry swamps, where there is water beneath and bushes above; then brushing through extensive birch forests all covered with green lice, which cover our clothes and face; then, relieved, under larger wood, more open beneath, steering for some more conspicuous trunk; now along a rocky hillside where the sweet-fern grows for a mile, then over a recent cutting, finding our uncertain footing on the cracking tops and trimmings of trees left by the choppers; now taking a step or two of smooth walking across a highway; now through a dense pine wood, descending into a rank, dry swamp, where the cinnamon fern rises above your head, with isles of poison-dogwood; now up a scraggy hill covered with shrub oak, stooping and winding one's way for half a

mile, tearing one's clothes in many places and putting out one's eyes, and find[ing] at last that it has no bare brow, but another slope of the same character; now through a corn-field diagonally with the rows; now coming upon the hidden melon-patch; seeing the back side of familiar hills and not knowing them, — the nearest house to home, which you do not know, seeming further off than the farthest which you do know; — in the spring defiled with the froth on various bushes, etc., etc., etc.; now reaching on higher land some open pigeon-place, a breathing-place for us.

I suppose that is a puffball, about two inches through (on the ground), roundish, brownish, cracked, pale wash-leather color, with a handsome, variegated slate-color within, not yet dusty, contrasting with the outside.

Aug. 28. Much cooler this morning, making us think of fire. This is gradually clearing the atmosphere, and, as it is about as dry as ever, I think that haze was not smoke; quite as dry as yesterday.

P. M. — By Great Meadows and Bedford meadows to Carlisle Bridge; back by Carlisle and Concord side across lots to schoolhouse.

Improve the continued drought to go through the meadows. There is a cool east wind (it has been east a good deal lately in this drought), which has cleared the air wonderfully, revealing the long-concealed woods and hills in the horizon and making me think of November even. And now that I am going along the path to the meadow in the woods beyond Peter's, I perceive the fall shine on the leaves and earth: *i. e.*, a great deal

of light is reflected through the clearer air, which has also a vein of coolness in it. Some crotalaria pods are now black and dry, and rattle as I walk. The farmers improve this dry spell to cut ditches and dig mud in the meadows and pond-holes. I see their black heaps in many places. I see on the Great Meadows circular patches — the stubble of a coarse light-green sedge (apparently cut-grass) — of various dimensions, which look as if they had been brought from other places and dropped there in the spring. Yet they are very numerous and extensive, running into one another, yet with a rounded or coarsely crenate edge. In fact, they probably cover the greater part of the meadow. It must be that the cut-grass merely spreads in circles. There are some in the meadow near the Kibbe Place. It makes firm ground. Between these are the dark-colored patches of cranberries, ferns, and finer grasses (?) of such singular forms as are used in lace-work, like the spaces left between circles, suggesting that this is the groundwork on which the other is dropped. Or does the cut-grass (?) incline to grow in this circular manner?



The meadow is drier than ever, and new pools are dried up. The breams, from one to two and a half inches long, lying on the sides and quirking from time to time, a dozen together where there is but a pint of water on the mud, are a handsome but sad sight, — pretty green jewels, dying in the sun. I saved a dozen or more by putting them in deeper pools. Saw a whole school of little pouts, hundreds of them one and a half

inches long, many dead, all apparently fated to die, and some full-grown fishes. Several hairworms four or five inches long in this muddy water. The muddy bottom of these pools dried up is cracked into a sort of regular crystals. In the soft mud, the tracks of the great bittern and the blue heron. Scared up one of the former and saw a small dipper on the river. Just after entering the Bedford meadows (travelling north), for perhaps a mile in length and the width of the meadow, the surface on all sides had been lifted or tilted up, showing the blue edges of the soil, so that there was hardly a level square rod, — giving the aspect of waves two feet high or more with numerous holes and trenches, and making it very difficult to mow it, as well as to walk over it, and here and there permanent pools were made in it. I do not know why it should have happened there more than elsewhere. Found the *Ludwigia sphaerocarpa* down that way.

It seems that the upper surface of the *Victoria regia* is "a light green" and the under "a bright crimson," according to Schomburgk, its discoverer. In this it is like our white lily pads.

We did not come to a fence or wall for about four miles this afternoon. Heard some *large* hawks whistling much like a boy high over the meadow.

Observed many of those Castile-soap galls from a tenth of an inch to an inch in diameter on a *Quercus ilicifolia*. They are attached to the outer edge of the cup, commonly filling the space between two acorns, and look as if they had merely lodged between them, dropping out readily, though they are slightly attached

to one cup. I see some not much bigger than a pin's head, in the place, and reminding me of those small abortive acorns which so often grow on the cup of the small chinquapin. May not these galls be connected with those and be also an abortive acorn? I have three, of medium size, on the edge of one acorn-cup, and not occupying more than one third its circumference, unsupported by any neighboring cup, the middle one the smallest, being apparently crowded. Apparently the insect deposits its egg in the edge of the cup, and this egg, as in all galls, is, I should say, at once the seed of vegetable and of animal life: it produces the vegetable gall, and is the seed of it, also the animal. May it not be regarded as the seed of the gall, as well as the ovum of the insect?

Moles make heaps in meadows.

In my experience, at least of *late years*, all that depresses a man's spirits is the sense of remissness, — duties neglected, unfaithfulness, — or shamming, impurity, falsehood, selfishness, inhumanity, and the like.

From the experience of late years I should say that a man's seed was the direct tax of his race. It stands for my sympathy with my race. When the brain chiefly is nourished, and not the affections, the seed becomes merely excremental.

Saw a bushel of hazelnuts in their burs, which some boy had spread on the ground to dry behind Hodgman's. Observed yesterday, in a pool in what was Heywood's peat meadow south of, but near, Turnpike, apparently a *utricularia*, very small with minute forked green leaves, and bladders on bare

threads, rooting in mud at bottom; apparently out of bloom. Also another kind with long stems, many black bladders, and no *obviously* green leaves, filling the pools in Hubbard's Close.

Aug. 29. A cool morning with much fog, — more than yesterday. Have not had much during the warmer part of the drought, methinks.

Cattle are driven down from up-country. Hear the drovers' *whoa whoa whoa* or *whay whay whay*.

Where I walked yesterday it appeared as if the whole surface of the meadow had been at one time lifted up, but prevented by shores or bushes or ice from floating off, then broken up by wind and waves, and had finally melted and sunk irregularly, near where it rose. I repeatedly stepped into the long crack-like intervals between the cakes.

When our meadows are flooded in the spring and our river is changed to a sea, then the gulls, the sea birds, come up here to complete the scene. Or are they merely on their way eastward?

Were not those large, and often pointed, rocks occasionally seen on the meadows brought there by the floating meadow, and so dropped broad end down?

P. M. — To Derby Bridge neighborhood and front of Tarbell's.

It is a great pleasure to walk in this clearer atmosphere, though cooler. How great a change, and how sudden, from that sultry and remarkably hazy atmosphere to this clear, cool autumnal one, in which all things shine, and distance is restored to us! The wind

blew quite hard in the midst of that haze, but did not disperse it. Only this cooler weather with a steady east wind has done it. It is so cool that we are inclined to stand round the kitchen fire a little while these mornings, though we sit and sleep with open windows still. I think that the cool air from the sea has condensed the haze, not blown it off. The grass is so dry and withered that it caught fire from the locomotive four or five days ago near the widow Hosmer's, and the fire ran over forty or fifty rods, threatening the house, — grass which should have afforded some pasturage. The cymes of elder-berries, black with fruit, are now conspicuous.

Up railroad. Poison sumach berries begin to look ripe, — or dry, — of a pale straw-color. The zizania is pretty abundant in the river, in rear of Joseph Hosmer's. A small, what his father calls partridge hawk killed many chickens for him last year, but the slate-colored hawk never touches them. Very many water-plants — pontederias, lilies, zizania, etc., etc. — are now going to seed, prepared to feed the migrating water-fowl, etc. Saw a hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya*) on which every leaf was curiously marked with a small rather triangular brown spot (eaten) in the axils of the veins next the midrib, oppositely or alternately. Under side lower leaves of *Lycopus Virginicus* lake-color. I see where the squirrels, apparently, have stripped the pitch pine cones, scattering the scales about. Many birds nowadays resort to the wild black cherry tree, as here front of Tarbell's. I see them continually coming and going directly from and to a great distance, — cherry-

birds, robins, and kingbirds. I enjoy the warmth of the sun now that the air is cool, and Nature seems really more genial. I love to sit on the withered grass on the sunny side of the wall. My mistress is at a more respectful distance, for, by the coolness of the air, I am more continent in my thought and held aloof from her, while by the genial warmth of the sun I am more than ever attracted to her. I see a boy already raking cranberries. The moss rose hips will be quite ripe in a day or two. Found a new and erect euphorbia (*hypericifolia*) on the slope just east of his lizard ditches, still in bloom and pretty, probably open first in July. At Clamshell Bank the barn swallows are very lively, filling the air with their twittering now, at 6 P. M. They rest on the dry mullein-tops, then suddenly all start off together as with one impulse and skim about over the river, hill, and meadow. Some sit on the bare twigs of a dead apple tree. Are they not gathering for their migration?

Early for several mornings I have heard the sound of a flail. It leads me to ask if I have spent as industrious a spring and summer as the farmer, and gathered as rich a crop of experience. If so, the sound of my flail will be heard by those who have ears to hear, separating the kernel from the chaff all the fall and winter, and a sound no less cheering it will be. If the drought has destroyed the corn, let not all harvests fail. Have you commenced to thresh your grain? The lecturer must commence his threshing as early as August, that his fine flour may be ready for his winter customers. The fall rains will make full springs and raise his

streams sufficiently to grind his grist. We shall hear the sound of his flail all the fall, early and late. It is made of tougher material than hickory, and tied together with resolution stronger than an eel-skin. For him there is no husking-bee, but he does it all alone and by hand, at evening by lamplight, with the barn door shut and only the pile of husks behind him for warmth. For him, too, I fear there is no patent corn-sheller, but he does his work by hand, ear by ear, on the edge of a shovel over a bushel, on his hearth, and after he takes up a handful of the yellow grain and lets it fall again, while he blows out the chaff; and he goes to bed happy when his measure is full.

Channing has come from Chelsea Beach this morning with *Euphorbia polygonifolia* in flower, bayberry in fruit, datura in flower, staghorn sumach fruit, chenopodium (it seems not to be made a distinct species, though very mealy), scarlet pimpernel still in flower, *Salsola Kali* (the prickly plant), and apparently *Solidago sempervirens*.

Aug. 30. Another great fog this morning, which lasts till 8.30. After so much dry and warm weather, cool weather has suddenly come, and this has produced these two larger fogs than for a long time. Is it always so?

Hear a warbling vireo faintly in the elms.

P. M. — To Conantum *via* Clamshell Hill and meadows.

The clearness of the air which began with the cool morning of the 28th makes it delicious to gaze in any

direction. *Though there has been no rain*, the valleys are emptied of haze, and I see with new pleasure to distant hillsides and farmhouses and a river-reach shining in the sun, and to the mountains in the horizon. Coolness and clarity go together. What I called *Solidago altissima*, a simple slender one with a small head, some time, — perhaps not to be distinguished. Crossed the river at Hubbard's Bath. Apparently as many clams lie up as ever. The two river polygonums may be said to be now in prime. The *hydropiperoides* has a peculiarly slender waving spike. The *Bidens Beckii* made the best show, I think, a week ago, though there may be more of them open now. They are not so widely open. Was not that a meadow-hen which I scared up in two places by the riverside, — of a dark brown like a small woodcock, though it flew *straight* and low? I go along the flat Hosmer shore to Clamshell Hill. The sparganium seed balls begin to brown and come off in the hand. The *Ammannia humilis* is quite abundant on the denuded shore there and in John Hosmer's meadow, now turned red and so detected, reddening the ground. Are they not young hen-hawks which I have seen sailing for a week past, without red tails?

I go along through J. Hosmer's meadow near the river, it is so dry. I see places where the meadow has been denuded of its surface within a few years, four or five rods in diameter, forming shallow platters, in which the *Lysimachia stricta*, small hypericums, lindernia, gratiola, pipes, ammannia, etc., grow. I walk dry-shod quite to the phalanxes of bulrushes of

a handsome blue-green glaucous color. The colors of the rainbow rush are now pretty bright. The floating milfoil at Purple Utricularia Shore, with red stem. Blue-eyed grass still. Dogwood leaves have fairly begun to turn. A *few* small maples are scarlet along the meadow. A dark-brown or black shining, oval or globular, fruit of the skunk-cabbage, with prominent calyx, filaments, and style roughening it, is quite handsome like a piece of carved ebony (or dogwood?). I see its small green spathes already pushing up.

The berries are about all dried up or wormy — I am on Conantum — though I still eat the dried blueberries. There are now none to pluck in a walk, unless it be black cherries and apples. I see brown thrashers on the black cherry tree and hear their sharp click like a squirrel. Hazelnut time about a week ago, — to be in advance of the squirrels. I see the dried reddened burs and shells under every bush where they have been. The *Bidens frondosa*, some time; distinguished by its being fairly pinnate, with from three to five leaflets. Notice the radical leaves of primrose. The huckleberries are so withered and brown in many places, owing to the drought, that they appear dead and as if they were some which had been broken up by the pickers, or as if burnt. Some white ash trees have suffered more than any others I have noticed, on Cliffs their leaves being quite brown and sere.

Minot Pratt here this evening. He tells me he finds a *white* hardhack, bayberry in Holden's pasture, and, on the old Carlisle road, *Cornus florida*, near Bate-man's Pond, and what Russell thought a rare hedsa-

rum somewhere. Pratt once caught a mud turtle at Brook Farm which weighed forty-six pounds.

Aug. 31. Warmer this morning and considerably hazy again. Wormwood pollen yellows my clothes commonly.

Ferris in his "Utah," crossing the plains in '52, says that, on Independence Rock near the Sweetwater, "at a rough guess, there must be 35,000 to 40,000" names of travellers.¹

P. M. — To Lincoln.

Surveying for William Peirce. He says that several large chestnuts appear to be dying near him on account of the drought. Saw a meadow said to be still on fire after three weeks; fire had burned holes one and a half feet deep; was burning along slowly at a considerable depth. P. brought me home in his wagon. Was not quite at his ease and in his element; *i. e.*, talked with some reserve, though well behaved, unless I approached the subject of horses. Then he spoke with a will and with authority, betraying somewhat of the jockey. He said that this dry weather was "trying to wagons; it loosened the *tires*," — if that was the word.² He did not use blinders nor a check-rein. Said a horse's neck must ache at night which has been reined up all day. He said that the outlet of F[lint's] Pond had not been dry before for four years, and then only two or three days; now it was a month.

Notwithstanding this unprecedented drought our

¹ [Benjamin G. Ferris, *Utah and the Mormons*. New York, 1854.]

² Probably "tires."

river, the main stream, has not been very low. It may have been kept up by the reservoirs. Walden is unaffected by the drought, and is still very high. But for the most part silent are the watercourses, when I walk in rocky swamps where a tinkling is commonly heard.

At nine this evening I distinctly and strongly smell smoke, I think of burning meadows, in the air in the village. There must be more smoke in this haze than I have supposed. Is not the haze a sort of smoke, the sun parching and burning the earth?

END OF VOLUME VI