

Their grouped umbrellas, by the hazy light  
 Obscure and dim, show through the vapors dense  
 Like clumps of toad-stools, born of rain and night,  
 Huddled beside some roadside pasture fence.

One ray redeems the dreariness and blight, —  
 The window-light which streams across the square:  
 The light of home, — the blessed, saving light  
 Which keeps the world from darkness and despair.

Ah, happy they who in its warmth abide!  
 Peace sits among them, with her fair wings furled:  
 What care they for this wretched world outside, —  
 This darksome, dismal, drear December world?

*Elizabeth Akers Allen.*

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## APRIL DAYS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF HENRY D. THOREAU.

APRIL 1, 1841.

ON THE SUN COMING OUT IN THE AFTER-  
 NOON.

ME THINKS all things have traveled since you  
 shined,  
 But only Time\* and clouds, Time's team, have  
 moved;  
 Again foul weather shall not change my mind,  
 But in the shade I will believe what in the sun I  
 loved.

April 1, 1852. Walden is all white  
 ice, but little melted about the shore.  
 The very sight of it when I get so far on  
 the causeway, though I hear the spring  
 note of the chickadee from over the ice,  
 carries my thoughts back at once some  
 weeks toward winter, and a chill comes  
 over them. . . .

The mountains seen from Bare Hill  
 are very fine now in the horizon, so evanescent,  
 being broadly spotted white  
 and blue like the skins of some animals,  
 the white predominating. The Peter-  
 boro' Hills to the north are almost all  
 white. The snow has melted more on  
 the more southern mountains. With  
 their white mantles, notwithstanding the  
 alternating dark patches, they melt into  
 the sky. Yet perhaps the white por-

tions may be distinguished by the peculiar  
 light of the sun shining on them. . . .

I hear a robin singing in the woods  
 south of Hosmer's, just before sunset.  
 It is a sound associated with New En-  
 gland village life. It brings to my  
 thoughts summer evenings when the  
 children are playing in the yards before  
 the doors, and their parents, conversing,  
 sit at the open windows. It foretells all  
 this now, before those summer hours are  
 come.

As I come over the turnpike, the song-  
 sparrow's jingle comes up from every  
 part of the meadow, as native as the  
 tinkling rills or the blossoms of the spi-  
 ræa. . . . Its cheep is like the sound of  
 opening buds.

April 1, 1853. The rain rests on the  
 downy leaves of the young mulleins in  
 separate, irregular drops, from the irreg-  
 ularity and color looking like ice. The  
 drops quite in the cup of the mullein have  
 a peculiar translucent silveriness, appar-  
 ently because while they are upheld by  
 the wool the light is reflected which  
 would otherwise be absorbed, as if they  
 were cased in light. The fresh mullein



leaves are pushing up amid the brown, unsightly wrecks of last fall, which strew the ground like old clothes. . . . That early willow by Miles's has been injured by the rain. The drops rest on the catkins as on the mullein. Though this began to open only day before yesterday, and was the earliest I could find, already I hear the well-known hum of a honey-bee, and one alights on it (also a fly or two), loads himself, circles round with a loud humming, and is off. Where the first willow catkin opens, there will be found the honey-bee also with it. He found this out as soon as I. The stamens have burst out on the side towards the top, like a sheaf of spears, thrust forth to encounter the sun, — so many spears as the garrison can spare, advanced into the summer. With this flower, so much more flower-like or noticeable than any yet, begins a new era in the flower season.

April 1, 1854. The tree-sparrows, *hiemalis*, and song-sparrows are particularly lively and musical in the yard this rainy and truly April day. The robin now begins to sing powerfully.

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

this season. Now see them come drifting over a rising ground, just like snow-flakes before a northeast wind!

April 1, 1855. When I look out the window, I see that the grass on the bank on the south side of the house is already much greener than it was yesterday. As it cannot have grown so suddenly, how shall I account for it? I suspect the reason is that the few green blades are not merely washed bright by the rain, but erect themselves to imbibe its influence, and so are more prominent, while the withered blades are beaten down and flattened by it.

April 1, 1858. I saw a squirrel's nest twenty-three or twenty-four feet high in a maple, and climbing to it (for it was so peculiar, having a basket-work of twigs about it, that I did not know but it was a hawk's nest) I found that it was a very perfect (probably) red squirrel's nest, made entirely of the now very dark or blackish-green moss, such as grows on the button-bush and on the swampy ground, — a dense mass of it, about one foot through, wattled together, with an inobvious hole on the east side. A tuft of loose moss blowing up about it seemed to answer for a door or porch-covering. The cavity within was quite small, but very snug and warm, where one or two squirrels might lie warm in the severest storm, the dense moss walls being three inches thick, or more. But what was most peculiar was that the nest, though placed over the centre of the tree, where it divided into four or five branches, was regularly and elaborately hedged about and supported by a basket-work of strong twigs stretched across from bough to bough; which twigs I perceived had been gnawed green from the maple itself, the stub ends remaining visible all around. . . .

April 2, 1852. Six A. M. To the river-side and Merrick's pasture. The sun is up. The water in the meadows is perfectly smooth and placid, reflecting the hills and clouds and trees. The air is full of the notes of birds: song-sparrows, redwings, robins (singing a strain), bluebirds, and I hear also a lark,



as if all the earth had burst forth into song. The influence of this April morning has reached them, for they live out-of-doors all the night, and there is no danger they will oversleep themselves such a morning. A few weeks ago, before the birds had come, there came to my mind in the night the twittering sound of birds in the early dawn of a spring morning, — a semi-prophecy of it, — and last night I attended mentally, as if I heard the spray-like dreaming sound of the midsummer frog, and realized how glorious and full of revelations it was. The clouds are white, watery, not such as we had in the winter. I see in this fresh morning the shells left by the musk-rats along the shore, and their galleries leading into the meadow, and the bright red cranberries washed up along the shore in the old water-mark. Suddenly there is a blur on the placid surface of the waters, a rippling mistiness, produced, as it were, by a slight morning breeze, and I should be sorry to show it to a stranger now. So is it with our minds. . . .

How few valuable observations can we make in youth! What if there were united the susceptibility of youth with the discrimination of age! Once I was part and parcel of nature; now I am observant of her. . . .

It appears to me that to one standing on the heights of philosophy mankind and the works of man will have sunk out of sight altogether; that man is altogether too much insisted on. The poet says the proper study of mankind is man. I say, study to forget all that; take wider views of the universe. That is the egotism of the race. What is this our childish, gossiping, social literature, mainly in the hands of the publishers? Another poet says, "The world is too much with us." He means, of course, that man is too much with us. In the promulgated views of man in institutions, in the common sense, there is narrowness and delusion. It is our weakness that so exaggerates the virtue of philanthropy and charity, and makes it the highest human attribute. The world will sooner or later tire of philanthro-

py, and all religion based on it mainly. They cannot long sustain my spirit. In order to avoid delusions, I would fain let man go by, and behold a universe in which man is but a grain of sand. I am sure that those of my thoughts which consist or are contemporaneous with social, personal connections, however humane, are not the wisest and widest, most universal. What is the village, city, State, nation, aye, the citizen's world, that they should concern a man so much? The thought of them affects me in my wisest hours as when I pass a woodchuck's hole. It is a comfortable place to nestle in, no doubt, and we have friends — some sympathizing ones, it may be — and a hearth there; but I have only to get up at midnight, ay, to soar or wander a little in my thought by day, to find them all slumbering. Look at our literature; what a poor, puny, social thing, seeking sympathy! The author troubles himself about his readers, would fain have one before he dies. He stands too near his printer; he corrects the proofs. Not satisfied with defiling one another in this world, we would all go to heaven together. To be a good man (that is, a good neighbor in the widest sense) is but little more than to be a good citizen. Mankind is a gigantic institution; it is a community to which most men belong. It is a test I would apply to my companion. Can he forget man? Can he see the world slumbering? I do not value any view of the universe into which man and the institutions of man enter very largely and absorb much attention. Man is but the place where I stand, and the prospect hence is infinite. The universe is not a chamber of mirrors which reflect me when I reflect. I find that there is other than me. Man is a past phenomenon to philosophy; the universe is larger than enough for man's abode. Some rarely go out-doors; most are always at home at night; very few indeed have stayed out all night once in their lives; fewer still have gone behind the world of humanity, seen its institutions like toadstools by the wayside. . . .

April 2, 1853. The tree-sparrows and



a few blue snow-birds in company sing (the former) very sweetly in the garden this morning. I now see a faint spot on the breast. It says something like a "twee, twee, chit chit, chit-chit-cheevar-r." . . .

The farmers are trembling for their poultry nowadays. I heard the screams of hens and a tumult among their mistresses (at Dugan's) calling them and scaring away the hawk yesterday. They say they do not lose by hawks in mid-summer. White quotes Linnæus as saying of hawks, "*Paciscuntur inducias cum avibus quamdiu cuculus cucullat,*" but White doubts it. . . . The song-sparrows, the three-spotted, away by the meadow-sides, are very shy and cunning: instead of flying, will frequently trot along the ground under the bushes, or dodge through a wall like a swallow; and I have observed that they generally bring some object, as a rail or branch, between themselves and the face of the walker, — often with outstretched necks will peep at him for five or ten minutes. . . .

Heard and saw what I call the pine warbler, — "vetter, vetter, vetter, vetter, vet," — the cool woodland sound. The first this year of the higher-colored birds, after the bluebird and the black-bird's wing, is it not? It affects me as something more tender. . . .

We cannot well afford not to see the geese go over a single spring, and so commence our year regularly.

April 2, 1854. P. M. To Conantum *via* Nutmeadow Brook. Saw black ducks in water and on land. Can see their light throats a great way off with my glass. They do not dive, but dip. . . .

The radical leaves of some plants appear to have started, look brighter, — the shepherd sparse and plainly the skunk's cabbage. In the brook there is the least possible springing yet, — a little yellow lily in the ditch, and sweet-flag starting. I was just sitting on the rail over the brook when I heard something which reminded me of the song of the robin in rainy days in past springs. Why is it that not the note itself, but something which reminds me of it, should affect

me most? — the ideal instead of the actual. . . .

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

April 2, 1855. Green is essentially vivid or the color of life, and it is therefore most brilliant when a plant is moist or most alive. . . . The word, according to Webster, is from the Saxon *grêne*, to grow, and hence is the color of herbage when growing.

April 2, 1856. It is evident that it depends on the character of the season whether this flower or that is the most forward, whether there is more or less snow, or cold, or rain, etc. I am tempted to stretch myself on the bare ground above the Cliff, to feel its warmth on my back and smell the earth and the dry leaves. I see and hear flies and bees about. A large buff-edged butterfly flutters by along the edge of the Cliff, *Vanessa antiopa*. Though so little of the earth is bare, this frail creature has been warmed into life again. Here is the broken shell of one of those large white snails, *Helix albolabris*, on the top of the Cliff. I am rejoiced to find anything so pretty. I cannot but think it nobler, as it is rarer, to appreciate some beauty than to feel much sympathy with misfortune. The powers are kinder to me when they permit me to enjoy this beauty than if they were to express any amount of compassion for me. I could never excuse them that.

April 2, 1858. At the spring on the west side of Fairhaven Hill I startle a striped snake. It is a large one, with a white stripe down the dorsal ridge between two black ones, and on each side the last a buff one, and blotchy brown sides, darker towards the tail. Beneath, greenish-yellow. This snake generally has a pinkish cast. There is another, evidently of the same species, but not half so large, with its neck lying affectionately across the first. When seen by itself you might have thought of a distinct species. The dorsal line on this one is bright yellow, though not so bright as the lateral ones and the yellow about



the head. Also, the black is more glossy, and this snake has no pink cast. No doubt on almost every such warm bank now you will find a snake lying out. . . . They allowed me to lift their heads with a stick four or five inches without stirring, nor did they mind the flies that alighted on them, looking steadily at me without the slightest motion of head, body, or eyes, as if they were of marble; and as you looked back at them, you continually forgot that they were real, and not imaginary.

On the side of Fairhaven Hill I go looking for baywings, turning my glass to each sparrow on a rock or tree. At last I see one which flies up straight from a rock eighty or one hundred feet, and warbles a peculiar, long, and pleasant strain, after the manner of the skylark, methinks; and close by I see another, apparently a baywing (though I do not see the white on its tail), and it utters, while sitting, the same subdued, rather peculiar strain. . . .

It is not important that the poet should say some particular thing, but that he should speak in harmony with nature. The tone and pitch of his voice is the main thing.

It appears to me that the wisest philosophers I know are as foolish as Sancho Panza dreaming of his island. Considering the ends they propose and the obstructions in their path, they are even. One philosopher is feeble enough alone; but observe how each multiplies his difficulties, — by how many unnecessary links he allies himself to the existing state of things. He girds himself for his enterprise with fasting and prayer, and then, instead of pressing forward like a light-armed soldier, with the fewest possible hindrances, he at once hooks on to some immovable institution, and begins to sing and scratch gravel towards his objects. Why, it is as much as the strongest man can do decently to bury his friends and relations, without making a new world of it. But if the philosopher is as foolish as Sancho Panza, he is also as wise, and nothing so truly makes a thing so or so as thinking it so.

April 2, 1859. As I go down the street just after sunset, I hear many snipe to-night. At this hour, that is, in the twilight, they make a hovering sound high in the air over the villages, and the inhabitants do not know what to refer it to. It is very easily imitated by a sort of shuddering with the breath. It reminds me of calmer nights. Hardly one in a hundred hears it, and perhaps not nearly so many know what creature makes it. Perhaps no one dreamed of snipe an hour ago, and the air seemed empty of such as they; but as soon as the dusk begins so that a bird's flight is concealed, you hear this peculiar, spirit-suggesting sound, now far, now near, heard through and above the evening din of the village. I did not hear one when I returned up the street half an hour later.

April 3, 1841. Friends will not only live in harmony, but in melody.

April 3, 1842. I can remember when I was more enriched by a few cheap rays of light falling on the pond side than by this broad sunny day. Riches have wings, indeed. The weight of present woe will express the sweetness of past experience. When sorrow comes, how easy it is to remember pleasure! When in winter the bees cannot make new honey, they consume the old.

Experience is in the head and fingers. The heart is inexperienced. . . .

I have just heard the flicker among the oaks on the hill-side ushering in a new dynasty. It is the age and youth of time. Why did nature set this lure for sickly mortals? Eternity could not begin with more security and momentousness than the spring. The summer's eternity is reëstablished by this note. All sights and sounds are seen and heard both in time and eternity; and when the eternity of any sight or sound strikes the eye or ear, they are intoxicated with delight.

Sometimes, as through a dim haze, we see objects in their eternal relations. They stand like Stonehenge and the Pyramids, and we wonder who set them up, and what for.



The destiny of the soul can never be studied by the reason, for the modes of the latter are not ecstatic. In the wisest calculation or demonstration I but play a game with myself. I am not to be taken captive by myself. I cannot convince myself. God must convince. I can calculate a problem in arithmetic, but not any morality. Virtue is incalculable, as it is inestimable. Man's destiny is but virtue or manhood. It is wholly moral, to be learned only by the life of the soul. The reason, before it can be applied to such a subject, will have to fetter and restrict it. How can he, step by step, perform that long journey who has not conceived whither he is bound? How can he expect to perform an arduous journey without interruption who has no passport to the end? On this side of man is the actual, and on the other the ideal. The former is the province of the reason, which is even a divine light when directed upon that, but it cannot reach forward into the ideal without blindness. The moon was made to rule by night, but the sun to rule by day. Reason will be but a pale cloud like the moon when one ray of divine light comes to illumine the soul.

April 3, 1852. They call that northernmost sea, thought to be free from ice, "Polina." The coldest natures, persevere with them, go far enough, are found to have open sea in the highest latitudes.

April 3, 1853. Nothing is more saddening than an ineffectual, proud intercourse with those of whom we expect sympathy and encouragement. I repeatedly find myself drawn toward certain persons but to be disappointed. No concessions which are not radical are the least satisfaction. By myself I can live and thrive, but in the society of incompatible friends I starve. To cultivate their society is to cherish a sore which can only be healed by abandoning them. I cannot trust my neighbor whom I know any more than I can trust the law of gravitation and jump off the Cliffs.

The last two Tribunes I have not looked at. I have no time to read news-

papers. If you chance to live and move and have your being in that thin stratum in which the events which make the news transpire, — thinner than the paper on which it is printed, — then these things will fill the world for you. But if you soar above or dive below that plane, you cannot remember nor be reminded of them.

P. M. To Cliffs. At Hayden's I hear hylas on two keys or notes. Heard one after the other; the sounds might be mistaken for the varied note of one. The little croakers, too, are very lively there. I get close to them, and witness a great commotion, they half-hopping and half-swimming about with their heads out, apparently in pursuit of each other, perhaps thirty or forty within a few square yards, and fifteen or twenty within one yard. There is not only the incessant lively croaking of many together, as usually heard, but a lower, hoarser, squirming kind of croak, perhaps from the other sex. As I approach nearer, they disperse and bury themselves in the grass at the bottom, only one or two remaining outstretched upon the surface; and at another step, these too conceal themselves.

April 3, 1856. P. M. To Hunt's Bridge. It is surprising how the earth on south banks begins to show some greenness in its russet cheeks in this rain and fog, — a precious emerald-green tinge, almost like a green mildew, the growth of the night, a green blush suffusing her cheek, heralded by twittering birds. This sight is no less interesting than the corresponding bloom and ripe blush of the fall. How encouraging to perceive again that faint tinge of green spreading amid the russet on earth's cheeks! I revive with Nature. Her victory is mine. This is my jewelry. . . .

I see small flocks of robins running on the bared portions of the meadow; hear the sprayey tinkle of the song-sparrow along the hedges. Hear also the squeaking notes of an advancing flock of redwings or grackles (am uncertain which make that sound) somewhere high in the sky. At length detect them high overhead, advancing northeast in loose array,



with broad, extended front, competing with each other, winging their way to some northern meadow which they remember. The note of some is like the squeaking of many signs, while others accompany them with a steady, dry "tchuk-tchuk."

H— is overhauling a vast heap of manure in the rear of his barn, turning the ice within it up to the light. Yet he asks despairingly what life is for, and says he does not expect to stay here long. But I have just come from reading Columella, who describes the same kind of spring look in that, to him, new spring of the world with hope, and I suggest to be brave and hopeful with nature. Human life may be transitory and full of trouble, but the perennial mind whose survey extends from that spring to this, from Columella to H—, is superior to change. I will identify myself with that which did not die with Columella and will not die with H—.

Coming home along the causeway, I hear a robin sing (though faintly) as in May. The road is a path, here and there shoveled through drifts which are considerably higher than a man's head on each side.

April 3, 1858. Going down town this morning, I am surprised by the rich strain of the purple finch from the elms. Three or four have arrived and lodged against the elms of our street, which runs east and west across their course, and they are now mingling their loud, rich strain with that of the tree-sparrows, robins, bluebirds, etc. The hearing of this note implies some improvement in the acoustics of the air. It reminds me of that genial state of the air when the elms are in bloom. They sit still over the street, and make a business of warbling. They advertise one, surely, of some additional warmth and serenity. How their note rings over the roofs of the village! You wonder that even the sleepers are not awakened by it, to inquire who is there. And yet probably not another in all the town observes their coming, and not half a dozen ever distinguish them in their lives. But the very mob of the town know the hard

names of Germanians or Swiss families who once sang here or elsewhere. . . .

When I have been out thus the whole day, and spend the whole afternoon returning, it seems to me pitiful and ineffectual to be out, as usual, only in the afternoon, — as if you had come late to a feast, after your betters had done. The afternoon seems at best a long twilight after the fresh and bright forenoon.

The gregariousness of men is their most contemptible and discouraging aspect. See how they follow each other like sheep, not knowing why! Day and Martin's blacking was preferred by the last generation, and also is by this. They have not so good a reason for preferring this or that religion. Apparently, in ancient times several parties were nearly equally matched. They appointed a committee and made a compromise, agreeing to vote or believe so and so, and they still helplessly abide by that. Men are the inveterate foes of all improvement. Generally speaking, they think more of their hen-houses than of any desirable heaven. If you aspire to anything better than politics, expect no coöperation from men. They will not further anything good. You must prevail of your own force, as a plant springs and grows by its own vitality.

April 3, 1859. The *bæomyces* is in perfection this rainy day. I have for some weeks been insisting on the beauty and richness of the moist and saturated crust of the earth. It has seemed to me more attractive and living than ever, a very sensitive cuticle, teeming with life, especially in the rainy days. I have looked on it as the skin of a pard. And on a more close examination I am borne out by discovering in this now so bright *bæomyces*, and in other earthy lichens, and in cladonias, and also in the very pretty red and yellow stemmed mosses, a manifest sympathy with and an expression of the general life of the crust. This early and hardy cryptogamous vegetation is, as it were, a flowering of the crust of the earth. Lichens and these mosses which depend on moisture are now most rampant. If you examine it, this brown earth crust is not



dead. We need a popular name for the *bæomyces*. C—— suggests "pink mold." Perhaps "pink shot or eggs" would do. . . .

Men's minds run so much on work and money that the mass instantly associate all literary labor with a pecuniary reward. They are mainly curious to know how much money the lecturer or another gets for his work. They think that the naturalist takes so much pains to collect plants or animals because he is paid for it. An Irishman who saw me in the fields making a minute in my note-book took it for granted that I was casting up my wages, and actually inquired what they came to, as if he had never dreamed of any other use for writing. I might have quoted to him that the wages of sin are death, as the most pertinent answer. What do you get for lecturing now? I am occasionally asked. It is the more amusing, since I only lecture about once a year out of my native town, often not at all; so that I might, if my objects were merely pecuniary, give up the business. Once, when I was walking in Staten Island, looking about me, as usual, a man who saw me would not believe me when I told him that I was indeed from New England, but was not looking at that region with a pecuniary view, — a view to speculation; and he offered me a handsome bonus if I would sell his farm for him.

April 4, 1839. The atmosphere of morning gives a healthy hue to our prospects. Disease is a sluggard that overtakes, never encounters us. We have the start each day, and may fairly distance him before the dew is off; but if we recline in the bowers of noon, he will, after all, come up with us. The morning dew breeds no cold. We enjoy a diurnal reprieve in the beginning of each day's creation. In the morning we do not believe in expediency; we will start afresh, and have no patching, no temporary fixtures. In the afternoon man has an interest in the past; his eye is divided, and he sees indifferently well either way.

Drifting in a sultry day on the sluggish waters of the pond, I almost cease

to live, and begin to be. A boatman stretched on the deck of his craft, and dallying with the noon, would be as apt an emblem of eternity for me as the serpent with his tail in his mouth. I am never so prone to lose my identity. I am dissolved in the haze.

April 4, 1841. The rattling of the teakettle below stairs reminds me of the cowbells I used to hear when berrying in the Great Fields many years ago, sounding distant and deep amid the birches. That cheap piece of tinkling brass which the farmer hangs about his cow's neck has been more to me than the tons of metal which are swung in the belfry.

April 4, 1852. It is refreshing to stand on the face of the Cliff and see the water gliding over the surface of the almost perpendicular rock in a broad, thin sheet, pulsing over it. It reflects the sun for half a mile like a patch of snow. As you stand close by, it brings out the colors of the lichens like polishing or varnish. It is admirable regarded as a dripping fountain. You have lichens and moss on the surface, and starting saxifrage, ferns still green, and huckleberry bushes in the crevices. The rocks never appear so diversified and cracked, as if the chemistry of nature were now in full force. Then the drops falling perpendicularly from a projecting rock have a pleasing geometrical effect.

I see the snow lying thick on the south side of the Peterboro' Hills, and, though the ground is bare from the sea-shore to their base, I presume it is covered with snow from their base to the icy sea. I feel the raw air, cooled by the snow, on my cheek. Those hills are probably the dividing line at present between the bare ground and the snow-clad ground stretching three thousand miles to the Saskatchewan and Mackenzie, and the icy sea.

April 4, 1853. P. M. Rain, rain. To Clematis Brook *via* Lee's Bridge. Again I notice that early reddish or purplish grass that lies flat on the pools, like a warm blush suffusing the youthful face of the year. A warm, dripping rain heard on one's umbrella as on a snug roof, and on the leaves without, suggests comfort. We go abroad with a slow



but sure contentment, like turtles under their shells. We never feel so comfortable as when we are abroad in a storm with satisfaction. Our comfort is positive then. We are all compact, and our thoughts collected. We walk under the clouds and mists as under a roof. Now we seem to hear the ground a-soaking up the rain, which does not fall ineffectually, as on a frozen surface. We too are penetrated and revived by it. Robins still sing, and song-sparrows more or less, and blackbirds, and the unfailing jay screams. How the thirsty grass rejoices! It has pushed up visibly since morning, and fields that were completely russet yesterday are already tinged with green. We rejoice with the grass. I hear the hollow sound of drops falling into the water under Hubbard's Bridge, and each one makes a conspicuous bubble which is floated down stream. Instead of ripples, there are a myriad dimples in the stream. The lichens remember the sea to-day; the usually dry cladonias which are so crisp under the feet are full of moist vigor. The rocks speak, and tell the tales inscribed on them. Their inscriptions are brought out. I pause to study their geography. At Conantum-end I saw a red-tailed hawk launch himself away from an oak by the pond at my approach, — a heavy flyer, flapping even like the great bittern at first. Heavy forward. After turning Lee's Cliff, I heard, methought, more birds singing even than in fair weather, — tree-sparrows, whose song has the character of the canary's (*Fringilla hiemalis*) *chill-till*, the sweet strains of the fox-colored sparrow, song-sparrows, a nut-hatch, jays, crows, bluebirds, robins, and a large congregation of blackbirds. They suddenly alight with great din in a stubble field just over the wall, not perceiving me and my umbrella behind the pitch-pines, and there feed silently. Then, getting uneasy or anxious, they fly up on to an apple-tree, where, being reassured, commences a rich but deafening concert, — "o-gurgle-ee-e, o gurgle-ee-e," — some of the most liquid notes ever heard, as if produced by some of the water of the Pierian spring flowing through a kind

of musical water pipe, and at the same time setting in motion a multitude of fine vibrating metallic springs. Like a shepherd merely meditating most enrapturing glees on such a water pipe. A more liquid bagpipe or clarinet, immersed like bubbles in a thousand sprayey notes, the bubbles half lost in the spray. When I show myself, away they go with a loud, harsh "charr-charr-r." At first I had heard an inundation of blackbirds approaching, some beating time with a loud "chuck-chuck," while the rest played a hurried, gurgling fugue.

A rainy day is to the walker in solitude and retirement like the night. Few travelers are about, and they half-hidden under umbrellas and confined to the highways. The thoughts run in a different channel from usual. It is somewhat like the dark day; it is a light night. How cheerful the roar of a brook swollen by the rain, especially if there is no sound of the mill in it! A woodcock went off from the shore of Clematis or Nightshade pond with a few slight, rapid sounds like a watchman's rattle half-revolved.

April 4, 1855. P. M. To Clematis Brook *via* Lee's. A pleasant day; growing warmer; a slight haze. Now the hedges and apple-trees are alive with fox-colored sparrows all over the town, and their imperfect strains are occasionally heard.

It is a fine air, but more than tempered by the snow in the northwest. All the earth is bright; the very pines glisten, and the water is a bright blue. A gull is circling round Fairhaven Pond, seen white against the woods and hill-sides, looking as if it would dive for a fish every moment, and occasionally resting on the ice. The water above Lee's Bridge is all alive with ducks. There are many flocks of eight or ten together, their black heads and white breasts seen above the water, — more of them than I have seen before this season, — and a gull with its whole body above the water, perhaps standing where it is shallow.

Not only are the evergreens brighter, but the pools, as that upland one behind Lee's, the ice as well as snow about their



edges being completely melted, have a peculiarly warm and bright April look, as if ready to be inhabited by frogs. . . .

Returning from Mt. Misery, the pond and river each presented a fine warm view. The slight haze which, in a warmer day at this season, softens the rough surface which the winter has left, and fills the copses seemingly with life, made the landscape remarkably fair. There is a remarkable variety in the view at present from this summit. The sun feels as warm as in June on my ear.

Half a mile off, in front, is this Elysian water, high over which two wild ducks are winging their rapid flight eastward through the bright air. On each side and beyond, the earth is clad with a warm russet, more pleasing perhaps than green; and far beyond all, in the north-west horizon, my eye rests on a range of snow-covered mountains glistening in the sun.

April 4, 1860. The birds are eager to sing as the flowers to bloom, after raw weather has held them in check.

### LINCOLN'S TRIUMPH IN 1864.

IN the summer of 1864 vague and indefinite rumors were circulated that peace was attainable, and actually desired by the rebels, but that the administration would not listen to overtures or receive propositions which might lead to an adjustment. Some leading and over-officious persons interested themselves in these matters, which were merely subsidiary aids to the peace democrats, projected by the rebels to divide the republicans and to promote democratic success in the pending election. For a brief period these rumors undoubtedly made an impression unfavorable and unjust, as regarded the president. Horace Greeley, often credulous and always ready to engage in public employment, was entrapped by the most skillfully contrived of these intrigues. He became the willing agent of certain prominent rebels who resorted to Canada, and from thence persuaded him that they were authorized by the rebel government to negotiate peace, and desired his assistance. They asked for full protection to proceed to Washington to effect that object, and made Greeley the medium to convey to the president their application and purpose.

Greeley, thus applied to, at once entered into the scheme, and forwarded

their application, with his indorsement that while he did "not say a just peace is now attainable, he believed it to be so." The president had no belief in the good faith or sincerity of this proceeding, and little doubted that it was a subtle intrigue; but as it emanated from distinguished rebels, and had the indorsement of one of the most influential editors and politicians of the republican party, he was for a moment embarrassed how to treat it or what course to take. Promptly to reject the application thus made and indorsed would not only subject him to misrepresentation, and bring upon him the assaults of the malevolent, but would lead to a misconception of his own ardent desire for peace by many well-meaning men who, weary of war, earnestly praying that hostilities should cease, wished he might accept this advance and permit such conspicuous rebels as Jacob Thompson, C. C. Clay, and their associates, to visit Washington. The advent of these secession gentlemen would not be private and unheralded, but attended with the pomp and proclaimed character of ambassadors or ministers from the Confederate government to negotiate peace. Its effect would be and was evidently intended to divert attention from a vigorous prosecution of the war, and



Oh, what wide vistas, thronged with mighty deed  
 And mightier thought, have here mine eyes descried!  
 Come, a fraternal grasp, thou hand of stone!  
 The flesh that once was thine is now mine own.

## V.

Sublime is life, though in beginnings base  
 At first enkindled! In this clod of mold  
 Beats with faint spirit pulse the heart of gold  
 That warms the lily's cheek; its silent grace  
 Dwells unborn 'neath this sod. Fain would I trace  
 The potent mystery which, like Midas' hand,  
 Thrills the mean clay into refulgence grand;  
 For, gazing down the misty aisles of space  
 And time, upon my sight vast visions throng  
 Of the imperial destiny of man.  
 The life that throbbed in plant and beast ere long  
 Will break still wider orbits in its van, —  
 A race of peace-robed conquerors and kings,  
 Achieving evermore diviner things.

Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen.

## MAY DAYS.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF HENRY D. THOREAU.

MAY 1, 1841. Life in gardens and parlors is unpalatable to me. It wants rudeness and necessity to give it relish. I would at least strike my spade into the earth with as good-will as the woodpecker his bill into a tree.

May 1, 1851. Khaled would have his weary soldiers vigilant still. Apprehending a midnight sally from the enemy, "Let no man sleep," said he; "we shall have rest enough after death."

May 1, 1852. Five A. M. To Cliffs. A smart frost in the night. The plowed ground and platforms white with it. I hear the little forked-tailed chipping-sparrow (*Fringilla socialis*) shaking out his rapid "tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi-tchi," — a little jingle from the oak behind the depot. I hear the note of that plump bird with a dark streaked breast, that runs and hides in the grass, whose note sounds so like a cricket's in the grass. I used

to hear it when I walked by moonlight last summer. I hear it now from deep in the sod, for there is hardly grass yet. The bird keeps so low you do not see it. You do not suspect how many there are till their heads appear. The word *seringo* reminds me of its note, as if it were produced by some kind of fine metallic spring. It is an earth sound.

It is a moist, lowering morning for the Mayers. The sun now shines under a cloud in the horizon, and his still yellow light falls on the western fields as sometimes on the eastern after a shower in a summer afternoon. Nuttall says the note of the chipping-sparrow is "given from time to time in the night, like the reverie of a dream." Have I not heard it when spearing? Found the first violet which would open to day, *V. sagittata* var. *ovata*, — or *cucullata*? for the leaves are not toothed at base nor arrow-shaped



as in the first, yet they are hairy, and, I should say, petiole-margined; still, like the latter, they are rolled in at base, and the scape is four-angled. . . . The woods have a damp smell this morning. I hear a robin amid them. Yet there are fewer singers to be heard than on a very pleasant morning some weeks ago. The low early blueberry (June berry) is well budded. The grass ground — low ground, at least — wears a good green tinge; there are no leaves on the woods; the river is high over the meadows. There is a thin, gauze-like veil over the village (I am on Fairhaven Hill), probably formed of the smokes. As yet we have had no morning fogs, to my knowledge. I hear the first to-wee finch; he says, "to-wee-to-wee;" and another, much farther off than I supposed when I went in search of him, says, "whip your chr-r-r-r-r," with a metallic ring. I hear the first cat-bird, also, mewing, and the wood-thrush, which still thrills me, — a sound to be heard in a new country from one side of a clearing. I heard a black and white creeper just now, "wicher-wicher-wicher-wich." I am on the Cliff. It is about six. The flicker cackles. I hear a woodpecker tapping. The tinkle of the huckleberry bird comes up from the shrub-oak plain. He commonly lives away from the habitations of men, in retired bushy fields and sprout lands. We have thus flowers and the song of birds before the woods leave out, like poetry. When leaving the woods I heard the hooting of an owl, which sounded very much like a clown calling to his team. Saw two large woodpeckers on an oak. I am tempted to say that they were other and larger than the flicker; but I have been deceived in him before. . . .

The little peeping frogs which I got last night resemble the description of the *Hylodes Pickeringii*, and in some respects the peeping hyla; but they are probably the former, though every way considerably smaller. Mine are about three fourths of an inch long as they sit, seven eighths if stretched; four-fingered and five-toed, with small tubercles on the ends of them. Some difference in their color. One is like a pale oak leaf at

this season, streaked with brown. Two others more ashy. Two have crosses on back, of dark brown, with transverse bands on the legs. I keep them in a tumbler. They peep at twilight and evening; occasionally at other times. One that got out in the evening on to the carpet was found soon after, by his peeping, on the piano. They easily ascend the glass of the window. Jump eighteen inches or more. When they peep, the loose, wrinkled skin of the throat is swelled up into a globular bubble, very large and transparent, and quite round, except on the throat side, behind which their little heads are lost, mere protuberances on the side of this sphere. The peeping wholly absorbs them, their mouths being shut, or apparently so. Will sit half a day on the side of a smooth tumbler. Made that trilling note in the house. Remain many hours at the bottom of the water in the tumbler, or sit as long on the leaves above. A pulse in the throat always, except in one for an hour or two, apparently asleep. They change their color to a darker or lighter shade, chameleon-like.

May 1, 1853. To Cliffs. The oak leaves on the plain are fallen. The colors are now light blue above (where is my cyanometer? Saussure invented one, and Humboldt used it in his travels); the landscape russet and greenish, spotted with fawn-colored plowed lands, with green pine and gray or reddish oak woods intermixed, and dark-blue or slate-colored water here and there. It is greenest in the meadows and where water has lately stood, and a strong, invigorating scent comes up from the fresh meadows. It is like the greenness of an apple faintly or dimly appearing through the russet.

May 1, 1854. Early starlight by river-side. The water smooth and broad. I hear the loud and incessant cackling of probably the pigeon woodpecker, what some time since I thought to be a different kind. Thousands of robins are filling the air with their trills, mingling with the peeping of hylodes and ringing of frogs; and now the snipes have just begun their winnowing sounds and squeaks.



May 1, 1855. P. M. By boat with S—— to Conantum a-maying.

The myrtle bird is one of the commonest and tamest birds now. It catches insects like a pewee, darting off from its perch and returning to it, and sings something like "a-chill chill, chill chill, chill chill, a-twear, twill twill twee," or it may be all *tw* (not loud, a little like the *Fringilla hiemalis*, or more like the pine warbler), rapid, and more and more intense as it advances. There is an unaccountable sweetness as of flowers in the air. A true May day,—raw and drizzling in the morning. The grackle still. What various brilliant and evanescent colors on the surface of this agitated water,—now, as we are crossing Willow Bay, looking toward the half-concealed sun over the foam-spotted flood! It reminds me of the sea. . . .

Went to G——'s for the hawk of yesterday. It was nailed to the barn *in terrorem*, and as a trophy. He gave it to me, with an egg. He called it the female, and probably was right, it was so large. He tried in vain to shoot the male, which I saw circling about just out of gunshot, and screaming, while he robbed the nest. He climbed the tree when I was there yesterday P. M., and found two young, which he thought not more than a fortnight old, with only down, at least no feathers, and one addled egg; also three or four white-bellied or deer mice (*Mus leucopus*), a perch and a sucker, and a gray rabbit's skin. I think they must have found the fish dead. They were now stale. I found the remains of a partridge under the tree. G—— had seen squirrels, etc., in other nests.

May 1, 1857. Two P. M. First notice the ring of the toad as I am crossing the common in front of the meeting-house. There is a cool and breezy south wind, and the ring of the first toad leaks into the general stream of sound unnoticed by most, as the mill brook empties into the river, and the voyager cannot tell if he is above or below its mouth. The bell was ringing for town meeting, and every one heard it, but none heard this older and more universal bell, rung by

more native Americans all the land over. It is a sound from amid the waves of the aerial sea, that breaks on our ears with the surf of the air,—a sound that is almost breathed with the wind, taken into the lungs instead of being heard by the ears. It comes from far over and through the troughs of the aerial sea, like a petrel; and who can guess by what pool the singer sits?—whether behind the meeting-house sheds, or over the burying-ground hill, or by the river-side. A new reign has commenced. Bufo the first has ascended his throne, the surface of the earth, marshaled into office by the south wind. Bufo, the double-chinned, inflates his throat. Attend to his message. Take off your great coats, swains, and prepare for the summer campaign. Hop a few paces farther toward your goals. The measures which I shall advocate are warmth, moisture, and low-flying insects. . . .

It is foolish for a man to accumulate material wealth chiefly, houses and lands. Our stock in life, our real estate, is that amount of thought which we have had, which we have thought out. The ground we have thus created is forever pasturage for our thoughts. I fall back on to visions which I have had. What else adds to my possessions, and makes me rich in all lands? If you have ever done any work with those finest tools, the Imagination and Fancy and Reason, it is a new creation, independent of the world, and a possession forever. You have laid up something against a rainy day. You have, to that extent, cleared the wilderness.

May 1, 1859. We accuse savages of worshiping only the bad spirit or devil. Though they may distinguish both a good and a bad, they regard only that one which they fear, worship the devil only. We too are savages in this, doing precisely the same thing. This occurred to me yesterday, as I sat in the woods admiring the beauty of the blue butterfly. We are not chiefly interested in birds and insects, for example, as they are ornamental to the earth and cheering to man, but we spare the lives of the former only on condition that they eat more



grubs than they do cherries, and the only account of the insects which the State encourages is of the insects injurious to vegetation. We too admit both a good and bad spirit, but we worship chiefly the bad spirit whom we fear. We do not think first of the good, but of the harm things will do us. The catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, which of course is applicable mainly to God as seen in his works. Yet the only account of the beautiful insects, butterflies, etc., which God has made and set before us, which the State ever thinks of spending any money on is the account of those which are injurious to vegetation! This is the way we glorify God and enjoy him forever. . . .

We have attended to the evil, and said nothing about the good. This is looking a gift horse in the mouth, with a vengeance. Children are attracted by the beauty of butterflies, but their parents and legislators deem it an idle pursuit. The parents remind one of the devil, but the children of God. Though God may have pronounced his work good, we ask, Is it not poisonous?

Science is *inhuman*. Things seen with a microscope begin to be insignificant. So described, they are monstrous, as if they should be magnified a thousand diameters. Suppose I should see and describe men and horses and trees and birds as if they were a thousand times larger than they are. With our prying instruments we disturb the harmony and balance of nature.

May 2, 1852. Reptiles must not be omitted, especially frogs. Their croaking is the most earthy sound now, a rustling of the scurf of the earth, not to be overlooked in the awakening of the year. . . .

The commonplaces of one age or nation make the poetry of another. . . .

The handsome, blood-red, lacquered marks on the edge and under the edge of the painted tortoise's shell, like the marks on a waiter, concentric. Few colors like it in nature. This tortoise, too, like the *guttata*, painted on thin

parts of the shell, and on legs and tail in this style, but on throat bright yellow stripes. Sternum dull yellowish or buff. It hisses like the spotted tortoise. Is the male the larger and flatter, with depressed sternum? There is *some* regularity in the *guttata's* spots, generally a straight row on back. Some of the spots are orange sometimes on the head. . . .

If you would obtain insight, avoid anatomy. . . .

May 2, 1855. The anemone is well named, for see now the *memorosa* amid the fallen brush and leaves, trembling in the wind, so fragile.

May 2, 1859. A peewee and its mate. The river seems really inhabited when the peewee is back. This bird does not return to our stream until the weather is decidedly pleasant and warm. He is perched on the accustomed rock. His note peoples the river like the prattle of children once more in the yard of a house that has stood empty. . . .

I am surprised by the tender yellowish green of the aspen leaves, just expanded suddenly, even like a fire, seen in the sun against the dark brown twigs of the wood, though these leaflets are yet but thinly dispersed. It is very enlivening.

I feel no desire to go to California or Pike's Peak, but I often think at night, with inexpressible satisfaction and yearning, of the arrow-headiferous sands of Concord. I have often spent whole afternoons, especially in the spring, pacing back and forth over a sandy field, looking for these relics of a race. This is the gold which our sands yield. The soil of that rocky spot of Simon Brown's land is quite ash-colored (now that the sod is turned up) from Indian fires, with numerous pieces of coal in it. There is a great deal of this ash-colored soil in the country. We do literally plow up the hearths of a people, and plant in their ashes. The ashes of their fires colors much of our soil.

May 2, 1860. I observed on the 29th that the clams had not only been moving much, furrowing the sandy bottom near the shore, but generally, or almost



invariably, had moved toward the middle of the river. Perhaps it had something to do with the low stage of the water. I saw one making his way,—or perhaps it had rested since morning,—over that sawdust bar just below Turtle Bar, toward the river, the surface of the bar being an inch or two higher than the water. Probably the water falling left it thus on moist land.

A crowd of men seems to generate vermin even of the human kind. In great towns there is degradation undreamed of elsewhere, gamblers, dog-killers, rag-pickers. Some live by robbing or by luck. There was the Concord muster of last September. I see still a well-dressed man carefully and methodically searching for money on the muster field far off across the river. I turn my glass upon him and notice how he proceeds. (I saw them searching in the fall till the snow came.) He walks, regularly and slowly, back and forth over the ground where the soldiers had their tents, still marked by the straw, with his head prone, and picking in the straw with a stick, now and then turning back or aside to examine something more closely. He is dressed, methinks, better than the average man whom you meet in the streets. How can he pay for his board thus? He dreams of finding a few coppers, or perchance half a dime, which have fallen from the soldiers' pockets, and no doubt he will find something of the kind, having dreamed of it. Having knocked, this door will be opened to him.

May 3, 1841. We are all pilots of the most intricate Bahama channels. Beauty may be the sky overhead, but duty is the water underneath. When I see a man with serene countenance in garden or parlor, it looks like a great inward leisure that he enjoys, but in reality he sails on no summer's sea. This steady sailing comes of a heavy hand on the tiller. We do not attend to larks and bluebirds so leisurely but that conscience is as erect as the attitude of the listener. The man of principle gets never a holiday. Our true character underlies all our words and actions, as

the granite underlies the other strata. Its steady pulse does not cease for any deed of ours, as the sap is still ascending in the stalk of the fairest flower.

May 3, 1852. Five A. M. To Cliffs. A great brassy moon going down in the west. . . . Looking from the Cliff, now about six A. M., the landscape is as if seen in a mirage, the Cliff being in shadow, and that in the cool sunlight. The earth and water smell fresh and new, and the latter is marked by a few smooth streaks. The atmosphere suits the grayish-brown landscape, the still, ashy maple swamps, and now nearly bare shrub oaks. The white pine, left here and there over the sprout land, is never more beautiful than with the morning light, before the water is rippled and the morning song of the birds is quenched.

Hear the first brown thrasher, two of them. They drown all the rest. He says, "cherruwit, cherruwit, go ahead, go ahead, give it to him, give it to him," etc. Plenty of birds in the woods this morning. The huckleberry birds and the chickadees are as numerous, if not as loud, as any. The flicker taps a dead tree somewhat as one uses a knocker on a door in the village street. In his note he begins low, rising higher and higher.

Anurnsack looks green three miles off. This is an important epoch, when the distant bare hills begin to show green or verdurous to the eye. The earth wears a new aspect. Not tawny or russet now, but green are such bare hills. Some of the notes, the trills of the lark sitting amid the tussucks and stubble, are like the notes of my seringo bird. May these birds that live so low in the grass be called the cricket birds? and does their song resemble that of the cricket, an earth song?

Evening. The moon is full. The air is filled with a certain luminous, liquid white light. You can see the moonlight, as it were reflected from the atmosphere, which some might mistake for a haze,—a glow of mellow light, somewhat like the light I saw in the afternoon sky some weeks ago, as if the air were a very thin but transparent liquid, not dry as in winter, nor gross as in



summer. The sky has depth and not merely distance. Going through the depot field, I hear the dream frog at a distance. The little peeping frogs make a background of sound in the horizon, which you do not hear unless you attend. The former is a trembling note, some higher, some lower, along the edge of the earth,—an all-pervading sound. Nearer, it is a blubbering or rather bubbling sound, such as children, who stand nearer to nature, can and do often make. . . . The little peeper prefers a pool on the edge of a wood, which mostly dries up at midsummer, whose shore is covered with leaves, and where there are twigs in the water, as where choppers have worked. Theirs is a clear, sharp, ear-piercing peep, not shrill, sometimes a squeak from one whose pipe is out of order. . . . They have much the greatest apparatus for peeping of any frogs that I know. . . . I go along the side of Fairhaven Hill. The clock strikes distinctly, showing the wind is easterly. There is a grand, rich, musical echo trembling in the air long after the clock has ceased to strike, like a vast organ, filling the air with a trembling music, like a flower of sound. Nature adopts it. The water is so calm, the woods and single trees are doubled by the reflection, and in this light you cannot divide them as you walk along the river. See the spearer's lights, one northeast, one southwest, toward Sudbury, beyond Lee's Bridge,—scarlet-colored fires. From the hill, the river is a broad blue stream exactly the color of the heavens which it reflects. Sit on the Cliff with comfort in great-coat. All the tawny and russet earth (for no green is seen upon the ground at this hour) sending only this faint, multitudinous sound (of frogs) to heaven. The vast, wild earth. The first whip-poor-will startles me; I hear three. Summer is coming apace. Within three or four days the birds have come so fast I can hardly keep the run of them,—much faster than the flowers.

Sunday, May 3, 1857. A remarkably warm and pleasant morning. A. M. To battle ground by river. I heard the

ring of toads at six A. M. The flood on the meadows, still high, is quite smooth, and many are out this still and suddenly very warm morning, pushing about in boats. Now, thinks many a one, is the time to paddle or push gently far up or down the river, along the still, warm meadow's edge, and perhaps we may see some large turtles, or musk-rats, or otter, or rare fish or fowl. It will be a grand forenoon for a cruise, to explore these meadow shores and inundated maple swamps which we have never explored. Now we shall be recompensed for the week's confinement in shop or garden. We will spend our Sabbath exploring these smooth, warm vernal waters. Up or down shall we go,—to Fairhaven Bay and the Sudbury meadows, or to Ball's Hill and Carlisle Bridge? Along the meadow's edge, lined with willows and alders and maples; underneath the catkins of the early willow, and brushing those of the sweet-gale with our prow; where the sloping pasture and the plowed ground submerged are fast drinking up the flood, what fair isles, what remote coast, shall we explore? what San Salvador or Bay of All Saints arrive at? All are tempted forth, like flies into the sun. All isles seem Fortunate and blessed to-day, all capes are of Good Hope. The same sun and calm that tempt the turtles out tempt the voyagers. It is an opportunity to explore their own natures, to float along their own shores. The woodpecker cackles and the crow blackbird utters his jarring chatter from the oaks and maples. All well men and women who are not restrained by superstitious custom come abroad this morning, by land or water, and such as have boats launch them and put forth in search of adventure. Others, less free or it may be less fortunate, take their station on bridges, watching the rush of waters through them and the motions of the departing voyagers, and listening to the note of blackbirds from over the smooth water. Perhaps they see a swimming snake or a musk-rat dive,—airing and sunning themselves there till the first bell rings. Up and down the town men and boys



that are under subjection are polishing their shoes and brushing their go-to-meeting clothes.

I sympathize not to-day with those who go to church in newest clothes, and sit quietly in straight-backed pews. I sympathize rather with the boy who has none to look after him, who borrows a boat and paddle, and in common clothes sets out to explore these temporary vernal lakes. I meet one paddling along under a sunny bank, with bare feet and his pants rolled up above his knees, ready to leap into the water at a moment's warning. Better for him to read Robinson Crusoe than Baxter's Saint's Rest. . . .

The pine-warbler is perhaps the commonest bird heard now from the wood sides. It seems left to it almost alone to fill the empty aisles.

May 4, 1852. This excitement about Kossuth is not interesting to me, it is so superficial. . . . Men are making speeches to him all over the country, but each expresses only the thought or the want of thought of the multitude. No man stands on truth. They are merely banded together as usual, one leaning on another, and all together on nothing, as the Hindoos made the world rest on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise, and had nothing to put under the tortoise. You can pass your hand under the largest mob, a nation in revolution even, and however solid a bulk they may make, like a hail cloud in the atmosphere, you may not meet so much as a cobweb of support. They may not rest, even by a point, on eternal foundations. But an individual standing on truth you cannot pass your hand under, for his foundations reach to the centre of the universe. So superficial these men and their doings. It is life on a leaf, or a chip, which has nothing but air or water beneath. I love to see a man with a tap-root, though it make him difficult to transplant. It is unimportant what these men do. Let them try forever, they can effect nothing. Of what significance are the things you can forget?

May 4, 1853. Cattle are going up country. Hear the "tull-lull" of the white-throated sparrow.

Eight A. M. To Walden and Cliffs. The sound of the oven-bird. . . . The woods and fields next the Cliffs now ring with the silver jingle of the field sparrow, the medley of the brown thrasher, the honest *qui vive* of the chewink, or his jingle from the top of a low copse tree, while his mate scratches in the dry leaves beneath. The black and white creeper is hopping along the oak boughs, head downward, pausing from time to time to utter its note, like a fine, delicate saw sharpening, and ever and anon rises, clear over all, the smooth rich melody of the wood-thrush. Could that have been a jay? I think it was some large, uncommon woodpecker that uttered that very loud, strange, cackling note. The dry woods have the smell of fragrant everlasting. I am surprised by the cool drops which now at ten o'clock fall from the flowers of the amelanchier, while other plants are dry, as if these had attracted more moisture. The white pines have started. The indigo bird and its mate, dark throat, light beneath, white spot on wings which is not described, a hoarse note and rapid, the first two or three syllables "twe, twe, twee," the last being dwelt upon, or "twe, twe, twee," or as if there were an *r* in it, "tre," etc., not musical. . . .

It is stated in the Life of Humboldt that he proved "that the expression, 'The ocean reflects the sky,' was a purely poetical, not a scientifically correct one, as the sea is often blue when the sky is almost totally covered with light, white clouds." He used Saussure's cyanometer even to measure the color of the sea. This might probably be used to measure the intensity of blue flowers, like lupines, at a distance.

May 4, 1855. A robin sings, when I in the house cannot distinguish the earliest dawning from the full moonlight. His song first advertises me of the day-break when I thought it was night, as I lay looking out into the full moonlight. I heard a robin begin his strain, and yielded the point to him, believing that



he was better acquainted with the signs of day than I.

May 4, 1858. P. M. By boat to Holden swamp. To go among the willows now and hear the bees hum is equal to going some hundreds of miles southward toward summer.

Go into Holden swamp to hear warblers. See a little blue butterfly (or moth) (saw one yesterday) fluttering about on the dry brown leaves in a warm place by the swamp side, making a pleasant contrast. From time to time have seen the large *Vanessa antiopa* resting on the black willows, like a leaf still adhering. As I sit by the swamp side this warm summery afternoon I hear the crows cawing hoarsely, and from time to time see one flying toward the top of a tall white pine. At length I distinguish a hen-hawk perched on the top. The crow repeatedly stoops toward him, now from this side, now from that, passing near his head each time, but he pays not the least attention to it.

I hear the "veer-e, ver-e, ver-e" of the creeper continually in the swamp. It is the prevailing note there, and methought I heard a redstart's note, but oftener than the last the tweezer or screeper note of the party-colored warbler, bluish above, throat and breast yellow or orange, white on wings, and neck above yellowish, going restlessly over the trees (maples, etc.) by the swamp, in creeper fashion; and as you may hear at the same time the true creeper's note without seeing it, you might think this bird uttered the creeper's note also.

The redwings, though here and there in flocks, are apparently beginning to build. I infer this from their shyness and alarm in the bushes along the river, and their richer solitary warbling.

May 4, 1859. P. M. To Lee's Cliff on foot. . . . Crossing the first Conantum field I perceive a peculiar fragrance in the air (not the meadow fragrance), like that of vernal flowers or of expanding buds. The ground is covered with the mouse-ear in full bloom, and it may be that in part. It is a temperate southwest breeze, and this is a scent of willows (flowers and leaflets), bluets,

violets, shad-bush, mouse-ear, etc., combined, or perhaps the last chiefly. At any rate, it is very perceptible. The air is more genial, laden with the fragrance of spring flowers. I, sailing on the spring ocean, getting in from my winter voyage, begin to smell the land. Such a scent perceived by a mariner would be very exciting. I not only smell the land breeze, but I perceive in it the fragrance of spring flowers. I come out expecting to see the redstart or the party-colored warbler, and as soon as I get within a dozen rods of the Holden wood I hear the screeper note of the tweezer bird, that is, the party-colored warbler, which also I see, but not distinctly. Two or three are flitting from tree-top to tree-top about the swamp there, and you have only to sit still on one side and wait for them to come round. The water has what you may call a summer ripple and sparkle on it; that is, the ripple does not suggest coldness in the breeze that raises it. It is a hazy day; the air is made hazy, you might fancy, with a myriad expanding buds. After crossing the arrow-head fields, we see a woodchuck run along and climb to the top of a wall and sit erect there,—our first. It is almost exactly the color of the ground, the wall, and the bare brown twigs altogether. When in the Miles swamp field we see two, one chasing the other, coming very fast down the lilac-field hill, straight toward us, while we squat still in the middle of the field. The foremost is a small gray or slaty-colored one; the other, two or three times as heavy, and a warm tawny, decidedly yellowish in the sun, a very large and fat one, pursuing the first. . . . Suddenly the foremost, when thirty or forty rods off, perceives us, and tries, as it were, to sink into the earth, and finally gets behind a low tuft of grass and peeps out. Also the other (which at first appears to fondle the earth, inclining his cheek to it and dragging his body a little along it) tries to hide himself, and at length gets behind an apple-tree and peeps out on one side in an amusing manner. This makes three that we see. They are clumsy runners, with their short legs and heavy bodies,—run with an un-



dulating or wabbling motion, jerking up their hind quarters. They can run pretty fast, however. Their tails were dark-tipped. They are low when the animal is running.

Looking up through this soft and warm southwest wind I notice the conspicuous shadow of mid-Conantum Cliff, now at three P. M., and elsewhere the shade of a few apple-trees, trunks and boughs. Through this warm and hazy air the sheeny surface of the hill, now considerably greened, looks soft as velvet, and June is suggested to my mind. It is remarkable that shadow should only be noticed now when decidedly warm weather comes, though before the leaves have expanded, that is, when it begins to be grateful to our senses. The shadow of the Cliff is like a dark pupil on the side of the hill. The first shadow is as noticeable and memorable as a flower. I observe annually the first shadow of this cliff, when we begin to pass from sunshine into shade for our refreshment; when we look on shade with yearning, as on a friend. That cliff and its shade suggest dark eyes and eyelashes, and overhanging brows. Few things are more suggestive of heat than this first shade, though now we see only the tracery of tree boughs on the greening grass and the sandy street. This I notice at the same time with the first humble-bee; when the *Rana palustris* purrs in the meadow generally; when the white willow and the aspen display their tender green, full of yellow light; when the party-colored warbler is first heard over the swamp; the woodchuck, who loves warmth, is out on the hill-sides in numbers; the jingle of the chipbird and the song of the thrasher are heard incessantly; the first cricket is heard in a warm, rocky place; and that scent of vernal flowers is in the air. This is an intenser expression of that same influence or aspect of nature which I began to perceive ten days ago, the same *Lieferung*.

These days we begin to think in earnest of bathing in the river and to sit at an open window. Life out-of-doors begins.

It would require a good deal of time

and patience to study the habits of woodchucks, they are so shy and watchful. They hear the least sound of a footstep on the ground, and are quick to see also. One should go clad in a suit somewhat like their own, the warp of tawny and the woof of green, and then with painted or well-tanned face he might lie out on a sunny bank till they appeared.

We hear a thrasher sing for half an hour steadily, a very rich singer, and heard one fourth of a mile off very distinctly. This is first heard commonly at planting time. He sings as if conscious of his power.

May 4, 1860. P. M. To Great Meadows by boat. . . . Walking over the river meadows to examine the pools and see how much dried up they are, I notice, as usual, the track of the musquash, some five inches wide always, and always exactly in the lowest part of the muddy hollows connecting one pool with another, winding as they wind, as if loath to raise itself above the lowest mud. At first he swam there, and now as the water goes down he follows it steadily, and at length travels on the bare mud, but as low and close to the water as he can get. Thus he first traces the channel of the future brook and river, and deepens it by dragging his belly along it. He lays out and engineers its road. As our roads are said to follow the track of the cow, so rivers in another period follow the trail of the musquash. They are perfect rats to look at, and swim fast against the stream. When I am talking on a high bank, I often see one swimming along within half a dozen rods, and land openly, as if regardless of us. Probably, being under water at first, he did not notice us.

Looking across the peninsula toward Ball's Hill, I am struck by the bright blue of the river (a deeper blue than the sky) contrasting with the fresh yellow-green of the meadow (that is, of coarse sedges just starting), and between them a darker or greener green, next the edge of the river, especially where that small sand-bar island is, the green of that early rank river-grass. This is the first painting or coloring in the meadows. These



several colors are, as it were, daubed on, as on china-ware, or as distinct and simple as in a child's painting. I was struck by the amount and variety of color after so much brown.

As I stood here I heard a thumping sound, which I referred to P—, three fourths of a mile off over the meadow.

But it was a pigeon woodpecker excavating its nest inside a maple within a rod of me. Though I had just landed and made a noise with my boat, he was too busy to hear me, but now he hears my tread, and I see him put out his head and then withdraw it warily, and keep still while I stay there.

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### THE DANCIN' PARTY AT HARRISON'S COVE.

"FUR you see, Mis' Darley, them Harrison folks over yander to the Cove hev determined on a dancin' party."

The drawling tones fell unheeded on old Mr. Kenyon's ear, as he sat on the broad hotel piazza of the New Helvetia Springs, and gazed with meditative eyes at the fair August sky. An early moon was riding, clear and full, over this wild spur of the Alleghanies; the stars were few and very faint; even the great Scorpio lurked, vaguely outlined, above the wooded ranges; and the white mist, that filled the long, deep, narrow valley between the parallel lines of mountains, shimmered with opalescent gleams.

All the world of the watering-place had converged to that focus, the ball-room, and the cool, moon-lit piazzas were nearly deserted. The fell determination of the "Harrison folks" to give a dancing party made no impression on the preoccupied old gentleman. Another voice broke his reverie, — a soft, clear, well-modulated voice, — and he started and turned his head as his own name was called, and his niece, Mrs. Darley, came to the window.

"Uncle Ambrose, — are you there? So glad! I was afraid you were down at the summer-house, where I hear the children singing. Do come here a moment, please. This is Mrs. Johns, who brings the Indian peaches to sell, — you know the Indian peaches?"

Mr. Kenyon knew the Indian peaches, the dark crimson fruit streaked with still

darker lines, and full of blood-red juice, which he had meditatively munched that very afternoon. Mr. Kenyon knew the Indian peaches right well. He wondered, however, what had brought Mrs. Johns back in so short a time, for although the principal industry of the mountain people about the New Helvetia Springs is selling fruit to the summer sojourners, it is not customary to come twice on the same day, nor to appear at all after night-fall.

Mrs. Darley proceeded to explain. "Mrs. John's husband is ill and wants us to send him some medicine."

Mr. Kenyon rose, threw away the stump of his cigar, and entered the room. "How long has he been ill, Mrs. Johns?" he asked, dismally.

Mr. Kenyon always spoke lugubriously, and he was a dismal-looking old man. Not more cheerful was Mrs. Johns; she was tall and lank, and with such a face as one never sees except in these mountains, — elongated, sallow, thin, with pathetic, deeply sunken eyes, and high cheek-bones, and so settled an expression of hopeless melancholy that it must be that naught but care and suffering had fallen to her lot; holding out wasted hands to the years as they pass, holding them out always and always empty. She wore a shabby, faded calico, and spoke with the peculiar expressionless drawl of the mountaineer. She was a wonderful contrast to Mrs. Darley, all furbelows and flounces, with her fresh,



## DAYS IN JUNE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF HENRY D. THOREAU.

JUNE 1, 1852. Evening. To the Lee place. The moon about full. The sounds I hear by the bridge; the mid-summer frog (I think it is not the toad), the night-hawk, crickets, the peet-weet (it is early), the hum of dor-bugs, and the whippoorwill. The boys are coming home from fishing, for the river is down at last. The moving clouds are the drama of moonlight nights and never-failing entertainment of nightly travelers. You can never foretell the fate of the moon, — whether she will prevail over or be obscured by the clouds, half an hour hence. The traveler's sympathy with the moon makes the drama of the shifting clouds interesting. The fate of the moon will disappoint all expectations. Her own light creates the shadows in the advancing clouds, and exaggerates her destiny.

June 1, 1853. Quite a fog this morning. Does it not always follow the cooler nights after the first really warm weather about the end of May? — Saw a water-snake yesterday with its tail twisted about some dead-weed stubble, and quite dry and stiff, as if it were preparing to shed its skin. . . .

Bees are swarming now, and those who keep them often have to leave their work in haste to secure them.

P. M. To Walden. Summer begins now, about a week past, with the expanded leaves, the shade, and warm weather. Cultivated fields, too, are leaving out, that is, corn and potatoes coming up. Most trees have leaved and are now forming fruit. Young berries, too, are forming, and birds are being hatched. Dor-bugs and other insects have come forth, the first warm evening after showers. The birds have now [all?] come, and no longer fly in flocks. The hylodes are no longer heard; the bull-frogs begin to trump. Thick and extensive fogs in the morning begin. Plants are rapidly growing, shooting. Hoeing corn

has commenced. The first bloom of the year is over. It is now the season of growth. Have not wild animals now henceforth their young, and fishes, too?

The pincushion galls on young white oaks are now among the most beautiful objects in the woods, — coarse, woolly, white, spotted with bright red or crimson on the exposed side. It is remarkable that a mere gall, which at first we are inclined to regard as something abnormal, should be made so beautiful, as if it were the flower of the tree; that a disease, an excrescence, should prove, perchance, the greatest beauty, as the tear of the pearl; beautiful scarlet sins they may be. Through our temptations, aye, and our falls, our virtues appear. As in many a character, many a poet, we see that beauty exhibited in a gall which was meant to have bloomed in a flower, unchecked. Such, however, is the accomplishment of the world. The poet cherishes his chagrin and sets his sighs to music. This gall is the tree's Ode to Dejection. How oft it chances that the apparent fruit of a shrub, its apple, is merely a gall or blight! How many men, meeting with some blast in the moist, growing days of their youth, so that what should have been a sweet and palatable fruit in them becomes a mere puff and excrescence, say that they have experienced religion! Their fruit is a gall, a puff, an excrescence, for want of moderation and continence. So many plants never ripen their fruit. . . .

The news of the explosion of the powder mills was not only carried seaward by the cloud which its smoke made, but more effectually, though more slowly, by the fragments which were floated thither by the river. M—— yesterday showed me quite a pile of fragments and short pieces of large timber, still black with powder, which he had saved as they were drifting by. . . . Some, no doubt,



were carried down to the Merrimack, and by the Merrimack to the ocean, till, perchance, they got into the Gulf Stream and were cast upon the coast of Norway, covered with barnacles, — or who can tell on what more distant strand? — still bearing traces of burnt powder, still capable of telling how and where they were launched to those who can read their signs. Mingling with wrecks of vessels, which told a different tale, this wreck of a powder-mill was cast up on some outlandish strand, and went to swell the pile of drift-wood — collected by some native — shouldered by whales, alighted on at first by the musk-rat and the peet-weet, and finally, perhaps, by the stormy petrel and other beach birds. It is long before nature forgets it. How slowly the ruins are being dispersed. . . .

I am as white as a miller — a rye-miller, at least — with the lint from the young leaves and twigs. The tufts of pinks on the side of the peak by the pond grow raying out from a centre, somewhat like a cyme, on the warm, dry side hill, — some a lighter, some a richer and darker shade of pink. With what a variety of colors we are entertained! Yet most colors are rare or in small doses, presented to us as a condiment or spice; much of green, blue, black, and white, but of yellow and the different shades of red, far less. The eyes feast on the colors of flowers as on tidbits. I hear now, at five o'clock, a farmer's horn calling the hands in from the field to an early tea. Heard afar by the walker, over the woods, at this hour, or at noon, bursting upon the stillness of the air, putting life into some portion of the horizon, this is one of the most suggestive and pleasing of the country sounds produced by man. I know not how far it is peculiar to New England or the United States. I hear two or three prolonged blasts, as I am walking along, some sultry noon, in the midst of the still woods, — a sound which I know to be produced by human breath, the most sonorous parts of which alone reach me; and I see in my mind's eye the hired men and master dropping the implements of their labor in the field, and wending their way with a sober satisfaction to-

ward the house. I see the well-sweep rise and fall. I see the preparatory ablutions, and the table laden with the smoking meal. It is a significant hum in a distant part of the hive. . . . How much lupine is now in full bloom on bare sandy brows or promontories, running into meadows where the sod is half worn away and the sand exposed! The geraniums are now getting to be common. *Hieracium venosum* just out on this peak, and the snapdragon catchfly is here, abundantly in blossom a little after five p. m., — a pretty little flower, the petals dull crimson beneath or varnished mahogany color, and rose-tinted white within or above. It closed on my way home, but opened again in water in the evening. Its opening in the night chiefly is a fact which interests and piques me. Do any insects visit it then? — Lambkill just beginning, — the very earliest. . . . New, bright, glossy, light-green leaves of the umbelled wintergreen are shooting on this hill-side, but the old leaves are particularly glossy and shining, as if varnished and not yet dry, or most highly polished. Did they look thus in the winter? I do not know any leaf so wet-glossy.

While walking up this hill-side I disturbed a night-hawk eight or ten feet from me, which went half fluttering, half hopping, the mottled creature, like a winged toad (as Nuttall says the French of Louisiana call it), down the hill as far as I could see. Without moving I looked about and saw its two eggs on the bare ground on a slight shelf of the hill, on the dead pine needles and sand, without any cavity or nest whatever; very obvious when once you had detected them, but not easily detected from their color, a coarse gray, formed of white spotted with bluish or slaty brown or amber, — a stone-granite color, like the places it selects. I advanced and put my hand on them, and while I stooped, seeing a shadow on the ground, looked up and saw the bird, which had fluttered down the hill so blind and helpless, circling low and swiftly past over my head, showing the white spot on each wing in true night-hawk fashion. When I had



gone a dozen rods it appeared again, higher in the air, with its peculiar limping kind of flight, all the while noiseless, and suddenly descending it dashed at me within ten feet of my head, like an imp of darkness; then swept away high over the pond, dashing now to this side, now to that, on different tracks, as if, in pursuit of its prey, it had already forgotten its eggs on the earth. I can see how it might easily come to be regarded with superstitious awe. — A cuckoo very plainly heard.

Within little more than a fortnight the woods, from bare twigs, have become a sea of verdure, and young shoots have contended with one another in the race. The leaves are unfurled all over the country. Shade is produced, the birds are concealed, their economies go forward uninterrupted, and a covert is afforded to animals generally. But thousands of worms and insects are preying on the leaves while they are young and tender. Myriads of little parasols are suddenly spread all the country over to shield the earth and the roots of the trees from the parching heat, and they begin to flutter and to rustle in the breeze.

From Bare Hill there is a mist on the landscape, giving it a glaucous appearance. Now I see gentlemen and ladies sitting in boats at anchor on the lakes, in the calm afternoons, under parasols, making use of nature. The farmer, hoeing, is wont to look with scorn and pride on a man sitting in a motionless boat a whole half day, but he does not realize that the object of his own labor is perhaps merely to add another dollar to his heap, nor through what coarseness and inhumanity to his family and servants he often accomplishes this. He has an Irishman or a Canadian working for him by the month, and what, probably, is the lesson he is teaching him by precept and example? Will it make that laborer more of a man? this earth more like heaven?

June 1, 1857. P. M. To hill. The weather has been less reliable for a few weeks past than at any other season of the year. Though fair in the forenoon,

it may rain in the afternoon, and the continuance of the showers surpasses all expectation. After several days of rain a fair day may succeed, and you close your eyes at night on a star-lit sky, but you awake unexpectedly to a steady rain in the morning.

A redwing's nest, four eggs, low in a tuft of sedge in an open meadow. What Champollion can translate the hieroglyphics on these eggs? It is always writing of the same character, though much diversified. While the bird picks up the material and lays this egg, who determines the style of the marking? When you approach, away dashes the dark mother, betraying her nest, and then chatters her anxiety from a neighboring bush, where she is soon joined by the red-shouldered male, who comes scolding over your head, chattering and uttering a sharp "phe phe-e."

I hear the note of a bobolink concealed in the top of an apple-tree behind me. Though this bird's full strain is ordinarily somewhat trivial, this one appears to be meditating a strain as yet unheard in meadow or orchard. *Paulo majora canamus*. He is just touching the strings of his theorbo, his glassichord, his water organ, and one or two notes globe themselves and fall in liquid bubbles from his tuning throat. It is as if he touched his harp within a vase of liquid melody, and when he lifted it out the notes fell like bubbles from the trembling strings. Methinks they are the most liquidly sweet and melodious sounds I ever heard. They are as refreshing to my ear as the first distant tinkling and gurgling of a rill to a thirsty man. Oh, never advance farther in your art; never let us hear your full strain, sir! But away he launches, and the meadow is all bespattered with melody. Its notes fall with the apple blossoms in the orchard. The very divinest part of his strain drops from his overflowing breast *singul-tim*, in globes of melody. It is the foretaste of such strains as never fell on mortal ears, to hear which we should rush to our doors and contribute all that we possess and are. Or it seemed as if in that vase full of melody some notes



sphered themselves, and from time to time bubbled up to the surface, and were with difficulty repressed.

June 2, 1841. I am brought into the near neighborhood, and am become a silent observer, of the moon to-night by means of a glass, while the frogs are peeping all around me on the earth, and the sound of the accordion seems to come from some bright saloon yonder. I am sure the moon floats in a human atmosphere; it is but a distant scene of the world's drama. It is a wide theatre the gods have given us, and our actions must befit it. More sea and land, mountain and valley here is, — a further West, — a freshness and wildness in reserve when all the land shall be cleared.

I see three little lakes between the hills near its edge reflecting the sun's rays. The light glimmers as on the water in a tumbler, — so far off do the laws of reflection hold. I seem to see the ribs of the creature. This is the aspect of their day, its outside, their heaven above their heads toward which they breathe their prayers. So much is between me and them. It is noon there, perchance, and ships are at anchor in their havens, or sailing on the seas, and there is a din in the streets, and in this light or shade some leisurely soul contemplates.

But now dor-bugs fly over its disk, and bring me back to earth and night.

June 2, 1853. Half past three A. M. When I awake I hear the low, universal chirping or twittering of the chip-birds, like the bursting head on the surface of the uncorked day. First come, first served. You must taste the first glass of the day's nectar if you would get all the spirit of it. Its fixed air begins to stir and escape. Also the robin's morning song is heard, as in the spring, — earlier than the notes of most other birds, thus bringing back the spring; now rarely heard or noticed in the course of the day.

Four A. M. To Nawshawtuck. I go to the river in a fog — through which I cannot see more than a dozen rods — three or four times as deep as the houses. As I row down the stream, the dark,

dim outlines of the trees on the banks appear coming to meet me on the one hand, while they retreat and are soon concealed in it on the other. My strokes soon bring them behind me. The birds are wide awake, as if knowing that this fog presages a fair day. I ascend Nawshawtuck from the north side. I am aware that I yield to the same influence which inspires the birds and the cockerels whose hoarse courage I hear now vaunted. I would crow like chanticleer in the morning, with all the lustiness that the new day imparts, without thinking of the evening, when I and all of us shall go to roost; with all the humility of the cock that takes his perch upon the highest rail and wakes the country with his clarion brag. Shall not men be inspired as much as cockerels? My feet are soon wet with fog. It is indeed a vast dew. Are not the clouds another kind of dew? Cool nights produce them. Now I have reached the hill-top above the fog at a quarter to five, about sunrise, and all around me is a sea of fog, level and white, reaching nearly to the top of this hill, only the tops of a few high hills appearing as distant islands in the main. Wachusett is a more distant and larger island, an Atlantis in the west; there is hardly one to touch at between me and it. It is just like the clouds beneath you as seen from a mountain. It is a perfect level in some directions, cutting the hills near their summits with a geometrical line, but puffed up here and there, and more and more toward the east, by the influence of the sun. An early freight train is heard, not seen, rushing through the town beneath it. You can get here the impression which the ocean makes, without ever going to the shore. The sea-shore exhibits nothing more grand, or on a larger scale. How grand where it rolls off over Ball's Hill, like a glorious ocean after a storm, just lit by the rising sun. It is as boundless as the view from the highlands of Cape Cod. These are exaggerated billows, the ocean on a larger scale, the sea after some tremendous and unheard-of storm, for the actual sea never appears so tossed up and universally white



with foam and spray as this, now, far in the northeastern horizon, where mountain billows are breaking on some hidden reef or bank. It is tossed up toward the sun and by it into the most boisterous of seas, which no craft, no ocean steamer, is vast enough to sail on. Meanwhile, my hands are numb with cold, and my feet ache with it. Now, at quarter past five, before this southwest wind, it is already grown thin as gossamer in that direction, and woods and houses are seen through it, while it is heaped up toward the sun, and finally becomes so thick there that for a short time it appears in one place a dark, low cloud, such as else can only be seen from mountains; and now long, dark ridges of wood appear through it, and now the sun reflected from the river makes a bright glow in the fog, and now, at half past five, I see the green surface of the meadows, and the water through the trees sparkling with bright reflections. Men will go further and pay more to see a tawdry picture on canvas, a poor, painted scene, than to behold the fairest or grandest scene that nature ever displays in their immediate vicinity, although they may never have seen it in their lives. . . .

Cherry birds are the only ones I see in flocks now. I can tell them afar by their peculiar fine springy note. . . .

Four P. M. To Conantum. . . .  
 Arethusas are abundant in what I may call Arethusia Meadow. They are the more striking for growing in such green localities in meadows where the brilliant purple, more or less red, contrasts with the green grass. Found four perfect arrowheads, and one imperfect, in the potato field just plowed up, for the first time that I remember, at the Hubbard bathing place. . . .

*Clintonia borealis* a day or two. Its beauty at present consists chiefly in its commonly three very handsome, rich, clear, dark-green leaves, which Bigelow describes truly as "more than half a foot long, oblanceolate, smooth, and shining." They are perfect in form and color, broadly oblanceolate, with a deep channel down the middle, uninjured by

insects, arching over from a centre at the ground; and from their midst rises the scape, a foot high, with one or more umbels of "green, bell-shaped flowers," — yellowish-green, nodding or bent downward, but without fragrance. In fact, the plant is all green, both leaves and corolla. The leaves alone — and many have no scape — would detain the walker. Its berries are its flower. A single plant is a great ornament in a vase, from the beauty of its form and the rich, unspotted green of its leaves. The sorrel now reddens the fields far and wide. As I look over the fields thus reddened in extensive patches, now deeper, now passing into green, and think of the season now in its prime and heyday, it looks as if it were the blood mantling in the cheek of the youthful year, — the rosy cheek of its health, its rude June health. The *medeola* has been out a day or two, apparently, — another green flower. . . .

June 2, 1854. P. M. Up Assabet to Castilleja and Anursnack. While waiting for — and S — I look now from the yard to the waving and slightly glaucous-tinged June meadows, edged by the cool shade of shrubs and trees, — a waving shore of shady bays and promontories, yet different from the August shades. It is beautiful and Elysian. The air has now begun to be filled with a bluish haze. These virgin shades of the year, when everything is tender, fresh, and green, how full of promise! — promising bowers of shade in which heroes may repose themselves. I would fain be present at the birth of shadow. It takes place with the first expansion of the leaves. . . . The black willows are already beautiful, and the hemlocks with their bead-work of new green. Are these not kingbird-days, — these clearer first June days, full of light, when this aerial, twittering bird flutters from willow to willow, and swings on the twigs, showing his white-edged tail? The *Azalea nudiflora* is about done, or there was apparently little of it. — I see some breams' nests near my old bathing place above the stone heaps, with sharp, yellow, sandy edges, like a milk pan from



within. . . . Also there are three or four small stone heaps formed. . . .

The painted-cup meadow is all lit up with ferns on its springy slopes. The handsome flowering fern, now rapidly expanding and fruiting at the same time, colors these moist slopes afar with its now commonly reddish fronds; and then there are the interrupted and the cinnamon ferns in very handsome and regular tufts, and the brakes standing singly, and more backward. . . .

June 2, 1855. From that cocoon of the *Attacus cecropia* which I found—I think it was on the 24th of May—came out this forenoon a splendid moth. I had pinned the cocoon to the sash at the upper part of my window, and quite forgotten it. About the middle of the forenoon S— came in, and exclaimed that there was a moth on my window. My *Attacus cecropia* had come out and dropped down to the window-sill, where it hung on the side of a slipper, to let its wings hang down and develop themselves. At first the wings were not only not unfolded laterally, but not longitudinally, the thinner ends of the foremost ones for perhaps three fourths of an inch being very feeble, and occupying very little space. It was surprising to see the creature unfold and expand before our eyes, the wings gradually elongating, as it were, by their own gravity, and from time to time the insect assisting this operation by a slight shake. It was wonderful how it waxed and grew, revealing some new beauty every fifteen minutes, which I called S—to see, but never losing its hold on the shoe. It looked like a young emperor just donning the most splendid ermine robes, the wings every moment acquiring greater expansion, and their at first wrinkled edge becoming more tense. At first, they appeared double, one within the other. But at last it advanced so far as to spread its wings completely, but feebly, when we approached. This process occupied several hours. It continued to hang to the shoe, with its wings ordinarily closed erect behind its back, the rest of the day, and at dusk, when apparently it was waving them preparatory to

its evening flight, I gave it ether, and so saved it in a perfect state. As it lies, not outspread to the utmost, it is five and nine tenths inches by two and one fourth. . . .

The *Azalea nudiflora* now in its prime. What splendid masses of pink, with a few glaucous green leaves sprinkled here and there,—just enough for contrast!

June 2, 1858. Half past eight A. M. Start for Monadnock. Between Shirley Village and Lunenburg I notice, in a meadow on the right hand, close to the railroad, the *Kalmia glauca* in bloom, as we are whirled past. Arrived at Troy station at five minutes past eleven, and shouldered our knapsacks, steering northeast to the mountain, its top some four miles off. It is a pleasant, hilly road, leading past a few farm-houses, where you already begin to sniff the mountain or at least up-country air. Almost without interruption we had the mountain in sight before us, its sublime gray mass that antique, brownish-gray, Ararat color. Probably these crests of the earth are for the most part of one color in all lands,—that gray color of antiquity which nature loves, the color of unpainted wood, weather stain, time stain; not glaring nor gaudy; the color of all roofs, the color of all things that endure, the color that wears well; color of Egyptian ruins, of mummies, and all antiquity, baked in the sun, done brown,—not scarlet, like the crest of the bragging cock, but that hard, enduring gray, a terrene sky color, solidified air with a tinge of earth.

We left the road at a school-house, and, crossing a meadow, began to ascend gently through very rocky pastures. . . . The neighboring hills began to sink, and entering the wood we soon passed Fassett's shanty, he so busily at work inside that he did not see us, and we took our dinner by the rocky brook-side in the woods just above. A dozen people passed us early in the afternoon while we sat there,—men and women on their way down from the summit, this suddenly very pleasant day after a lowering one having attracted them. . . .

Having risen above the dwarfish



woods (in which mountain ash was very common) which reached higher up along the ravine we had traversed than elsewhere, and nearly all the visitors having descended, we proceeded to find a place for and to prepare our camp at mid p. m. We wished it to be near water, out of the way of the wind — which was northwest — and of the path, and also near to spruce-trees, for a bed. There is a good place, if you would be near the top, within a stone's-throw of it, on the north side, under some spruce-trees. We chose a sunken yard in a rocky plateau on the southeast side of the mountain, perhaps half a mile from the summit by the path, a rod and a half wide by many more in length, with a mossy and bushy floor about five or six feet beneath the general level, where a dozen black spruce-trees grew, though the surrounding rock was generally bare. There was a pretty good spring within a dozen rods, and the western wall shelved over a foot or two. We slanted two scraggy spruce-trees, long since bleached, from the western wall, and, cutting many spruce boughs with our knives, made a thick bed and walls on the two sides, to keep out the wind. Then, putting several poles transversely across our two rafters, we covered them with a thick roof of spruce twigs, like shingles. The spruce, though harsh for a bed, was close at hand, we cutting away one tree to make room. We crawled under the low eaves of this roof, about eighteen inches high, and our extremities projected about a foot.

Having left our packs here, and made all ready for the night, we went up to the summit to see the sun set. Our path lay through a couple of small swamps, and then up the rocks. Forty or fifty rods below the very apex, or quite on the top of the mountain, I saw a little bird flit from beneath a rock close by the path, where there were only a very few scattered dwarf black spruces about, and looking I found a nest with three eggs. It was the *Fringilla hiemalis*, which soon disappeared around a projecting rock. The nest was sunk in the ground by the side of a tuft of grass, and

was pretty deep, made of much fine, dry grass or [sedge?]. The eggs were three, of a regular oval form, faint bluish-white, sprinkled with fine pale-brown dots, in two of the three condensed into a ring about the larger end. They had just begun to develop. The nest and tuft were covered by a projecting rock. Brewer says that only one nest is known to naturalists. We saw many of these birds flitting about the summit, perched on the rocks and the dwarf spruces, and disappearing behind the rocks. It is the prevailing bird now on the summit. They are commonly said to go to the fur countries to breed, though Wilson says that some breed in the Alleghanies. The New York Reports make them breed in the Catskills and some other mountains of that State. This was a quite interesting discovery. They probably are never seen in the surrounding low grounds at this season. . . . Now that the season is advanced, migrating birds have gone to the extreme north or to the mountain tops. By its color it harmonized with the gray and brownish-gray rocks. We felt that we were so much nearer to perennial spring and winter. . . .

We heard the hylodes peeping from a rain-water pool, a little below the summit, toward night. As it was quite hazy we could not see the shadow of the mountain well, and so returned just before sunset to our camp. We lost the path coming down, for nothing is easier than to lose your way here, where so little trail is left upon the rocks, and the different rocks and ravines are so much alike. Perhaps no other equal area is so bewildering in this respect as a rocky mountain summit, though it has so conspicuous a central point. Notwithstanding the newspaper and egg-shell left by visitors, these parts of nature are still peculiarly unhandseled and untracked. The natural terraces of rock are the steps of this temple, and it is the same whether it rises above the desert or a New England village. Even the inscribed rocks are as solemn as most ancient grave-stones, and nature reclaims them with bog and lichen. These sculp-



tors seemed to me to court such alliance with the grave as they who put their names over tombstones along the highway. One, who was probably a blacksmith, had sculptured the emblems of his craft, an anvil and hammer, beneath his name. Apparently, a part of the regular outfit of mountain climbers is a hammer and cold chisel, and perhaps they allow themselves a supply of garlic also. But no Old Mortality will ever be caught renewing their epitaphs. It reminds one what kind of steep do climb the false pretenders to fame, whose chief exploit is the carriage of the tools with which to inscribe their names. For speaking epitaphs they are, and the mere name is a sufficient revelation of the character. They are all of one trade, — stone-cutters, defacers of mountain tops. "Charles and Lizzie!" Charles carried the sledge-hammer, and Lizzie the cold chisel. Some have carried up a paint pot, and painted their names on the rocks.

We returned to our camp, and got our tea in our sunken yard. While one went for water to the spring, the other kindled a fire. The whole rocky part of the mountain, except the extreme summit, is strewn with the relics of spruce-trees a dozen or fifteen feet long, and long since dead and bleached, so that there is plenty of dry fuel at hand. We sat out on the brink of the rocky plateau, near our camp, taking our tea in the twilight, and found it quite dry and warm there, though you would not have thought of sitting out at evening in the surrounding valleys. I have often perceived the warm air high on the sides of hills, while the valleys were filled with a cold, damp night-air, as with water, and here the air was warmer and drier the greater part of the night. We perceived no dew there this or the next night. This was our parlor and supper-room; in another direction was our wash-room. The chewink sang before night, and this, as I have before observed, is a very common bird on mountain tops; the wood-thrush sang, too, indefinitely far or near, a little more distant and unseen, as great poets are. It seems to

love a cool atmosphere, and sometimes lingers quite late with us. Early in the evening the night-hawks were heard to *speek* and boom over these bare gray rocks, and such was our serenade at first as we lay on our spruce bed. We were left alone with the night-hawks. These withdrawn, bare rocks must be a very suitable place for them to lay their eggs, and their dry and unmusical, yet supra-mundane and spirit-like voices and sounds gave fit expression to the rocky mountain solitude. It struck the very key-note of that stern, gray, and barren region. It was a thrumming of the mountain's rocky chords; strains from the music of chaos, such as were heard when the earth was rent and these rocks heaved up. Thus they went *speeking* and booming while we were courting the first access of sleep, and I could imagine their dainty, limping flight, inclining over the kindred rocks with a spot of white quartz in their wings. No sound could be more in harmony with that scenery. Though common below, it seemed peculiarly proper here. But ere long the night-hawks are stilled, and we hear only the sound of our companion's breathing, or of a bug in our spruce roof. I thought I heard once, faintly, the barking of a dog far down under the mountain.

A little after one A. M. I woke and found that the moon had risen, and heard some little bird near by sing a short strain of welcome to it, song-sparrow-like. Before dawn the night-hawks commenced their sounds again, which were as good as a clock to us, telling how the night got on. At length, by three o'clock, June 3d, the signs of dawn appear, and soon we hear the robin and the *Fringilla hiemalis* (its prolonged jingle as it sat on the top of a spruce), the chewink and the wood-thrush. Whether you have slept soundly or not, it is not easy to lie abed under these circumstances, and we rose at half past three, in order to see the sun rise from the top and get our breakfast there. It was still hazy, and we did not see the shadow of the mountain until it was comparatively short, nor did



we get the most distant views, as of the Green and White mountains, while we were there. . . .

We concluded to explore the whole rocky part of the mountain in this wise: to saunter slowly around it at about the height and distance from the summit of our camp, or say half a mile, more or less, first going north, and returning by the western semicircle, and then exploring the east side, completing the circle, and returning over the summit at night. . . .

During this walk, in looking toward the summit, I first observed that its steep, angular projections and the brows of the rocks were the parts chiefly covered with dark brown lichens, *umbilicaria*, etc., as if they were to grow on the ridge and slopes of a man's nose only. It was the steepest and most exposed parts of the high rocks alone on which they grew, where you would think it most difficult for them to cling. They also covered the more rounded brows on the sides of the mountain, especially on the east side, where they were very dense, fine, crisp, and firm, like a sort of shagreen, giving a firm hold to the feet where it was needed. It was these that gave that Ararat brown color of antiquity to these portions of the mountain, which a few miles distant could not be accounted for, compared with the more prevalent gray. From the sky blue you pass through the misty gray of the rocks to this darker and more terrene color. The temples of the mountain are covered with lichens, which color it for miles. . . .

We had thus made a pretty complete survey of the top of the mountain. It is a very unique walk, and would be almost equally interesting to take, if it were not elevated above the surrounding valleys. It often reminded me of my walks on the beach, and suggested how much both depend for their sublimity on solitude and dreariness. In both cases we feel the presence of some vast, titanic power. The rocks and valleys and bogs and rain pools of the mountain are so wild and unfamiliar still that

you do not recognize the one you left fifteen minutes before. This rocky region, forming what you may call the top of the mountain, must be more than two miles long by one wide in the middle, and you would need to ramble round it many times before it would begin to be familiar. . . .

We proceeded to get our tea on the summit, in the very place where I had made my bed for a night some fifteen years before. . . . It was interesting to watch from that height the shadows of fair weather clouds passing over the landscape. You could hardly distinguish them from forests. It reminded me of similar shadows seen on the sea from the high bank of Cape Cod beach. There the perfect equality of the sea atoned for the comparatively slight elevation of the bank. . . . In the valley or on the plain you do not commonly notice the shadow of a cloud unless you are in it, but on a mountain top or on a lower elevation in a plane country, or by the sea-side, the shadows of clouds fitting over the landscape are a never-failing source of amusement. It is commonly easy enough to refer a shadow to its cloud, since in one direction its form is perceived with sufficient accuracy. Yet I was surprised to observe that a long, straggling, downy cumulus, extending north and south a few miles east of us, when the sun was perhaps an hour high, cast its shadow along the base of the Peterboro hills, and did not fall on the other side, as I should have expected. It proved the clouds not so high as I had supposed. . . . It was pleasant enough to see one man's farm in the shadow of a cloud, which perhaps he thought covered all the Northern States, while his neighbor's farm was in sunshine.

June 4th. At six A. M. we began to descend. As you are leaving a mountain and looking back at it from time to time, it is interesting to see how it gradually gathers up its slopes and spurs to itself into a regular whole, and makes a new and total impression.