

X

AUGUST, 1856

(ÆT. 39)

Aug. 1. To *Ludwigia sphaerocarpa*.

Burdock, several days at least. Erechtithes, apparently two or three days, by Peter's Path, end of Cemetery, the middle flowers first. Crotalaria in fine lechea field, how long? Still out, and some pods fully grown. *Liatris* will apparently open in a day or two. *Diplopappus umbellatus* at Peter's wall. *Desmodium Canadense*, some time; several great stems five feet high, a little spreading.

Since July 30th, inclusive, we have had perfect dog-days without interruption. The earth has suddenly [become] invested with a thick musty mist. The sky has become a mere fungus. A thick blue musty veil of mist is drawn before the sun. The sun has not been visible, except for a moment or two once or twice a day, all this time, nor the stars by night. Moisture reigns. You cannot dry a napkin at the window, nor press flowers without their mildewing. You imbibe so much moisture from the atmosphere that you are not so thirsty, nor is bathing so grateful as a week ago. The burning heat is tempered, but as you lose sight of the sky and imbibe the musty, misty air, you exist as a vegetable, a fungus. Unfortunate those who have not got their hay. I see them wading in overflowed meadows and pitching

the black and mouldy swaths about in vain that they may dry. In the meanwhile, vegetation is becoming rank, vines of all kinds are rampant. Squashes and melons *are said* to grow a foot in a night. But weeds grow as fast. The corn unrolls. Berries abound and attain their full size. Once or twice in the day there is an imperfect gleam of yellow sunlight for a moment through some thinner part of the veil, reminding us that we have not seen the sun so long, but no blue sky is revealed. The earth is completely invested with cloud-like wreaths of vapor (yet fear no rain and need no veil), beneath which flies buzz hollowly and torment, and mosquitoes hum and sting as if they were born of such an air. The drooping spirits of mosquitoes revive, and they whet their stings anew. Legions of buzzing flies blacken the furniture. (For a week *at least* have heard that snapping sound under pads.¹) We have a dense fog every night, which lifts itself but a short distance during the day. At sundown I see it curling up from the river and meadows. However, I love this moisture in its season. I believe it is good to breathe, wholesome as a vapor bath. Toadstools shoot up in the yards and paths.

The Great Meadows being a little wet, — hardly so much as usual, — I took off my shoes and went barefoot some two miles through the cut-grass, from Peter's to Sphaerocarpa Pools and backward by river. Very little grass cut there yet. The cut-grass is bad for tender feet, and you must be careful not to let it draw through your hands, for it will cut like a fine saw.

¹ And of course a great while.

I was surprised to see dense beds of rhexia in full bloom there, apparently on hummocks a rod in diameter left by the ice, or in long ridges mixed with ferns and some *Lysimachia lanceolata*, arrowhead, etc. They make a splendid show, these brilliant rose-colored patches, especially in the neighborhood of Copan. It is about the richest color to be seen now. Yet few ever see them in this perfection, unless the haymaker who levels them, or the birds that fly over the meadow. Far in the broad wet meadows, on the hummocks and ridges, these bright beds of rhexia turn their faces to the heavens, seen only by the bitterns and other meadow birds that fly over. We, dwelling and walking on the dry upland, do not suspect their existence. How obvious and gay to those creatures that fly over the meadow! Seen only by birds and mowers. These gay standards otherwise unfurled in vain.

Snake-head arethusa still in the meadow there. *Ludwigia sphaerocarpa* apparently a week out, a foot and a half to two feet high.

Aug. 2. P. M. — To Hill.

A green bittern comes, noiselessly flapping, with stealthy and inquisitive looking to this side the stream and then that, thirty feet above the water. This antediluvian bird, creature of the night, is a fit emblem of a dead stream like this Musketcook. This especially is the bird of the river. There is a sympathy between its sluggish flight and the sluggish flow of the stream, — its slowly lapsing flight, even like the rills of Musketcook and my own pulse sometimes.

Very common now are the few green emerald leaflets of the *Bidens Beckii*, which will ere long yellow the shallow parts.

Acalypha, apparently not long. Dodder, not long (not out 27th of July at railroad bridge), say four or five days. A three-ribbed goldenrod by small apple, by wall at foot east side of Hill (*S. gigantea*? or one of the two preceding), not nearly out. It differs from *my gigantea* apparently only in the leaves being *perfectly smooth* above and the stem smooth and pink [?] glaucous (excepting a *little* pubescence near the top). Very tall. *Vide* it by and by.

The lower leaves of some catnep are now of that delicate lake or claret color. Some waxwork leaves have felt the heat and slight drought. Their green is spotted with yellow, distinct yellow and green; others a very delicate clear yellow; others faded quite white.

Aug. 3. Sunday. P. M. — To Lee's Cliff by river.

Landing at flat shore. The sium and sarothra apparently now in prime. The central umbel of the sium going or gone to seed. The whorled utricularia is open all day. The *Hypericum ellipticum* is apparently out of bloom, there at least.

At length from July 30th inclusive the cloud-like wreaths of mist of these dog-days lift somewhat, and the sun shines out more or less, a short time, at 3 P. M.

The sun coming out when I am off Clamshell, the abundant small dragon-flies of different colors, bright-blue and lighter, looped along the floating vallisneria, make a very lively and gay appearance. I fancy these

bright loops adorn or set forth the river like triumphal arches for my procession, stretching from side to side. The floating vallisneria is very thick at the shallow bends. I see many of its narrow, erect, spoon-shaped tops.¹

Cornus alternifolia berries ripe, as I go from Holden Swamp shore to Miles Swamp. They are in open cymes, dull-blue, somewhat depressed globular, tipped with the persistent styles, yet already, as usual, mostly fallen. But handsomer far are the pretty (bare) red peduncles and pedicels, like fairy fingers spread. They make a show at a distance of a dozen rods even. Something light and open about this tree, but a sort of witch's tree nevertheless.

The purple utricularia abundant, but I did not chance to notice it July 25th. At Bittern Cliff again lucky enough to find *Polygonum tenue*, apparently out but a short time, say one week at most. Have marked the spot by a stone from the wall; further north than formerly. *Selaginella rupestris* (?) shows yellow fruit now at Bittern Cliff. *Gerardia quercifolia*, three to four feet high, out there, apparently two or three days. Yet none of the leaves I have are twice pinnatifid. Pennyroyal there, apparently some days. *Diplopappus cornifolius*, some time. *Desmodium acuminatum* a long time out and also gone to seed. *Lespedeza hirta*, Blackberry Steep, how long? High blackberries beginning; a few ripe. Parietaria a foot high, some time, under the slippery elm.

What is that tall (four feet), long-bearded grass, now nearly ripe, under this end of Lee's Cliff?

¹ Probably pickerel-weed.

I see blackened haycocks on the meadows. Think what the farmer gets with his hay, — what his river-meadow hay consists of, — how much of fern and osier and sweet-gale and *Polygonum hydropiperoides* and rhexia (I trust the cattle love the scent of it as well as I) and lysimachia, etc., etc., and rue, and sium and cicuta. In a meadow now being mown I see that the ferns and small osiers are as thick as the grass. If modern farmers do not collect elm and other leaves for their cattle, they do thus mow and cure the willows, etc., etc., to a considerable extent, so that they come to large bushes or trees only on the edge of the meadow.

Two small ducks (probably wood ducks) flying south. Already grown, and at least looking south!! It reminds me of the swift revolution of the seasons.

Our river is so sluggish and smooth that sometimes I can trace a boat that has passed half an hour before, by the bubbles on its surface, which have not burst. I have known thus which stream another party had gone up long before. A swift stream soon blots out such traces.

Cirsium lanceolatum at Lee's Cliff, apparently some days. Its leaves are long-pointed and a much darker green than those of the pasture thistle. On the under sides of its leaves I noticed very large ants attending peculiar large dark-colored aphides, for their milch cows.

The prevailing willow off Holden Swamp is *sericea*-like, but the leaf is narrow, more shining above, and merely glaucous beneath, longer-petioled, the serratures not so much bent toward the point. The twigs

not nearly so brittle at the base, but bringing away strings of bark. Stipules probably fallen or inconspicuous. Can it be *S. petiolaris*? and is it the same with that above Hemlocks, north side? Or is it *S. lucida*?¹ *Vide* in press.

Edge of grain-field next Bittern Cliff Wood, common spurge; and, with it, apparently the same, half ascendant and covered or spotted with a minute fungus.

Aug. 4. P. M. — Carried party a-berrying to Conantum in boat.

Lespedeza violacea, perhaps the largest-leafed variety, leaflets one inch by one third inch, petioled, well out on side of Blackberry Steep.

Scare up a young apparently summer duck, floating amid the pads, and the same again, coming within gunshot. I think it young because it is not very shy.

Have heard the alder *cricket* some days. The turning-point is reached.

Conantum hillside is now literally black with berries. What a profusion of this kind of food Nature provides, as if to compensate for the scarcity last year! Fortunate that these cows in their pasture do not love them, but pass them by. The blackberries are already softening, and of all kinds there are many, many more than any or all creatures can gather. They are literally five or six species deep. First, away down in the shade under all you find, still fresh, the great very light blue (*i. e.* with a very thick blue bloom) *Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum* in heavy clusters, that early ambrosial fruit,

¹ No.

delicate-flavored, thin-skinned, and cool, — Olympian fruit; then, next above, the still denser bunches and clusters of *V. vacillans*, of various varieties, firm and sweet, solid food; and, rising above these, large blue and also shining black huckleberries (*Gaylussacia resinosa*) of various flavors and qualities; and over all runs rampant the low blackberry (*Rubus Canadensis*), weighing down the thicket with its wreaths of black fruit. Also here and there the high blackberry, just beginning, towers over all. You go daintily wading through this thicket, picking, perchance, only the biggest of the blackberries — as big as your thumb — and clutching here and there a handful of huckleberries or blueberries, but never, perchance, suspecting the delicious cool blue-bloomed ones under all. This favorable moist weather has expanded some of the huckleberries to the size of bullets. Each patch, each bush, seems fuller and blacker than the last. Such a profusion, yet you see neither birds nor beasts eating them, unless ants and the huckleberry-bug! I carried my hands full of bushes to the boat, and, returning, the two ladies picked fully three pints from these alone, casting the bare bushes into the stream.

Aug. 5. A. M. — On river.

Mikania a day or two. *Polygonum amphibium* in water, slightly hairy, well out. *Polygonum orientale*, how long?

P. M. — To house-leek *via* Assabet Bath.

Trichostema, maybe several days in some places. Nightshade berries, how long?

When I crossed the new stone bridge a great water adder lay on it, full five feet long and nearly as big round as my arm. It turned and ran along, with a coarse grating rustle, to the end of the railing, and then dropped deliberately head foremost from the last abutment, full nine feet, to the gravelly ground, amid the osiers, making a loud sound when he struck; at once took to the water, and showed his head amid the pads. I also saw another similar one at House-leek Rock.

Centaurea well out, how long? *Aster dumosus*, apparently a day or two, with its large conspicuous flower-buds at the end of the branchlets and linear-spatulate involucreal scales.

A[t] haunted house site, as at Bittern Cliff grain-field, I see much apparent *Euphorbia maculata* semi-erect in the grass. *Eupatorium pubescens*, by Pear Path.

I now find an abundance of the clustered rubus ripe. It is not large and has a clammy, subacid taste, but some are very sweet. Clusters generally drooping.

Now, at 4 p. m. this dog-day, cloudy weather, the *Hypericum mutilum* is abundantly open in the *Solidago lanceolata* path, sometimes fifteen inches high, while the *Canadense* and *angulatum* are shut. *S. lanceolata*, some days. *S. nemoralis*, two or three days.

Choke-cherries near House-leek Rock begin to be ripe, though still red. They are scarcely edible, but their beauty atones for it. See those handsome racemes of ten or twelve cherries each, dark glossy red, semi-transparent. You love them not the less because they are not quite palatable. Along fences or hedgerows.

To my surprise one house-leek (apparently *Semper-*

vivum tectorum of Dewey) has shot up twenty-two inches high and is apparently nearly out,¹ though the petals are erect, not spread. The stem is clothed with the same thick leaves, only smaller and lessening upward and forming a column about one and a half inches in diameter (with the leaves). The top is a broad raceme (?), about eight inches wide and two thirds as long, of eleven long, spreading, and recurved branches, lined with flowers on the upper side only. These consist of twelve to thirteen lanceolate calyx-segments and as many still longer dull-purple petals and about twenty pistils within and short stamens around them. It is a strange but rather stately cactus-like plant. The children call the pretty clusters of radical leaves hen and chickens. In this case the radical leaves are withered, and a fusiform root sustains the flower. This one is not on the bare rock, but lower amid the huckleberry bushes.

At the Assabet stone bridge, apparently freshly in flower, — though it may have been out nearly as long as the *androsæmifolium*, — apparently the *Apocynum cannabinum* var. *hypericifolium* (?). The tallest is four feet high. The flowers very small (hardly more than an eighth of an inch in diameter), the segments of the corolla not revolute but nearly erect. There are twenty to thirty flowers at end of a branch. The divisions of the calyx are longer than in the common, long ovate. Yet it differs from Gray's *hypericifolium* in having flowers rose-streaked within like the common, the cymes not shorter than the leaves, and the tube of the corolla rather longer than the divisions of the calyx. The leaves

¹ In house the 10th; say then Aug. 10.

are hardly more downy or heart-shaped below than the common. *Hypericifolium* is a separate species in Pursh and some others. And the branches are less ascending than the common, making an angle of about 62° with the stem (the four lower), while three of the lower of a common one make an angle of 44° .

Aug. 6. Copious and continuous rain in the night, deluging, soaking rain, with thunder and lightning, beating down the crops; and this morning it is cooler and clearer and windier.

P. M. — To Walden.

The wind, or motion of the air, makes it much cooler on the railroad causeway or hills, but in the woods it is as close and melting as before. *Solidago altissima*, a small specimen, a day or two. *Apios tuberosa*, some days. *Rubus hispidus* ripe. Middle umbels of the bristly aralia ripe. *Desmodium nudiflorum*, some time out at Peak. It is sometimes three feet high! Holly berries ripe. Clethra, how long? Some anychia shows green seed. *Desmodium rotundifolium*, some days at least. *Cynoglossum Morisoni* mostly gone to seed, roadside, at grape-vine just beyond my bean-field. Some is five feet high. *Aster macrophyllus*, apparently two or three days, at hillside, under beaked hazel. *Eupatorium purpureum* at Stow's Pool, apparently several days, but more common there the tall hollow one, whorled to top, also out. Hear a nuthatch. *Hieracium scabrum*.

Artificial, denaturalized persons cannot handle nature without being poisoned. If city-bred girls visit

their country cousins, — go a-berrying with them, — they are sure to return covered with blueberry bumps at least. They exhaust all the lotions of the country apothecary for a week after. Unnamable poisons infect the air, as if they were pursued by imps. I have known those who forbade their children going into the woods at all.

Aug. 7. Hemp, perhaps a week.

Heard this forenoon what I thought at first to be children playing on pumpkin stems in the next yard, but it turned out to be the new steam-whistle music, what they call the Calliope (!) in the next town. It sounded still more like the pumpkin stem near at hand, only a good deal louder. Again I mistook it for an instrument in the house or at the door, when it was a quarter of a mile off, from habit locating it by its loudness. At Acton, six miles off, it sounded like some new seraphim in the next house with the blinds closed. All the milkmen and their horses stood still to hear it. The horses stood it remarkably well. It was not so musical as the ordinary whistle.

P. M. — With a berry party, ride to Conantum.

At Blackberry Steep, apparently an early broad-leaved variety of *Desmodium paniculatum*, two or three days. This and similar plants are common there and may almost name the place. The *D. rotundifolium* is there abundant; also, beside, *Lespedeza hirta* and *capitata*, the elliptic-oblong *L. violacea* and the *angustata*, as also at Heywood Peak. All these plants seem to love a dry open hillside, a steep one. Are rarely

upright, but spreading, wand-like. *Aster patens*, a day or more. *Inula*, some time. *Mulgedium*, perhaps a fortnight. *Eupatorium sessilifolium*, apparently about August 5th. I suspect that I see but one species of smooth-stemmed grape as yet.

I must contrast the *Galium circæzans* and *pilosum* (?) more carefully. *Vide* if the first ever has purple flowers. The only difference, perhaps, that I yet notice is that the leaves of the latter are scarcely three-nerved and are more rounded or obovate, and it is a later plant.



I see that common gall on goldenrods now on an *S. casia*.

The river has been raised by the rain, and water stands still in low grass ground. The leaves in low land, as of the mulgedium, are white with mildew, owing [to] the continued dampness of dog-days. One mulgedium at Corner Spring is at least ten feet high and hollow all the way.

Those who have weak eyes complain of the darkness of the late dog-days.

Aug. 8. Rain, lightning, and thunder all day long in torrents. The ground was already saturated on the night of the 5th, and now it fills all gutters and low grounds. No sooner has one thunder-shower swept over and the sky begun to light up a little, than another darkens the west. We were told that lightning cleared the air and so cleared itself, but now we lose our faith in that theory, for we have thunder[-shower] after thunder-shower and lightning is become a drug. Na-

ture finds it just as easy to lighten the last time as at first, and we cannot believe that the air was so very impure.

3.30 P. M. — When I came forth, thinking to empty my boat and go a-meditating along the river, — for the full ditches and drenched grass forbade other routes, except the highway, — and this is one advantage of a boat, — I learned to my chagrin that Father's pig was gone. He had leaped out of the pen some time since his breakfast, but his dinner was untouched. Here was an ugly duty not to be shirked, — a wild shoat that weighed but ninety to be tracked, caught, and penned, — an afternoon's work, at least (if I were lucky enough to accomplish it so soon), prepared for me, quite different from what I had anticipated. I felt chagrined, it is true, but I could not ignore the fact nor shirk the duty that lay so near to me. Do the duty that lies nearest to thee. I proposed to Father to sell the pig as he was running (somewhere) to a neighbor who had talked of buying him, making a considerable reduction. But my suggestion was not acted on, and the responsibilities of the case all devolved on me, for I could run faster than Father. Father looked to me, and I ceased to look to the river. Well, let us see if we can track him. Yes, this is the corner where he got out, making a step of his trough. Thanks to the rain, his tracks are quite distinct. Here he went along the edge of the garden over the water and muskmelons, then through the beans and potatoes, and even along the front-yard walk I detect the print of his divided hoof, his two sharp toes (*ungula*). It's a wonder we

did not see him. And here he passed out under the gate, across the road, — how naked he must have felt! — into a grassy ditch, and whither next? Is it of any use to go hunting him up unless you have devised some mode of catching him when you have found? Of what avail to know where he has been, even where he is? He was so shy the little while we had him, of course he will never come back; he cannot be tempted by a swill-pail. Who knows how many miles off he is! Perhaps he has taken the back track and gone to Brighton, or Ohio! At most, probably we shall only have the satisfaction of glimpsing the nimble beast at a distance, from time to time, as he trots swiftly through the green meadows and corn-fields. But, now I speak, what is that I see pacing deliberately up the middle of the street forty rods off? It is *he*. As if to tantalize, to tempt us to waste our afternoon without further hesitation, he thus offers himself. He roots a foot or two and then lies down on his belly in the middle of the street. But think not to catch him a-napping. He has his eyes about, and his ears too. He has already been chased. He gives that wagon a wide berth, and now, seeing me, he turns and trots back down the street. He turns into a front yard. Now if I can only close that gate upon him ninety-nine hundredths of the work is done, but ah! he hears me coming afar off, he foresees the danger, and, with swinish cunning and speed, he scampers out. My neighbor in the street tries to head him; he jumps to this side the road, then to that, before him; but the third time the pig was there first and went by. "Whose is it?" he shouts. "It's ours." He bolts into that neighbor's

yard and so across his premises. He has been twice there before, it seems; he knows the road; see what work he has made in his flower-garden! He must be fond of bulbs. Our neighbor picks up one tall flower with its bulb attached, holds it out at arm's length. He is excited about the pig; it is a subject he is interested in. But where is [he] gone now? The last glimpse I had of him was as he went through the cow-yard; here are his tracks again in this corn-field, but they are lost in the grass. We lose him; we beat the bushes in vain; he may be far away. But hark! I heard a grunt. Nevertheless for half an hour I do not see him that grunted. At last I find fresh tracks along the river, and again lose them. Each neighbor whose garden I traverse tells me some anecdote of losing pigs, or the attempt to drive them, by which I am not encouraged. Once more he crosses our first neighbor's garden and is said to be in the road. But I am not there yet; it is a good way off. At length my eyes rest on him again, after three quarters of an hour's separation. There he trots with the whole road to himself, and now again drops on his belly in a puddle. Now he starts again, seeing me twenty rods [off], deliberates, considers which way I want him to go, and goes the other. There was some chance of driving him along the sidewalk, or letting him go rather, till he slipped under our gate again, but of what avail would that be? How corner and catch him who keeps twenty rods off? He never lets the open side of the triangle be less than half a dozen rods wide. There was one place where a narrower street turned off at right angles with the main one, just this side our yard, but I could

not drive him past that. Twice he ran up the narrow street, for he knew I did not wish it, but though the main street was broad and open and no traveller in sight, when I tried to drive him past this opening he invariably turned his piggish head toward me, dodged from side to side, and finally ran up the narrow street or down the main one, as if there were a high barrier erected before him. But really he is no more obstinate than I. I cannot but respect his tactics and his independence. He will be he, and I may be I. He is not unreasonable because he thwarts me, but only the more reasonable. He has a strong will. He stands upon his idea. There is a wall across the path not where a man bars the way, but where he is resolved not to travel. Is he not superior to man therein? Once more he glides down the narrow street, deliberates at a corner, chooses wisely for him, and disappears through an openwork fence eastward. He has gone to fresh gardens and pastures new. Other neighbors stand in the doorways but half sympathizing, only observing, "Ugly thing to catch." "You have a job on your hands." I lose sight of him, but hear that he is far ahead in a large field. And there we try to let him alone a while, giving him a wide berth.

At this stage an Irishman was engaged to assist. "I can catch him," says he, with Buonapartean confidence. He thinks him a family Irish pig. His wife is with him, bareheaded, and his little fibbertigibbet of a boy, seven years old. "Here, Johnny, do you run right off there" (at the broadest possible angle with his own course). "Oh, but he can't do anything." "Oh, but I only want him to tell me where he is, — to keep

sight of him." Michael soon discovers that he is not an Irish pig, and his wife and Johnny's occupation are soon gone. Ten minutes afterward I am patiently tracking him step by step through a corn-field, a near-sighted man helping me, and then into garden after garden far eastward, and finally into the highway, at the graveyard; but hear and see nothing. One suggests a dog to track him. Father is meanwhile selling him to the blacksmith, who also is trying to get sight of him. After fifteen minutes since he disappeared eastward, I hear that he has been to the river twice far on [?] the north, through the first neighbor's premises. I wend that way. He crosses the street far ahead, Michael behind; he dodges up an avenue. I stand in the gap there, Michael at the other end, and now he tries to corner him. But it is a vain hope to corner him in a yard. I see a carriage-manufactory door open. "Let him go in there, Flannery." For once the pig and I are of one mind; he bolts in, and the door is closed. Now for a rope. It is a large barn, crowded with carriages. The rope is at length obtained; the windows are barred with carriages lest he bolt through. He is resting quietly on his belly in the further corner, thinking unutterable things.

Now the course recommences within narrower limits. Bump, bump, bump he goes, against wheels and shafts. We get no hold yet. He is all ear and eye. Small boys are sent under the carriages to drive him out. He froths at the mouth and deters them. At length he is stuck for an instant between the spokes of a wheel, and I am securely attached to his hind leg. He squeals deafen-

ingly, and is silent. The rope is attached to a hind leg. The door is opened, and the *driving* commences. Roll an egg as well. You may drag him, but you cannot drive him. But he is in the road, and now another thunder-shower greets us. I leave Michael with the rope in one hand and a switch in the other and go home. He seems to be gaining a little westward. But, after long delay, I look out and find that he makes but doubtful progress. A boy is made to face him with a stick, and it is only when the pig springs at him savagely that progress is made homeward. He will be killed before he is driven home. I get a wheelbarrow and go to the rescue. Michael is alarmed. The pig is rabid, snaps at him. We drag him across the barrow, hold him down, and so, at last, get him home.

If a wild shoat like this gets loose, first track him if you can, or otherwise discover where he is. Do not scare him more than you can help. Think of some yard or building or other inclosure that will hold him and, by showing your forces — yet as if uninterested parties — fifteen or twenty rods off, let him of his own accord enter it. Then slightly shut the gate. Now corner and tie him and put him into a cart or barrow.

All progress in driving at last was made by facing and endeavoring to switch him from home. He rushed upon you and made a few feet in the desired direction. When I approached with the barrow he advanced to meet it with determination.

So I get home at dark, wet through and supperless, covered with mud and wheel-grease, without any rare flowers.

To the eyes of men there is something tragic in death. We hear of the death of any member of the human family with something more than regret, — not without a slight shudder and feeling of commiseration. The churchyard is a *grave* place.

Aug. 9. Saturday. Notwithstanding the very copious rain, with lightning, on the night of August 5th and the deluge which fell yesterday, raising the river still higher, it rained again and again with very vivid lightning, more copiously than ever, last night, and without long intervals all this day. Few, if any, can remember such a succession of thunder-storms merged into one long thunder-storm, lasting almost continuously (the storm does) two nights and two days. We are surprised to see that it can lighten just as vividly, thunder just as loud, rain just as copiously at last as at first.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

The river is raised about two feet! My boat is nearly even full, though under the willows. The water stands nearly a foot over the highest part of the large flat rock by Island. There is more current. The pads are drowned; hardly one to be seen afloat; the utmost length of their tethers does not permit them to come within a foot or ten inches of the surface. They lay smoothly on the top before, with considerable spare coil beneath; now they strain in vain toward the surface. All the *Bidens Beckii* is drowned too, and will be delayed, if not exterminated for this year. The water is cool to the bather after so much rain.

The notes of the wood pewee and warbling vireo are more prominent of late, and of the goldfinch twittering over. Does the last always utter his twitter when ascending? These are already feeding on the thistle seeds.

Again I am surprised to see the *Apocynum cannabinum* close to the rock at the Island, several plants, apparently not more than ten days out; say July 25th, including the ones I saw before. The flowers of this are white, with divisions of the corolla erect or nearly so, corolla not one eighth of an inch wide, calyx-segments lanceolate, pointed, *as long as* the tube of the corolla. I now notice that *all* the branches are about equally upright, and hence the upper ones are much more upright than the upper ones of the *A. androsæmifolium*. The plant is inclined to be taller and narrower than that, perhaps because it grows by water. The leaves are more oblong or lanceolate and pointed, the downiness and petioles about the same with that of the common; in this case, none heart-shaped. The one found the 5th was between this and the common, a rose-streaked one, in fact colored like the common; this, a *white* one with still longer calyx-segments and no heart-shaped leaves. This is rather smooth. Say, then, for that of the 5th and this, they are varieties of the *A. cannabinum*.¹

¹ At Astor Library, New York, Nov. 8th, 1856, in Richardson's *Flora Boreali*, etc., the leaves of *Apocynum cannabinum* in the plate are an inch or more beyond the flowers, and not hearted! Of the *A. hypericifolium*, the lower leaves are decidedly hearted, and the flowers are about terminal.

I scare up a couple of wood ducks separately, undoubtedly birds bred and dispersed about here. The rise of the river attracts them.

What I have called *Aster corymbosus* out a day, above Hemlocks. It has eight to twelve white rays, smaller than those of the *macrophyllus*, and a dull-red stem commonly. It differs from Gray's *corymbosus* in the achenia being apparently *not* slender, not opening in July, and there being no need of distinguishing it from *A. macrophyllus*; from his *cordifolius* in the rays *not* being numerous, nor the paniced heads very numerous (sometimes pretty numerous), and the rays not pale-blue. Perhaps I must call it *A. cordifolius*, yet the lower and principal petioles are naked (Gray makes them so commonly!), not at all winged, though the upper are. Found one individual at Miles Swamp whose lower petioles were winged. Its petioles (the lower) are only sometimes winged here. The flowers of *A. macrophyllus* are white with a very slight bluish tinge, in a coarse flat-topped corymb. Flowers nine to ten eighths of an inch in diameter. *A. cordifolius* flowers six eighths of an inch [in] diameter.

Aug. 10. *Sunday*. The weather is fair and clear at last. The dog-days over at present, which have lasted since July 30th.

P. M. — To Fair Haven Hill and Walden.

Fragrant everlasting, maybe some days.

Rhus copallina not yet for two or three days. The *Pycnanthemum incanum*, the handsomest of the pycnanthemums, grows also at the west end [of] the Knoll

with the *R. copallina*. All the upper leaves are equally hoary there in the light. The corymbs are an inch across, and the flowers large and very prettily purple-spotted. They are swarming with great wasps of different kinds, and bees.

Hear the wood thrush still.

I go across lots like a hunting dog. With what tireless energy and abandonment they dash through the brush and up the sides of hills! I meet two white foxhounds, led by an old red one. How full of it they are! How their tails work! They are not tied to paths; they burst forth from the thickest shrub oak lot, and immediately dive into another as the fox did.

There are more varieties of blackberries between the low and the high than I take notice of. *Vide* that kind in the Well Meadow Field.

The fine (early sedge?) grass in the frosty hollows about Walden (where no bushes have sprung up) looks like an unkempt head.

Vernonia, how long?

The river has been rising all day. It is between two and a half and three feet higher than ten days ago. Even the white umbels of the sium are drowned, except here and there where they stand over the water. It is within nine and a half inches of the top of Hoar's wall at 6 P. M. The meadows have quite a springlike look, yet the grass conceals the extent of the flood. It appears chiefly where it is mown. Yet a quarter part as much rain would have raised the river more in the spring, so much of it was soaked up by the thirsty earth.

Aug. 11. This morning the river is an inch and a half higher, or within eight inches of the top of Hoar's wall.

The other evening, returning down the river, I think I detected the convexity of the earth within a short distance. I saw the western landscape and horizon, reflected in the water fifty rods behind me, all lit up with the reflected sky, though it was a narrow [?] picture. A stroke of my oar and the dark intervening water was interposed like a dark, opaque wall. Moving my head a few inches up or down produced the same effect; *i. e.*, by raising my head three inches I could partially oversee the plane of the water at that point, which was otherwise concealed by the slightest convexity.

P. M. — Walk to Conantum with Mr. Bradford. He gives me a sprig of *Cassia Marilandica*, wild senna, found by Minot Pratt just below Leighton's by the roadside. How long? P. thought it in prime August 10th.¹ *Aster puniceus* a day or more. A new sunflower at Wheeler's Bank, this side Corner Spring, which I will call the *tall* rough sunflower; opened say August 1st (?). (I saw it out the 7th.) It does not correspond exactly to any described. Stem three to six feet high, branched at top, purple with a bloom, roughish, especially the peduncles. Leaves opposite, except a few small ones amid the branches, thick, ovate or ovate-lanceolate, taper-pointed, three-nerved, obscurely and remotely toothed, rough above, smooth and whitish below, abruptly contracted into margined petioles. Scales of the involucre lanceolate, taper-pointed, subequal, exceeding the disk,

¹ *Vide* 16th [*Journal*, vol. ix, p. 4].

ciliate; rays eight or nine, one and a half or more inches long, chaff black. Edge of meadow.

Measured a mulgedium, eight feet three inches long and hollow all the way. Some boy had fixed an arch-angelica stem so as to conduct the water at the spring close by. Elder-berries in a day or two. I see some *Hypericum angulosum* turned a delicate clear purple. *Polygonum dumetorum* at Bittern Cliff, one flower gone to seed (!); say day or two.

7 P. M. — The river has risen about two inches today, and is now within six inches of the top of Hoar's wall.

Aug. 12. 11 A. M. — To Hill.

The *Hypericum mutilum* is well out at this hour. The river is now at a standstill, some three feet above its usual level. The pickerel-weed is all covered, and lilies, and much of the button-bush and mikania. It is as great an accident as can befall these flowers.

It is novel to behold this great, full tide in which you perceive some current by the eddies, in which no snarl of weeds is seen. So different from that Potamogeton River, where you caught a crab at every stroke of the oar, and farmers drove their hay-carts across. Instead of watery gleaming fields of potamogetons in which the boatman was entangled, and drifting vallisneria on which the dragon-flies alighted, I see a deep full river on which vessels may float, and I feel at a distance from *terra firma* when on its bosom.

P. M. — To Moore's Swamp.

Gerardia purpurea, two or three days. The mulgedium in that swamp is very abundant and a very stately plant, so erect and soldier-like, in large companies, rising above all else, with its very regular long, sharp, elliptic head and bluish-white flowers.

Again I examine that very strict solidago, which perhaps I must call wand-stemmed. Perhaps it is only a swamp variety of *S. stricta*, yet the leaves are thicker and darker(?)—green, and the upper commonly broader, often elliptic, pointed, less recurved and not wavy. Stem and head is *now* commonly much more strict and branches more erect, and racemes less one-sided, but in larger and maturer ones they are at length recurving and forming a pyramid like *S. stricta*. Rays are fewer and broader, five or six; stem reddish, with apparently more branchlets or leaflets in axils.¹

Am surprised to see still a third species or variety of helianthus (which may have opened near August 1st, say only a week). Only the first flowers out. At edge of the last clearing south of spring. I cannot identify it. It has very short but not margined petioles; leaves narrower than yesterday's, and rough beneath as well as above. The outer scales of involucre a little the longest; but I think this of little importance, for the involucre of the *II. divaricatus* is very variable, hardly two alike; rays about ten. In some respects it is most like *H. strumosus*, but not downy beneath.²

¹ Vide Aug. 30th.

² It has decidedly thick leaves, unlike that of Aug. 29, and flowers two and a half or more inches in diameter.

The bruised leaves of these helianthus are rather fragrant.

It is thick, smoky, dog-day weather again. Bradford speaks of the dog's-tooth violet as a plant which disappears early.

The *Aster patens* is very handsome by the side of Moore's Swamp on the bank, — large flowers, more or less purplish or violet, each commonly (four or five) at the end of a long peduncle, three to six inches long, at right angles with the stem, giving it an open look. Snake-head, or chelone. On the edge of the ditch opposite the spring, *Epilobium coloratum*, and also what I must call *E. palustre* of Willdenow and Pursh and Eaton. It is smooth or smoothish, leaves somewhat toothed or subdenticulate, peduncle one inch long, flowers white.

The most interesting domes I behold are not those of Oriental temples and palaces, but of the toadstools. On this knoll in the swamp they are little pyramids of Cheops or Cholula, which also stand on the plain, very delicately shaded off. They have burst their brown tunics as they expanded, leaving only a clear-brown apex, and on every side these swelling roofs or domes are patched and shingled with the fragments, delicately shaded off thus into every tint of brown to the edge. As if this creation of a night would thus imitate the weather-stains of centuries. 'Toads' temples. So charming is gradation!'

Gerardia pedicularia, how long?

What a wilderness of weeds is Moore's Swamp now!

¹ [Channing, p. 290.]

Tall rough goldenrods, erechthites, poke, *Aster Radula*, dogwood, etc., etc. It looks as if the potatoes which grew there would be poisonous.

An arrowhead in Peter's Path. How many times I have found an arrowhead by that path, as if that had been an Indian trail! Perchance it was, for some of the paths we travel are much older than we think, especially some which the colored race in our midst still use, for they are nearest to the Indian trails. The Emerson children say that *Aralia nudicaulis* berries are good to eat.

The leaves of *Sericocarpus conyzoides* are fragrant when bruised. Black cherries ripe.

Labor Lost. — For one of this generation to talk with a man of the old school. You might have done a solid work the meanwhile with a contemporary. I thought of this when I saw Neighbor B., the worthy man! and thought of my interviews with him. If I could only get the parish clerk to read what I have to say to him!

Saw the primrose open at sundown. The corolla burst part way open and unfolded rapidly; the sepals flew back with a smart spring. In a minute or two the corolla was opened flat and seemed to rejoice in the cool, serene light and air.

Lespedeza capitata, not long.

The sarothra — as well as small hypericums generally — has a lemon scent.

The late rains have tried the roofs severely. Tenants have complained to their landlords, and now I see carpenters setting up their staging and preparing to shingle on various sides.

Aug. 13. P. M. — To Conantum.

Beck says of the small *circæa* (*C. alpina*), "Many botanists consider this a mere variety of the preceding." I am not sure but it is more deeply toothed than the large.¹ Its leaves are of the same color with those of the large at Bittern Cliff, but more decidedly toothed; *q. v.* Why does it not grow larger at Corner Spring?

The root of the *Polygala verticillata* also has the checkerberry odor.

In Bittern Cliff Woods that (apparently) very oblong elliptical leaved *Lespedeza violacea* (?), growing very loose and open on a few long petioles, one foot high by four or five inches wide. Is this because it grows in woods? It is not in bloom.

Is there not now a prevalence of aromatic herbs in prime? — The polygala roots, blue-curls, wormwood, pennyroyal, *Solidago odora*, rough sunflowers, horse-mint, etc., etc. Does not the season require this tonic?

I stripped off a shred of Indian hemp bark and could not break it. It is as strong as anything of the kind I know.

Aug. 14. P. M. — To Flint's Pond via Saw Mill Brook.

Aster Tradescanti, apparently a day or two. Hypopitys, just beyond the last large (two-stemmed) chestnut at Saw Mill Brook, about done. Apparently a fungus-like plant. It erects itself in seed. *Gymnadenia* nearer the brook, how long? Is that slender erect shrub near oak stump at Saw Mill *Cornus circinata*?²

¹ It is as far as I observe.

² *Viburnum nudum*.

Solidago odora abundantly out.

The low wood-paths are strewn with toadstools now, and I begin to perceive their musty scent, — great *tumbeae*, or, as R. W. E. says, *tuguria*, — crowding one another by the path-side when there was not a fellow in sight; great towers that have fallen and made the plain shake; ponderous wheels that have lost their fellows, broken their axles, abandoned by the toady or swampy teamsters. Some whose eaves have been nibbled apparently by turtles. Ricketson says he saw a turtle eating a toadstool once. Some great dull-yellow towers, — towers of strength, to judge from their mighty columns, — like the South African honey-birds' (?) nests.

The recent heavy rains have caused many leaves to fall, especially chestnut. They already spot the ground, rapidly yellowing and very handsomely spotted. I never weary of their colors. I see those eye-spots on the low hickory leaves also. All the Flint's Pond wood-paths are strewn with these gay-spotted chestnut leaves, and the changing sarsaparilla leaves begin to yellow the forest floor.

Sedum Telephium, some time. Flowering blackberry¹ still. A short elliptic-leaved *Lespedeza violacea*, loose and open in Veery Nest Path, at Flint's Pond. In press.

On roadside heap at Emerson's, a portulaca with leaves one inch wide and seven petals (!) instead of five.

Meet a little boy with six young blind mice in his

¹ Raspberry?

hat, which Horatio Watts has given [him]. He did not find them till he came to fork over and turn the hay. There were six of these little brown blind meadow mice (I suppose *Arvicola hirsutus?*), with short tails and blunt muzzles and great heads, looking like little bulldogs. The nest was open on the surface amid the roots of the grass; of dried grass, like a bird's, three and a half inches [in] diameter, with a gallery or two leading from it. Watts said these were the kind that clung to the mother! But why did they not? Sometimes find nine of them.

Aug. 15. Friday. P. M. — To Minot Pratt's.

Pratt is collecting his parsnip seed. This the second or third cutting. It takes three cuttings, the central umbellets ripening first. It takes a sharp knife not to shake out the seeds, and, as it is, enough to seed ten times the ground is lost. Almost every one is poisoned, says P., by this work. The skin comes off the back of the hand, making tanned hands look white-spotted. This from handling the parsnip in its second year only. Great rank poisonous-looking and really poisonous parsnips gone to seed. It is not quite time to cut the carrot seed.