

## XI

JULY, 1855

(ÆT. 37-38)

*July 2.* Young bobolinks are now fluttering over the meadow, but I have not been able to find a nest, so concealed in the meadow-grass.

At 2 P. M. — Thermometer north side of house . . . . . 93°  
Air over river at Hubbard's Bath . . . . . 88°  
Water six feet from shore and one foot deep . . . . . 84½°  
“ near surface in middle, where up to neck . . . . . 83½°  
“ at bottom in same place, pulling it up quickly 83½°

Yet the air on the wet body, there being a strong southwest wind, feels colder than the water.

*July 3.* 4 P. M. — Air out-of-doors generally, 86°. On the sand between rails in the Deep Cut, 103°. Near the surface of Walden, fifteen rods from shore, 80°. Three feet below the surface there, and everywhere nearer shore (and probably further from it), 78°.

*July 4.* To Boston on way to Cape Cod with C.

The schooner Melrose was advertised to make her first trip to Provincetown this morning at eight. We reached City (?) Wharf at 8.30. “Well, Captain Crocker, how soon do you start?” “To-morrow morning at 9 o'clock.” “But you have advertised to leave at 8

this morning." "I know it, but we are going to lay over till to-morrow." !!! So we had to spend the day in Boston, — at Athenæum gallery, Alcott's, and at the regatta. Lodged at Alcott's, who is about moving to Walpole.

*July 5.* In middle of the forenoon sailed in the Melrose. We hugged the Scituate shore as long as possible on account of wind. The great tupelo on the edge of Scituate is very conspicuous for many miles about Minot's Rock. Scared up a flock of young ducks on the Bay, which have been bred hereabouts. Saw the petrel.<sup>1</sup>

Went to Gifford's Union House (the old Tailor's Inn) in Provincetown. They have built a town-house since I was here — the first object seen in making the port. Talked with Nahum Haynes, who is making fisherman's boots there. He came into the tavern in the evening. I did not know him — only that he was a Haynes. He remembered two mud turtles caught in a seine with shad on the Sudbury meadows forty years ago, which would weigh a hundred pounds each. Asked me, "Who was that man that used to live next to Bull's, — acted as if he were crazy or out?"

Talked with a man who has the largest patch of cranberries here, — ten acres, — and there are fifteen or twenty acres in all.

The fishermen sell lobsters fresh for two cents apiece.

*July 6.* Rode to North Truro very early in the stage

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 264; Riv. 320.]

or covered wagon, on the new road, which is just finished as far as East Harbor Creek. Blackfish on the shore. Walked from post-office to lighthouse. Fog till eight or nine, and short grass very wet. Board at James Small's, the lighthouse, at \$3.50 the week.

*Polygala polygama* well out, flat, ray-wise, all over the fields. *Cakile Americana*, sea-rocket, the large weed of the beach, some time and going to seed, on beach. Pasture thistle (*Cirsium pumilum*), out some time. A great many white ones. The boy, Isaac Small, got eighty bank swallows' eggs out of the clay-bank, *i. e.* above the clay. Small says there are a few great gulls here in summer. I see small (?) yellow-legs. Many crow blackbirds in the dry fields hopping about. Upland plover near the lighthouse breeding. Small once cut off one's wing when mowing in the field next the lighthouse as she sat on her eggs. Many seringo-birds, apparently like ours. They say mackerel have just left the Bay, and fishermen have gone to the eastward for them. Some, however, are catching cod and halibut on the back side. Cape measures two miles in width here on the great chart.<sup>1</sup>

*July 7.* *Smilax glauca* in blossom, running over the shrubbery. *Honkenya peploides*, sea sandwort, just out of bloom on beach. The thick-leaved and dense-tufted, upright plant *Salsola Kali*, saltwort, prickly and glaucous, in bloom. Beach pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*) going out of bloom.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, pp. 164, 167; Riv. 196, 200.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 167; Riv. 200.]

C. says he saw in the catalogue of the Mercantile Library, New York, "Peter Thoreau on Book-keeping, London."

The piping plover running and standing on the beach, and a few mackerel gulls skimming over the sea and fishing. Josh (?) pears<sup>1</sup> ("juicy," suggests Small) just begun; few here compared with Provincetown: do not cook them.

Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) not nearly yet.

*Xanthium echinatum*, sea cocklebur or sea-burdock, not yet.<sup>2</sup>

What that smilacina-like plant very common in the shrubbery, a foot high, with now green fruit big as peas at end of spike, with reddish streaks? Uncle Sam calls it snake-corn.<sup>3</sup> Brought home some fruit.

Just south of the lighthouse near the bank on a steep hillside, the savory-leaved aster (*Diplopappus linariifolius*) and mouse-ear (*Gnaphalium plantaginifolium*) form a dense sward, being short and thick; [the aster] not yet out.<sup>4</sup> Scarlet pimpernel, or poor-man's weather-glass (*Anagallis arvensis*), in bloom some time, very common on sandy fields and sands, and very pretty, with a peculiar scarlet.<sup>5</sup>

July 8. A northeasterly storm. A great part of beach bodily removed and a rock five feet high exposed

<sup>1</sup> [The fruit of the shad-bush. See *Cape Cod*, p. 203; Riv. 244.]

<sup>2</sup> I saw its burs early in October in New Bedford.

<sup>3</sup> It is *Smilacina racemosa*.

<sup>4</sup> Out July 10th. [*Cape Cod*, p. 135; Riv. 160.]

<sup>5</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 167; Riv. 200.]

— before invisible — opposite lighthouse. The black-throated bunting common among the shrubbery. Its note much like the Maryland yellow-throat's, — *wittichee te tchea, tche te tchea, tche*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Corema Conradii*, broom crowberry, is quite common at edge of higher bank just south of the lighthouse. It is now full of small green fruit, small pin-head size. It spreads from a centre, raying out and rooting every four or five inches. It forms peculiar handsome-shaped mounds, four or five feet in diameter by nine inches or a foot high, very soft springy beds to lie on, — a woodman's bed already spread.<sup>2</sup>

I am surprised at the number of large light-colored toads everywhere hopping over these dry and sandy fields.

Went over to Bay side. That pond at Pond Village three eighths of a mile long and densely filled with cat-tail flag seven feet high. Many red-wing black-birds in it. Small says there are two kinds of cat-tail there, one the barrel flag for coopers, the other shorter for chairs; he used to gather them.<sup>3</sup>

See the killdeer a dozen rods off in pasture, anxious about its eggs or young, with its shrill squeaking note, its ring of white about its neck and two black crescents on breast. They are not so common and noisy as in June. A milkweed out some days.

*Hudsonia tomentosa*, the downy, still lingering, and *ericoides* even yet up to 17th. The last is *perhaps* the most common.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 131; Riv. 156.] <sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 167; Riv. 200.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 142; Riv. 169.]

*Euphorbia polygonifolia*, seaside spurge, small and flat on pure sand. Did n't notice flower. *Lemna minor*, duckweed, duck-meat, covering the surface at the pond, — scale-like. See a nighthawk at 8 A. M., sitting lengthwise on a rail. Asked Small if a quarter of the fuel of North Truro was driftwood. He thought it was, beside some lumber. None of the *Mya arenaria* on back side, but a small thicker-shelled clam, *Mesodesma arctata*, with a golden-yellow epidermis, very common on the flats, which S. said was good to eat. The shells washed up were commonly perforated; could dig them with your hands.<sup>1</sup>

S. said that nineteen small yellow birds (probably goldfinches) were found dead under the light in the spring early.<sup>2</sup>

July 9. Peterson brings word of blackfish. I went over and saw them. The largest about fourteen feet long. Nineteen years ago three hundred and eighty at this (Great) Hollow in one school. Sometimes eat them. Small says they generally come about the last of July: some yield five barrels, average one barrel.<sup>3</sup>

A kind of artemisia or sea wormwood by Bay-side on sand-hills, not out. Bay-wings here.

I find the edible mussel generally in bunches as they were washed off the rocks thirty or forty together, held together by the twine-like byssus. Many little mussels on the rocks exposed at high tide.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 110; Riv. 130.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 170; Riv. 204.]

<sup>3</sup> [See *Cape Cod*, pp. 142-146; Riv. 170-174.]

Uncle Sam Small, half blind, sixty-six years old, remembers the building of the lighthouse and their prophecies about the bank wasting. Thought the now overhanging upper solid parts *might* last ten years. His path had sometimes lasted so long (??). Saw him making a long diagonal slanting path with a hoe, in order to get up a small pile of stuff on his back. (There lay his hooked pike-staff on the bank ready for immediate use.) But this path was destroyed before we left. Told of a large rock which was carried along the shore half a mile.<sup>1</sup> He gets all his fuel on the beach. At flood-tide there is a strong inshore current to north. We saw some (perhaps) bales of grass, or else dried bits of marsh, six feet long carried along thus very fast a quarter of a mile out. Told us of man-eating sharks, one twelve feet long, which he killed and drew up with his oxen.

No quahogs on this side.

Now, with a clear sky and bright weather, we see many dark streaks and patches where the surface of the ocean is rippled by fishes, mostly menhaden, far and wide, in countless myriads, such the populousness of the sea. Occasionally, when near, can see their shining sides appear — and the mackerel gulls dive. Also see bass, whiting, cod, etc., turn up their bellies, near the shore.<sup>2</sup> The distant horizon a narrow blue line from distance (?) like mountains. They call pectweets shore-birds here. Small thought the waves never ran less than seven or eight feet up the shore here, though

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 155; Riv. 186.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 120; Riv. 142, 143.]

these might be perfectly smooth.<sup>1</sup> Speaks of mackerel gulls breeding on islands in Wellfleet Harbor.

*July 10.* The sea, like Walden, is greenish within half a mile of shore, then blue. The purple tinges near the shore run far up and down. Walked to marsh head of East Harbor Creek. Marsh rosemary (*Statice Limonium*), "meadow root," rays small, out some time, with five reddish petals. Also see there samphire of two kinds, *herbacea* and *mucronata*. *Juncus Gerardii*, black grass, in bloom. The pigweed about seashore is remarkably white and mealy. Great devil's-needles above the bank, apparently catching flies. I see a brood of young peeps running on the beach under the sand-hills ahead of me. Indigo out. Heard a cannon from the sea, which echoed under the bank dully, as if a part of the bank had fallen; then saw a pilot-boat standing down and the pilot looking through his glass toward the distant outward-bound vessel, which was putting back to speak with him. The latter sailed many a mile to meet her. She put her sails aback and communicated alongside.

*July 11.* See *young* piping plover running in a troop on the beach like peetweets. Patches of shrub oaks, bay-berry, beach plum, and early wild roses, overrun with woodbine. What a splendid show of wild roses, whose sweetness is mingled with the aroma of the bayberry! !

Small made three thousand shingles of a mast, worth six dollars a thousand.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 156; Riv. 186.]

A bar wholly made within three months; first exposed about first of May; as I paced, now seventy-five rods long and six or eight rods wide at high water, and bay within six rods wide. The bay has extended twice as far, but is filled up.

*Lespedeza Stuvei* (?) or *procumbens* (?)

I see five young swallows dead on the sand under their holes. Fell out and died in the storm?

The upland plover hovers almost stationary in the air with a quivering note of alarm. Above, dark-brown interspersed with white, darkest in rear; gray-spotted breast, white beneath; bill dark above, yellowish at base beneath, and legs yellowish. *Totanus Bartramius* — "gray," "grass," "field" plover.

Bank at lighthouse one hundred and seventy feet on the slope, perpendicular one hundred and ten; say shelf slopes four and ordinary tide-fall is nine, makes one hundred and twenty-three in all. Saw sand-bank south fifteen to twenty-five feet higher.

Small says *cattle* for quintal. Mackerel-fishing not healthy like cod-fishing; hard work packing the mackerel, stooping over.

*July 12.* Peterson says he dug one hundred and twenty-six dollars' worth of small clams near his house in Truro one winter, — twenty-five bucketfuls at one time. One man forty. Says they are scarce because they feed pigs on them. I measure a horseshoe on the back side twenty-two inches by eleven. The low sand-downs between East Harbor head and sea are thinly covered with beach-grass, seaside goldenrod,

and beach pea. Fog wets your beard till twelve o'clock.<sup>1</sup>

Long slender seaside plantain leaf (?) at East Harbor head. *Solanum* (with white flowers) *nigrum* (?) in marsh. *Spergularia rubra* var. *marina*. Great many little shells by edge of marsh — *Auricula bidentata* (?) and *Succinea avara* (?).

Great variety of beetles, dor-bugs, etc., on beach. I have one green shining one. Also butterflies over bank. Small thought the pine land was worth twenty-five cents an acre. I was surprised to see great spider-holes in pure sand and gravel, with a firm edge, where man could not make a hole without the sand sliding in, — in tunnel form.

They are gone off for mackerel and cod; also catching mackerel, halibut, and lobsters about here for the market.

The upland plover begins with a quivering note somewhat like a tree-toad and ends with a long, clear, somewhat plaintive (?) or melodious (?) hawk-like scream. I never heard this very near to me, and when I asked the inhabitants about it they did not know what I meant. Frank Forester, in "Manual for Young Sportsmen," 1856, page 308, says, "This bird has a soft plaintive call or whistle of two notes, which have something of a ventriloquial character and possess this peculiarity, that when uttered close to the ear, they appear to come from a distance, and when the bird is really two or three fields distant, sound as if near at hand." It hovers on quivering wing, and alights by a steep dive.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 165; Riv. 198.]

My paper so damp in this house I can't press flowers without mildew, nor dry my towel for a week.<sup>1</sup>

Small thought there was no stone wall west of Orleans. Squid the bait for bass. Small said the blackfish ran ashore in pursuit of it. Hardly use pure salt at Small's. Do not drink water.<sup>2</sup> S. repeats a tradition that the back side was frozen over one mile out in 1680 (?). Often is on Bay, but never since on Atlantic.

*July 13.* About \$33,000 has been appropriated for the protection of Provincetown Harbor. Northeast winds the strongest. Caught a box tortoise. It appeared to have been feeding on insects, — their wing-cases, etc., in its droppings, — also leaves. No undertow on the bars because the shore is flat.

*July 14.* The sea has that same streaked look that our meadows have in a gale.

Go to Bay side. Stench of blackfish. The lobster holds on to the pot himself. Throw away the largest. Find French crown. I was walking close to the water's edge just after the tide had begun to fall, looking for shells and pebbles, and observed on the still wet sand, under the abrupt caving edge of the bank, this dark-colored round, flat — old button? I cheated my companion by holding up round *Scutella parma* on the bars, between my fingers.<sup>3</sup> High hill — where town-house? — in Provincetown; according to big map, 109 feet high.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 165; Riv. 198.]    <sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 165; Riv. 198.]

<sup>3</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 161; Riv. 193.]

When numerous you may count about eighty vessels at once. A little kelp and rockweed grow offshore here. Nest of grass-bird (?), — grass stubble, lined with grass and root-fibres, three eggs half hatched, under a tuft of beach-grass, a quarter of a mile inland. Have an egg. Measured apple trees at Uncle Sam's.

They say the keeper of Billingsgate Light a few days ago put his initials in [a] thousand dollars' worth of blackfish in one morning, and got that of Provincetown for them.<sup>1</sup> Another, some years ago, got one hundred in a morning, and sold them for fifteen hundred dollars. Got a fox's skull. Thirty-six feet from base to centre of this light. Light called in book one hundred and seventy-one feet above sea?

Found washed up, and saw swimming in the cove where we bathed, young mackerel two inches long.

Uncle Sam says there is most drift in the spring; so in our river. He calls his apple trees "he."

*July 16.* Why not have one large reflector instead of many small ones, for a strong light? Uva-ursi berries begin to redden. Beach-grass grows on the highest land here. Uncle Sam tells of sea-turtles, which he regarded as natives, as big as a barrel, found on the marsh; of more than one kind.<sup>2</sup> Call the fishing captains skippers. The oak wood north of Rich's or Dyer's Hollow, say twenty years old, nine feet high. Red (?) oaks, etc. Can see soil on edge of bank covered five feet deep with sand which has blown up, on the

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, pp. 145, 146; Riv. 173, 174.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 202; Riv. 243.]

highest part of bank. See three black snakes on sand just behind edge of bank. Blueberries only one inch high.

*July 18.* Leave Small's. Corn-cockle, or rose-campion, a handsome flower, by East Harbor Marsh. *Lychnis Githago*, how long? Perfect young horseshoe crab shells there. Goosefoot by marsh very spreading, with entire, obovate leaves. Came up in the Olata, Captain Freeman, a fine yacht. Little wind; were from half past eight into candle-light on water. Melrose and another, which started with us, were ten miles astern when we passed light-boat. Kept pace awhile with a steamer towing one of Train's ships far in the north. The steamer looked very far from ship, and some wondered that the interval continued the same for hours. Smoke stretched perfectly horizontal for miles over the sea, and, by its direction, warned me of a change in the wind before we felt it.<sup>1</sup>

*July 19.* In Concord.

Young bobolinks; one of the first autumnalish notes. The early meadow aster out.

*July 21.* A red-eyed vireo nest on a red maple on Island Neck, on meadow-edge, ten feet from ground; one egg half hatched and one cowbird's egg, nearly fresh (!), a trifle larger. The first white (the minute brown dots washing off), sparsely black-dotted at the large end. Have them.

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, pp. 264, 265; Riv. 320, 321.]

*July 22.* I hear that many of those balls have been found at Flint's Pond within a few days. See small flocks of red-wings, young and old, now, over the willows. The pigeon woodpeckers have flown. Dog-day weather begins.

*July 25.* Many little toads about.

That piece of hollow kelp stem which I brought from the Cape is now shrivelled up and is covered and all white with crystals of salt a sixth of an inch long, like frost, on all sides.<sup>1</sup>

*Morrhua vulgaris* is the cod of Europe and Newfoundland. Those caught off our coast are the *M. Americana*.

*July 30.* Saw the lightning on the telegraph battery and heard the shock about sundown from our window, — an intensely bright white light.

*July 31.* Our dog-days seem to be turned to a rainy season. Mr. Derby, whose points of compass I go to regulate, tells me that he remembers when it rained for three weeks in haying time every day but Sundays.

Rode to J. Farmer's. He says that on a piece of an old road on his land, discontinued forty years ago, for a distance of forty rods which he plowed, [he found] two or three dollars in small change. Among the rest he showed me an old silver piece about as big as a ten-cent-piece, with the word *skilli*, etc., etc., on it, apparently a Danish shilling?

<sup>1</sup> [*Cape Cod*, p. 69: Riv. 79.]

His boy has a republican swallow's egg, long and much spotted; a dove's egg. Found a bay-wing's nest and got an egg; three half hatched, with dark *spots*, not *lines*; low in grass; of stubble, lined with root-fibres and then horsehair; in a dry field of his. He gave me what he called the seringo's egg. (He calls it chick-le-sec.)<sup>1</sup> Pointed out the bird to me. Says that she enters to her nest by a long gallery, sometimes two or three feet long, under the grass, and the nest is very hard to find. Gave me a small pure white egg. The boy thought it a small pewee's (?).

Farmer showed me that every wilted or diseased pigweed had green lice on its root. He says he sometimes finds the marsh wren's nest in meadows, hung to the grass, and hole on one side. Hears it almost every night near the brook beyond Dr. Bartlett's. Has found lark's nest covered over.

Found lately on his sand two arrowheads, and, close by, a rib and a shoulder-blade and kneecap (?), he thinks of an Indian.

His son Edward gave me a blue jay's egg as well as the seringo's above named, also another, rounder and broader egg found in that open field without any nest, *maybe* the same kind, somewhat singularly marked, but whiter at one end and browner at the other.

Mr. Samuel Hoar tells me that about forty-eight years ago, or some two or three years after he came to Concord, where he had an office in the yellow store, there used to be a great many bullfrogs in the mill-pond, which, by their trumping in the night, disturbed the

<sup>1</sup> Does he mean whittiche, Maryland yellow-throat?

apprentices of a Mr. Joshua Jones who built and lived in the brick house near by and soon after set up the trip-hammer. But, as Mr. H. was going one day to or from his office (he boarded this side the Mill-Dam), he found that the apprentices had been round the pond in a boat knocking the frogs on the head; got a good-sized tub nearly full of them. After that scarcely any were heard, and, the trip-hammer being set up soon after, they all disappeared as if frightened away by the sound. But perhaps the cure was worse than the disease, for I know of one, then a young minister studying divinity, who boarded in that very brick house, who was so much disturbed by that trip-hammer that, out of compassion, he was taken in at the old parsonage.

Mr. H. remembers that blackfish oil, which was used at the tan-yards, was sold to put on horses and keep the flies off.

Tree-toads sing more than before. Have observed the twittering over of goldfinches for a week.