

III

OCTOBER, 1857

(ÆT. 40)

Oct. 1. P. M. — To second stone bridge and down Assabet home.

The ash trees are a dull red, and some quite mulberry-color. Methinks it has to do with the smart frost of yesterday morning; *i. e.*, that after the maples have fairly begun, the *young* red oaks, ash trees, etc., begin with the first smart frost. The pines now half turned yellow, the needles of this year are so much the greener by contrast. The arbor-vitæ changes with them so completely that it looks as if the lower parts were dead. All very much exposed button-bushes are brown and sere; so their yellowish season does not amount to much away from the river.¹ . . .

It seemed to me that it was no compliment to their god to suppose that he would not let them go to Ktaadn without so much ado.² They'd better have put their shoulders to the wheel and stumped it along at a good round pace. . . .

I boiled some rice at the carry, for our dinner, in cooking which I consider myself adept, having had a good deal of experience in it. P. said that he sometimes used it, but boiled it till it all fell apart, and,

¹ *Vide* [4] pages forward [Oct. 4].

² [See *Maine Woods*, pp. 214, 215; Riv. 265.]

finding this mess unexpectedly soft though quickly prepared, he asked if it had not been cooked before.

Washing the dishes, especially the greasy ones, is the most irksome duty of the camp, and it reminded me of that sacred band in Fourier's scheme, who took upon themselves the most disagreeable services. The consequence is that they do not often get washed.

Oct. 2. P. M. — To Hubbard's Close and Swamp.

Veronica scutellaria still. Sitting on a rock east of Trillium Woods, I perceive that, generally speaking, it is only the edge or *pediment* of the woods that shows the bright autumnal tints yet (while the superstructure is green), the birches, very young oaks and hickories, huckleberry bushes, blackberries, etc., etc., that stand around the edges, though here and there some taller maple flames upward amid the masses of green, or some other riper and mellow tree.

The chief incidents in Minott's life must be more distinct and interesting to him now than immediately after they occurred, for he has recalled and related them so often that they are stereotyped in his mind. Never having travelled far from his hillside, he does not suspect himself, but tells his stories with fidelity and gusto to the minutest details, — as much as Herodotus his histories.

The leaves of some trees merely wither, turn brown, and drop off at this season, without any conspicuous flush of beauty, while others now first attain to the climax of their beauty.

There is a more or less general reddening of the leaves

at this season, down to the cinquefoil and mouse-ear, sorrel and strawberry under our feet. White oaks are still quite green, with a few distinct *red* leaves intermixed. A great many red maples are merely yellow; more, scarlet, in some cases deepening to crimson.

Looking at the pines of Trillium Woods, I see that the pitch pines have generally a rounded head, composed of countless distinct small rounded masses of foliage, the tops of their plumes, while the white pines are more smooth, or only flaky.

Since the cooler weather many crickets are seen clustered on warm banks and by sunny wall-sides. It is evident from their droppings that the woodchucks (?)¹ eat many of them these evenings.

I go through Stow's Wood and up Laurel Glen eastward. The chickadees of late have winter ways, flocking after you.

This changing of the leaves — their brighter tints — must have to do with cold, for it begins in the low meadows and in frosty hollows in the woods. There is where you must look as yet for the bright tints. I see the sprouts at the base of an old red oak for four or five feet upward, investing its trunk, all clear bright red, while all above is green. The shrub oak leaves around are more yellow or scarlet than the red. At the bottom of this hollow, the young walnut leaves have just been killed by the frosts while still green, and generally the hazel leaves also, but not the oaks, cherries, etc., etc. Many little maples in those coldest places have already dropped all their leaves. Gener-

¹ Skunks?

ally in low ground many maple and birch and locust leaves have fallen. Grape leaves were killed and crisped by the last frost.

The fringed gentian at Hubbard's Close has been out some time, and most of it already withered.

In the clintonia swamp I see where some animal has been getting the seeds of the skunk-cabbage out of their pericarp. You may take a dry walk there for a quarter of a mile along the base of the hill through this open swamp, where there is no underwood, all the way in a field of cinnamon fern four or five feet high and level, brushing against its light fronds, which offer now no serious obstacle. They are now generally imbrowned or crisp. In the more open swamp beyond, these ferns, recently killed by the frost and exposed to the sun, fill the air with a very strong sour scent, as if your nose [were] over a hog'shead of vinegar. When I strip off a handful of the frond I find it is the cinnamon fern. I perceive it afterward in different parts of the town.

The erechthites down (fire-weed) is conspicuous in sprout-lands of late, since its leaves were killed.

Oct. 3. The *Rhus radicans* also turns yellow and red or scarlet, like the *Toxicodendron*. Asters, and still more goldenrods, look quite rare now. See a cowbird alone.

Getting over the wall near Sam Barrett's the other day, I had gone a few rods in the road when I met Prescott Barrett, who observed, "Well, you take a walk round the square sometimes." So little does he

know of my habits. I go across lots over his grounds every three or four weeks, but I do not know that I ever walked round the square in my life.

How much more agreeable to sit in the midst of old furniture like Minott's clock and secretary and looking-glass, which have come down from other generations, than in [*sic*] that which was just brought from the cabinet-maker's and smells of varnish, like a coffin! To sit under the face of an old clock that has been ticking one hundred and fifty years, — there is something mortal, not to say immortal, about it! A clock that began to tick when Massachusetts was a province. Meanwhile John Beaton's heavy tombstone is cracked quite across and widely opened.¹

Oct. 4. A. M. — By boat to Conantum.

River fallen again. Barberrying and graping. Many of the grapes shrivelled and killed by frost now, and the leaves mostly fallen. The yellow leaves of the white willow thickly strew the bottom of my boat. Willows, elms, etc., shed their oldest leaves first, even like pines.² The recent and green ones are seen mottling a yellowish ground, especially in the willow; and, in the case of the willow, at least, these green ones wither and fall for the most part without turning yellow at all.

The button-bushes are generally greenish-yellow now; only the highest and most exposed points brown and crisp in some places. The black willow, rising above them, is crisped yellowish-brown, so that the

¹ It has fallen also and has been set up.

² [Altered in pencil so as to read, "These willows shed," etc.]

general aspect of the river's brim now is a modest or sober ripe yellowish-brown, — generally no bright colors. When I scare up a bittern from amid the weeds, I say it is the color of that bird's breast, — or body generally, for the darker part of its wings correspond to the sere pickerel-weed. Now that the pontederia is brown, the humble, weedy *green* of the shore is *bur-weed*, polygonum, wool-grass, and, in some places, rushes. Such is the river's border ordinarily, — either these weeds mingled with the sere and dark-brown pontederia or a convex raised rim of button-bushes, two to four feet high by a rod wide, through [which] the black willows rise one to a dozen feet higher. Here and there, to be sure, are the purple-leaved *Cornus sericea*, yellowish sweet-gale, reddish rose bushes, etc., etc.

Alders are still a fresh green. The grape leaves are generally crisp and curled, having a very light-colored appearance, but where it is protected by other foliage it is still a dense canopy of greenish-yellow shields.

From the midst of these yellowing button-bushes, etc., I hear from time to time a half-warbled strain from some young sparrow who thinks it is spring.

Scared up from the low shore at the bend, on the south side, opposite Clamshell, a flock of seventy-five or one hundred of what appeared solitary tattlers (??), that went off with a *rippling* note, wheeled, and alighted there again.¹

Now again, when other trees prove so fickle, the steadfast evergreenness of the pines is appreciated.

¹ Henry Haynes next year thought they might be "Black-backs."

Bright-tinted flaming scarlet or yellow maples amid pines show various segments of bright cones embosomed in green.

At Potter's Swamp, where they are all maples, it adds to the beauty of the maple swamp at this season that it is not seen as a simple mass of color, but, different trees being of different tints, — green, yellow, scarlet, crimson, and different shades of each, — the outline of each tree is distinct to where one laps on to another. Yet a painter would hardly venture to make them thus distinct a quarter of a mile off.¹

Hear a catbird and chewink, both faint.

Fever-bush has begun to yellow. *Some* nightshade leaves are a very dark purple.

See a grackle on the shore, so near I see the light mark about the eye.

While I lived in the woods I did various jobs about the town, — some fence-building, painting, gardening, carpentering, etc., etc. One day a man came from the east edge of the town and said that he wanted to get me to brick up a fireplace, etc., etc., for him. I told him that I was not a mason, but he knew that I had built my own house entirely and would not take no for an answer. So I went.

It was three miles off, and I walked back and forth each day, arriving early and working as late as if I were living there. The man was gone away most of the time, but had left some sand dug up in his cow-yard for me to make mortar with. I bricked up a fireplace, papered a chamber, but my principal work was whitewashing

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 262; Riv. 321.]

ceilings. Some were so dirty that many coats would not conceal the dirt. In the kitchen I finally resorted to yellow-wash to cover the dirt. I took my meals there, sitting down with my employer (when he got home) and his hired men. I remember the awful condition of the sink, at which I washed one day, and when I came to look at what was called the towel I passed it by and wiped my hands on the air, and thereafter I resorted to the pump. I worked there hard three days, charging only a dollar a day.

About the same time I also contracted to build a wood-shed of no mean size, for, I think, exactly six dollars, and cleared about half of it by a close calculation and swift working. The tenant wanted me to throw in a gutter and latch, but I carried off the board that was left and gave him no latch but a button. It stands yet, — behind the Kettle house. I broke up Johnny Kettle's old "trow," in which he kneaded his bread, for material. Going home with what nails were left in a flower [*sic*] bucket on my arm, in a rain, I was about getting into a hay-rigging, when my umbrella frightened the horse, and he kicked at me over the fills, smashed the bucket on my arm, and stretched me on my back; but while I lay on my back, his leg being caught over the shaft, I got up, to see him sprawling on the other side. This accident, the sudden bending of my body backwards, sprained my stomach so that I did not get quite strong there for several years, but had to give up some fence-building and other work which I had undertaken from time to time.

I built the common slat fence for \$1.50 per rod, or worked for \$1.00 per day. I built six fences.

Minott and Rice are apt to tell me the same story many times over. Minott told me the other day again of his peach tree. John Richardson was going by with a basket full of peach-stones. "What are you going to do with them?" asked M. He said he was going to plant. "Well, give me two or three of them, and I'll try too." So he raised one fine tree, which bore first-rate rare-ripes as big as an apple, but after bearing once or twice something got into it and the tree died. They're short-lived things.

Oct. 5.¹ P. M. — To Yellow Birch Swamp.

I go by the river and Hunt's Bridge. A warm and bright October afternoon. One man is making a gutter, to be prepared for rains, in his piece recently laid down in Merrick's pasture, where the grass is just springing up. I see many haws still green and hard, though their leaves are mostly fallen. Do they ever turn red and edible? Their leaves are a very dull reddish cast. The surface of the river sparkles in this air here and there. I see in most orchards the apples in heaps under the trees, and ladders slanted against their twiggy masses. The earth shines now as much as, or more than, ever in spring, especially the bare and somewhat faded fields, pastures, stubble, etc. The light is reflected as from a ripe surface, no longer absorbed to secure maturity.

¹ Begins now ten days of perfect Indian summer without rain; and the eleventh and twelfth days equally warm, though rainy.

I go north by Jarvis's lane from the old pump-maker's house. There is not that profusion and consequent confusion of events which belongs to a summer's walk. There are few flowers, birds, insects, or fruits now, and hence what does occur affects us as more simple and significant. The cawing of a crow, the scream of a jay. The latter seems to scream more fitly and with more freedom now that some fallen maple leaves have made way for his voice. The jay's voice resounds through the vacancies occasioned by fallen maple leaves.

The mulberry ¹ was perhaps the first tree that was conspicuously turned after the maples. Many maples are still quite green; so that their gala-day will be prolonged. I see some hickories now a crisped mass of imbrowned yellow, green in the recesses, sere brown on the prominences, though the eye does not commonly thus discriminate. The smooth sumach is very important for its mass of clear red or crimson. Some of it is now a very dark crimson.

In the old Carlisle road I see a great many pitch pine twigs or plumes, cast down, evidently, by squirrels, — but for what?

Many are now gathering barberries.

Am surprised to see a large sassafras tree, with its rounded umbrella-like top, without limbs beneath, on the west edge of the Yellow Birch Swamp, or east of Boulder Field. It is some sixteen inches in diameter. There are seven or eight within two rods. Leaves curled, but not changed. See a red squirrel cast down a chest-

¹ Or ash??

nut bur. The pigeon woodpecker utters his whimsical *ah-week ah-week*, etc., as in spring. The yellow birch is somewhat yellowed. See a cherry-bird. Many robins feeding on poke berries on Eb Hubbard's hill. There is a great abundance of poke there. That lowest down the hill, killed by frost, drooping and withered, no longer purple-stemmed, but faded; higher up it is still purple.

I hear the alarum of a small red squirrel. I see him running by fits and starts along a chestnut bough toward me. His head looks disproportionately large for his body, like a bulldog's, perhaps because he has his chaps full of nuts. He chirrup and vibrates his tail, holds himself in, and scratches along a foot as if it were a mile. He finds noise and activity for both of us. It is evident that all this ado does not proceed from fear. There is at the bottom, no doubt, an excess of inquisitiveness and caution, but the greater part is make-believe and a love of the marvellous. He can hardly keep it up till I am gone, however, but takes out his nut and tastes it in the midst of his agitation. "*See there, see there,*" says he, "who's that? O dear, what shall I do?" and makes believe run off, but does n't get along an inch, — lets it all pass off by flashes through his tail, while he clings to the bark as if he were holding in a race-horse. He gets down the trunk at last on to a projecting knot, head downward, within a rod of you, and chirrup and chatters louder than ever. Tries to work himself into a fright. The hind part of his body is urging the forward part along, snapping the tail over it like a whip-lash, but the fore part, for the most part, clings fast to the bark with

desperate energy. *Squirr*, "to throw with a jerk," seems to have quite as much to do with the name as the Greek *skia oura*, shadow and tail.

The lower limbs of trees often incline downwards as if from sympathy with the roots; the upper tend upwards with the *leading* stem.

I found on the 4th, at Conantum, a half-bushel of barberries on one clump about four feet in diameter at base, falling over in wreaths on every side. I filled my basket, standing behind it without being seen by other pickers only a dozen rods off. Some great clumps on Melvin's preserve, no doubt, have many more on them.

I hear nowadays again the small woodpecker's sharp, shrill note from high on the trees. . . .

It is evident that some phenomena which belong only to spring and autumn here, lasted through the summer in that latitude, as the peeping of hylodes and blossoming of some flowers that long since withered here were there still freshly in bloom, in that fresher and cooler atmosphere, — the calla for instance. To say nothing of the myrtle-bird and *F. hyemalis* which breed there, but only transiently visit us in spring and fall. Just as a river which here freezes only a certain distance from the shore, follow it further north, is found to be completely bridged over. The toads, too, as I have said, rang at this season. What is summer where Indian corn will not ripen?

Oct. 6. P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook *via* Hubbard's Close.

A beautiful bright afternoon, still warmer than yesterday. I carry my coat on my arm. This weather makes the locust to be heard, — many of them. I go along the hill from the old burying-ground and descend at Minott's. Everything — all fruits and leaves, the reddish-silvery feathery grass in clumps,¹ even the surfaces of stone and stubble — are all ripe in this air. Yes, the hue of maturity has come even to that fine silver-topped feathery grass, two or three feet high, in clumps on dry places. I am riper for thought, too.

Of trees which are numerous here and form considerable masses or groups, those now sufficiently changed in their color to attract the eye generally are red maple (in prime), — *N. B.*, the *white maples* began in water long ago, but are rare, — white birch (perhaps in prime), *young oaks* in sprout-lands, etc. (especially young scarlet oaks), white ash, white pines (when near), elms, buttonwoods, and perhaps walnuts. Some others are equally changed, but so rare or distant from the village as to make less impression on me.

The shrubs now generally conspicuous from some distance, from their changed color and mass, are huckleberries and blueberries (high and low), smooth sumach and *Rhus venenata*, woodbine, button-bush, and grape perhaps.

I observe too that the ferns of a rich brown (being sere), about swamps, etc., are an important feature. A broad belt of rich brown (and crisp) ferns stands about many a bright maple swamp.

Some maples are in form and *color* like hickories,

¹ *Andropogon scoparius*.

tall and irregular. It, indeed, admits of singular variety in form and color. I see one now shaped like a hickory which is a very rich yellow with a tinge of brown, which, when I turn my head slightly, concealing the trunk, looks like a mass of yellow cloud, wreath upon wreath, drifting through the air, stratified by the wind.¹

The trumpet-weeds are perfectly killed scere brown along the fences.

Think what a change, unperceived by many, has within a month come over the landscape! Then the general, the universal, hue was green. Now see those brilliant scarlet and glowing yellow trees in the lowlands a mile off! I see them, too, here and there on the sides of hills, standing out distinct, mere bright [an indecipherable word] and squads perchance, often in long broken lines, and so apparently elevated by their distinct color that they seem arranged like the remnants of a morning mist just retreating in a broken line along the hillsides. Or see that crowd in the swamp half a mile through, all vying with one another, a blaze of glory. See those crimson patches far away on the hillsides, like dense flocks of crimson sheep, where the huckleberry reminds of recent excursions. See those patches of rich brown in the low grounds, where the ferns stand shrivelled. See the greenish-yellow phalanxes of birches, and the crisped yellowish elm-tops here and there. We are not prepared to believe that the earth is now so parti-colored, and would present to a bird's eye such distinct masses of bright color. A great painter is at work. The very pumpkins yellow-

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 262; Riv. 321.]

ing in the fields become a feature in the landscape, and thus they have shone, maybe, for a thousand years here.

I have just read Ruskin's "Modern Painters." I am disappointed in not finding it a more out-of-door book, for I have heard that such was its character, but its title might have warned me. He does not describe Nature as Nature, but as Turner painted her, and though the work betrays that he has given a close attention to Nature, it appears to have been with an artist's and critic's design. How much is written about Nature as somebody has portrayed her, how little about Nature as she is, and chiefly concerns us, *i. e.* how much prose, how little poetry!

Going through Ebby Hubbard's woods, I see thousands of white pine cones on the ground, fresh light brown, which lately opened and shed their seeds and lie curled up on the ground. The seeds are rather pleasant or nutritious tasting, taken in quantity, like beech-nuts, methinks. I see a great quantity of hypopitys, now all scere, along the path in the woods beyond. Call it Pine-Sap Path. It seems to have been a favorable season for it. It was evidently withered earlier than the tobacco-pipe, which is still *pretty* white!

Going through the Ministerial sprout-lands, I see the *young* oaks generally turning scarlet, and chestnuts, too, the young and also the old.

The lower chestnut leaves are among the most interesting now when closely inspected, varying from green to yellow, very finely and richly peppered with brown and green spots, at length turning brown with

a tinge of crimson; but they, like others, must be seen on the twig, for they fade immediately, or in one night, if plucked. These brilliant leaves are as tender and inclined to wilt and fade as flowers, indeed are more transitory.

The amelanchier is yellowing and reddening a little, and also falling. I see *Lobelia inflata* leaves in the shade, a peculiar hoary white.

I see one or two chestnut burs open on the trees. The squirrels, red and gray, are on all sides throwing them down. You cannot stand long in the woods without hearing one fall.

As I came up the Turnpike, I smelt that strong-scented — like carrion, etc. — obscene fungus at the mossy bank, and I saw a dozen of those large flat oval black bugs with light-colored shoulder-pieces, such as, methinks, I see on carrion, feeding on its remnants. . . .

The frontier houses¹ preserve many of the features of the logging-camp. . . .

Looking up Trout Stream, it seemed as wild a place for a man to live as we had seen. What a difference between a residence there and within five minutes' walk of the depot! What different men the two lives must turn out!

Oct. 7. P. M. — To Cliffs and Walden.

Little chinquin oaks are partly turned, dull scarlet or yellow as it may happen, nearly in prime, not fallen. Some of their leaves (as well as of the white oak) are gnawed into lace regularly about the edges. Horn-

¹ [In Maine.]

beam generally green still, but becoming yellowish-brown and falling. Black alder still green. Elder is greenish-yellow. I see *some* panicked andromeda dark-red or crimson. Swamp-pink a *dark* reddish purple where exposed. Beach plum begins to turn a clear pale yellow in dry places. Sage willow is fairly yellowing and some even falling.

Crossing Depot Brook, I see many yellow butterflies fluttering about the *Aster puniceus*, still abundantly in bloom there.

I go across Barton Meadow direct to Bear Garden Hill-side. Approaching the sand-slide, I see, some fifty rods off, looking toward the sun, the top of the maple swamp just appearing over the sheeny russet edge of the hill, — a strip, apparently twenty rods long and ten feet deep, of the most intensely brilliant scarlet, orange, and yellow, equal to any flowers or fruits or any tints ever painted. As I advance, lowering the edge of the hill, which makes the firm foreground or lower frame to the picture, the depth of this brilliant grove revealed steadily increases, suggesting that the whole of the concealed valley is filled with such color.¹ As usual, there is one tree-top of an especially brilliant scarlet, with which the others contrast.

One wonders that the tithing-men and fathers of the town are not out to see what the trees mean by their high colors and exuberance of spirits, fearing that some mischief is brewing. I do not see what the Puritans did at that season when the maples blazed out in scarlet. They certainly could not have worshipped

¹ [Excursions, p. 262; Riv. 321, 322.]

in groves then. Perhaps that is what they built meeting-houses and surrounded them with horse-sheds for.¹

No wonder we must have our annual cattle-show and fall training and perhaps Cornwallis, our September courts, etc. Nature holds her annual fair and galadays in October in every hollow and on every hill-side.

Look into that hollow all aglow, where the trees are clothed in their vestures of most dazzling tints. Does it not suggest a thousand gypsies beneath, rows of booths, and that man's spirits should rise as high, that the routine of his life should be interrupted by an analogous festivity and rejoicing? ²

It is the reign of crickets now. You see them gliding busily about over all sunny surfaces. They sometimes get into my shoes; but oftener I have to empty out the seeds of various shrubs and weeds which I have been compelled to transport.

Looking toward the sun from Lupine Bank, I see bloody patches of blackberry vines amid the fine hoary and sheeny grass of the pasture. Since the frosts such pastures are already a hoary russet.

Some shrub oaks are yellow, others reddish.

When I turn round half-way up Fair Haven Hill, by the orchard wall, and look northwest, I am surprised for the thousandth time at the beauty of the landscape, and I sit down to behold it at my leisure. I think that Concord affords no better view. It is always incred-

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 262, 263; Riv. 322.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 275; Riv. 337, 338.]

ibly fair, but ordinarily we are mere objects in it, and not witnesses of it. I see, through the bright October air, a valley extending southwest and northeast and some two miles across, — so far I can see distinctly, — with a broad, yellow meadow tinged with brown at the bottom, and a blue river winding slowly through it northward, with a regular edging of low bushes on the brink, of the same color with the meadow. Skirting the meadow are straggling lines, and occasionally large masses a quarter of a mile wide, of brilliant scarlet and yellow and crimson trees, backed by and mingled with green forests and green and hoary russet fields and hills; and on the hills around shoot up a million scarlet and orange and yellow and crimson fires amid the green; and here and there amid the trees, often beneath the largest and most graceful of those which have brown-yellow dome-like tops, are bright white or gray houses; and beyond stretches a forest, wreath upon wreath, and between each two wreaths I know lies a similar vale; and far beyond all, on the verge of the horizon, are half a dozen dark-blue mountain-summits. Large birds of a brilliant blue and white plumage are darting and screaming amid the glowing foliage a quarter of a mile below, while smaller blue birds warble faintly but sweetly around me.¹

Such is the dwelling-place of man; but go to a caucus in the village to-night or to a church to-morrow, and see if there is anything said to suggest that the inhabitants of those houses know what kind of world they live in. But hark! I hear the tolling of a distant

¹ The autumnal tints were more generally diffused there Oct. 10th.

funeral bell, and they are conveying a corpse to the churchyard from one of the houses that I see, and its serious sound is more in harmony with this scenery than any ordinary bustle could be. It suggests that a man must die to his present life before he can appreciate his opportunities and the beauty of the abode that is appointed him.

I do not know how to entertain one who can't take long walks. The first thing that suggests itself is to get a horse to draw them, and that brings us at once into contact with stablers and dirty harness, and I do not get over my ride for a long time. I give up my forenoon to them and get along pretty well, the very elasticity of the air and promise of the day abetting me, but they are as heavy as dumplings by mid-afternoon. If they can't walk, why won't they take an honest nap and let me go in the afternoon? But, come two o'clock, they alarm me by an evident disposition to sit. In the midst of the most glorious Indian-summer afternoon, there they sit, breaking your chairs and wearing out the house, with their backs to the light, taking no note of the lapse of time.

As I sat on the high bank at the east end of Walden this afternoon, at five o'clock, I saw, by a peculiar intention or dividing of the eye, a very striking subaqueous rainbow-like phenomenon. A passer-by might, perhaps would, have noticed that the bright-tinted shrubs about the high shore on the sunny side were reflected from the water; but, unless on the alert for such effects, he would have failed to perceive the full beauty of the phenomenon. Unless you look for re-

flections, you commonly will not find them. Those brilliant shrubs, which were from three to a dozen feet in height, were all reflected, dimly so far as the details of leaves, etc., were concerned, but brightly as to color, and, of course, in the order in which they stood, — scarlet, yellow, green, etc.; but, there being a slight ripple on the surface, these reflections were not true to their height though true to their breadth, but were extended downward with mathematical perpendicularity, three or four times too far, forming sharp pyramids of the several colors, gradually reduced to mere dusky points. The effect of this prolongation of the reflection was a very pleasing softening and blending of the colors, especially when a small bush of one bright tint stood directly before another of a contrary and equally bright tint. It was just as if you were to brush firmly aside with your hand or a brush a fresh line of paint of various colors, or so many lumps of friable colored powders. There was, accordingly, a sort of belt, as wide as the whole height of the hill, extending downward along the whole north or sunny side of the pond, composed of exceedingly short and narrow inverted pyramids of the most brilliant colors intermixed. I have seen, indeed, similar inverted pyramids in the old drawings of tattooing about the waists of the aborigines of this country. Walden, too, like an Indian maiden, wears this broad rainbow-like belt of brilliant-colored points or cones round her waist in October. The color seems to be reflected and re-reflected from ripple to ripple, losing brightness each time by the softest possible gradation, and tapering toward the

beholder, since he occupies a mere point of view. This is one of the prettiest effects of the autumnal change.

The harvest of leaves is at hand in some valleys, and generally the young deciduous trees on hillsides have the brilliant tint of ripe fruits. Already many windfalls strew the ground under the maples and elms, etc. I see one or two maple shrubs quite bare, while many large maples are still quite green.

In that rainbow belt we have color, which is commonly so rare and precious and confined to precious stones, in the utmost profusion. The ripples convey the reflection toward us, till all the color is winnowed out and spilled between them and only the dusky points reach near to this side where we stand. It is as if a broad belt (or waist-cloth) of sharp and narrow inverted cones or pyramids of bright colors, softly blended like fairy worsted work, their bases rising to a line mathematically level about the waist of the pond. That fall river Indian, like the Almouchicóis generally, wore a belt of hollow tubes.

It was strange that only the funeral bell was in harmony with that scene, while other sounds were too frivolous and trivial, as if only through the gate of death would man come to appreciate his opportunities and the beauty of the world he has abused. In proportion as death is more earnest than life, it is better than life.

The sun set just before I reached the railroad causeway on my return, but then there was not a cloud to be seen in the horizon. Coming through the Irish [*sic*]

field, the mountains were purple, much redder than a grape. . . .

That simple and mild nasal chant¹ affected me like the dawn of civilization to the wilderness. I thought of "Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind," etc. There is always a slight haze or mist on the brow of the Indian. The white man's brow is clear and distinct. It is eleven o'clock in the forenoon with him. It is four o'clock in the morning with the Indian.

Oct. 8. P. M. — Up Assabet.

Hemlock leaves are copiously falling. They cover the hillside like some wild grain. The changing red maples along the river are past their prime now, earlier than generally elsewhere. They are much faded, and many leaves are floating on the water. Those white maples that were so early to change in the water have more than half lost their leaves.

Walking through the Lee farm swamp, a dozen or more rods from the river, I found a large box trap closed. I opened it and found in it the remains of a gray rabbit, — skin, bones, and mould, — closely fitting the right-angled corner of one side. It was wholly inoffensive, as so much vegetable mould, and must have been dead some years. None of the furniture of the trap remained, but the box itself, with a lid which just moved on two rusty nails; the stick which held the bait, the string, etc., etc., were all gone. The box had the appearance of having been floated off in an upright position by a freshet. It had been a rabbit's

¹ [See *Maine Woods*, pp. 197, 198; Riv. 244.]

living tomb. He had gradually starved to death in it. What a tragedy to have occurred within a box in one of our quiet swamps! The trapper lost his box, the rabbit its life. The box had not been gnawed. After days and nights of moaning and struggle, heard for a few rods through the swamp, increasing weakness and emaciation and delirium, the rabbit breathes its last. They tell you of opening the tomb and finding by the contortions of the body that it was buried alive. This was such a case. Let the trapping boy dream of the dead rabbit in its ark, as it sailed, like a small meeting-house with its rude spire, slowly, with a grand and solemn motion, far amid the alders.

Four dark-colored ducks (white beneath), *maybe* summer, or teal (??), with a loud *creaking* note of alarm, flew away from near the shore and followed the bend of the river upward.

I see and hear white-throated sparrows on the swamp white oaks by the river's edge, uttering a faint sharp *cheep*.

The chipmunk,¹ the wall-going squirrel, that will cross a broad pasture on the wall, now this side, now that, now on top, and lives under it, — as if it were a track laid for him expressly.

Oct. 9. P. M. — To Dugan Desert and Ministerial Swamp.

The elms are now at the height of their change. As I look down our street, which is lined with them, now clothed in their very rich brownish-yellow dress, they

¹ An allied one is called the wall-mouse in the West.

remind me of yellowing sheaves of grain, as if the harvest had come to the village itself, and we might expect to find some maturity and *flavor* in the thoughts of the villagers at last. Under those light-rustling yellow piles, just ready to fall on the heads of the walker, how can any crudity or greenness of thought or act prevail? The street is a great harvest-home. It would be worth the while to set out these trees, if only for their autumnal value. Think of these great yellow canopies or parasols held over our heads and houses by the mile together, making the village all one and compact, an *ulmarium*. And then how gently and unobserved they drop their burdens and let in the sun when it is wanted, their leaves not heard when they fall on our roofs and in our streets.

I see the traveller driving into the village under its canopy of elm-tops, with his crop, as into a great granary or barn-yard. I am tempted to go thither as to a husking of thoughts, now dry and ripe and ready to be separated from their integuments, but I foresee that it will be chiefly husks and little thought, blasted pig-corn, fit only for cob-meal.¹ Is there, then, indeed, no thought under this ample husk of conversation and manners? There is the sermon husk, the lecture husk, and the book husk, and are they all only good to make mats of and tread under foot? .

Looking from railroad bridge, birches are perhaps at the height of their change now; hickories are about the color of elms or a little browner; balm-of-Gileads,

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 263, 264; Riv. 322-324.]

about as birches; many ash trees are a mere finely divided dull-reddish color; swamp white oaks are green, yellow, and brown, much less ripe than elms, not much yellowed yet.

Under the pines by the Clamshell, that fine purple grass is now withered and faded to a very light brown which reflects the autumnal light. Patches of rabbit's clover amid the blackberry vines are now quite hoary if not silvery. I thought it a mass of *Aster Tradescanti* at first, but they are not so common. Many plants, like them, remind you by their color of the frosts.

Sprout-lands, with their oaks, chestnuts, etc., etc., are now at their height of color.

From Lupine Hill, not only the maples, etc., have acquired brighter tints at this season, but the pines, by contrast, appear to have acquired a new and more liquid green, and to some extent this is true, — where their old leaves have chiefly fallen, which is not yet generally the case, however.

I see now that, near the river and low on the meadows, the maple stands with paled fires, burned out, thin-leaved, a salmon or faint cherry tint, ready to surrender to the first smart frost.

It has come to this, — that the lover of art is one, and the lover of nature another, though true art is but the expression of our love of nature. It is monstrous when one cares but little about trees but much about Corinthian columns, and yet this is exceedingly common.

Scarlet oaks have fairly begun to blaze, — especially their lower limbs, — in low places which have

most felt the frost. Hazels at their height, varying from green through dull crimson to dull scarlet.

Going along the mill road, the common shrub oaks make a dull-red or salmon impression in the mass at a little distance, from which brighter scarlet oaks stand out.

On F. Wheeler's clearing, over the swamp, many shrub oak leaves fallen, laying bare the acorns, which are browned. Many leaves already thickly strew the dry, sandy ground.

In the swamp, some twenty-foot maples are already bare, and some white pines are as yellow as birches. The spruces appear unchanged, even close at hand, though many leaves have fallen and are falling. The *Viburnum nudum* in the swamp is a clear handsome crimson. The young cherry yellow, with a faint cherry tinge. The mulberry is browned and falling, though it is but slightly tinged with yellow.

I see an Irishman digging mud at Harrington's mud-hole. He digs it out rapidly, — a hole four feet wide by eight long, — leaving a water-tight partition, eighteen or twenty inches wide, on two sides next the water. At three feet it is clear white sand, whiter than common sand-hills. Why? Why is there no stain of vegetation in it? It requires some skill to save much of the partition at last. This man first pares off the top nearly to the level of the water, then, standing on it, digs it away as the water rushes in, — though it fills it before he has got a foot, — and he thus saves about half its depth. No doubt his work is the more amusing for requiring this exercise of thought.

Saw a jay stealing corn from a stack in a field.

Oct. 10. P. M. — To Walden over Fair Haven Hill.

Some *Prinos verticillatus* yellowing and browning at once, and in low ground just falling and leaving the bright berries bare.

From the upper side of Wheeler's clearing on Fair Haven Hill, I see five smokes, now at 3.30 P. M., — one toward Lexington, one over Bedford, one over Billerica, one, very copious, as much further north, and one over Carlisle. These are all dark, seen against the sky and from the sun, and, except the first, apparently beyond the respective towns. Going over to the southwest side of the hill, I see one large wide-spread smoke toward Wachusett and rising against it, apparently beyond the height of land between the Concord and Nashua, and another much nearer, toward Stow. These two are light, or smoke-colored, because seen more toward the sun, perhaps; or is it solely because seen against the mountain and woods? There is another, the eighth, a little south of west, nearly under the sun, but this, being very distant and seen against the sky, is dusky. I could not see south and southwest.

I think that these smokes are the most distant sign of the presence of man on the globe that I detect with my unarmed eye, — of man's cohabitancy. I see the evidence that so many farmers with their hired men and boys are at work in their clearings from five to fifteen miles off. I see this smoky telegraph for hours marking the locality and occupation of some farmer and suggesting peaceful rural enterprises and improvements which I may yet see described in the agricul-

tural reports, though I may never have seen, and perhaps never shall see, that farm or farmer. Considering the slight evidence I have of their existence, they are as far away as if in another quarter of the globe. Sometimes the smoke is seen beyond a distant range of hills, spreading along, low and bluish, seen against a more distant hill or mountain; at others it is a column faintly and dimly seen against the horizon, but more distinctly revealed by a dusky but cloud-like expansion above. It may be a dusky almost level bar, slanting upward a little, like a narrow banner. The smokes from a dozen clearings far and wide, from a portion of the earth thirty miles or more in diameter, reveal the employment of many husbandmen at this season. Thus I see the woods burned up from year to year. The telltale smokes reveal it. The smokes will become rarer and thinner year by year, till I shall detect only a mere feathery film and there is no more brush to be burned.

Generally speaking, the autumnal tints affect the color of the landscape for only two or three miles, but I distinguish maples by their color half a mile north of Brooks Clark's, or some three miles distant, from this hill, — one further east very bright. Also I see them in the northeast, or on or near, apparently, a road between Bedford and Billerica, at least four or five miles distant!! This is the furthest I can see them.

Descend from Fair Haven Hill through Stow's sprout-land to railroad. See chincapin oaks in frosty places sere brown and ready to fall, while in others

they are still green, in woods. They turn of various colors, some quite handsome clear scarlet or red. Many young white oaks in similar frosty places are all withered and shrivelled. I see in the woods some *Smilacina racemosa* leaves, — which are usually a uniform pale-brown, — very wildly and remarkably marked, — *weirdly*. They are pale-brown, almost white, and somewhat curled, varied with rectilinear broad black (brown, seen close to) marks along the veins, say one inch, more or less, long by one tenth inch wide, with square corners. (Suppose you were to have a neckerchief after this pattern!) The whole plant gracefully bent almost horizontally with the weight of its dense raceme of bright cherry-red berries at the end.

Generally speaking, chestnuts, hickories, aspens, and some other trees attain a fair clear yellow only in small specimens in the woods or sprout-lands, or in their lower leaves.

You see now in sprout-lands young scarlet oaks of every degree of brightness from green to dark scarlet. It is a beautifully formed leaf, with its broad, free, open sinuses, — worthy to be copied in sculpture. A very agreeable form, a bold, deep scallop, as if the material were cheap. Like tracery. The color is more mingled with light than in the less deeply scalloped oak leaves. It is a less simple form. Though the connected outline is a broad oval, it is much improved by deep bays of light, as a simple oval pond would be improved by four or five broad, rounded promontories extending far into it on different sides, while the watery

bays, instead of being rounded at bottom, extended far inland in sharp friths. The leaf suggests a lavish expense in the creation of those deep scallops, as if so much material had been cut out and thrown away.¹

This is the end of the sixth day of glorious weather, which I am tempted to call the finest in the year, so bright and serene the air and such a sheen from the earth, so brilliant the foliage, so pleasantly warm (except, perhaps, this day, which is cooler), too warm for a thick coat, — yet not sultry nor oppressive, — so ripe the season and our thoughts. Certainly these are the most brilliant days in the year, ushered in, perhaps, by a frosty morning, as this. As a dewy morning in the summer compared with a parched and sultry, languid one, so a frosty morning at this season compared with a merely dry or foggy one. These days you may say the year is ripened like a fruit by frost, and puts on brilliant tints of maturity but not yet of decay. It is not sere and withered as in November. See the heaps of apples in the fields and at the cider-mill, of pumpkins in the fields, and the stacks of corn-stalks and the standing corn. Such is the season. The morning frosts have left a silvery hue on the fine pasture grasses. They have faded to a kindred color.

Oct. 11. *Sunday*. P. M. — Up Assabet.

River lower than before since winter at least; very low.

Another frost last night, although with fog, and this afternoon the maple and other leaves strew the water, and it is almost a leaf harvest. I see some fine clear

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 279, 280; Riv. 342, 343.]

yellows from the *Rhus Toxicodendron* on the bank by the hemlocks and beyond. The osmunda ferns are generally withered and brown except where very much protected from frost. The *O. regalis* is the least generally withered of them. The onoclea is much later and still generally green along the bank, or faded white here and there.

Looking at the reflection of the bank by the Hemlocks, the reflected sun dazzles me, and I approach nearer to the bank in order to shut it out (of course it disappears sooner in the reflection than the substance, because every head is raised above the level of the water), and I see in the reflection the fine, slender grasses on the sharp or well-defined edge of the bank all glowing with silvery light, a singularly silvery light to be seen in the water [?], and whose substance I cannot see to advantage with my head thus high, since the sun is in the way.

This is the seventh day of glorious weather. Perhaps these might be called Harvest Days. Within the week most of the apples have been gathered; potatoes are being dug; corn is still left in the fields, though the stalks are being carried in. Others are ditching and getting out mud and cutting up bushes along fences, — what is called “brushing up,” — burning brush, etc.

These are cricket days.

The river is so low that I run against several rocks, which I must have floated over three or four days ago, and I see many snags and water-logged trunks on the bottom or partly exposed, which were then invisible.

It is remarkable how many trees — maple and swamp white [oak], etc. — which stand on the bank of the river, being undermined by the water or broken off by the ice or other cause, fall into the stream and finally sink to the bottom and are half buried there for many years. A great deal of wood, especially of the kinds named, is thus lost. They last longer there probably than in *favorable* localities out of water. I see still the timber foundation of an old dam just above Spencer Brook, extending across the river on the bottom, though there has been nothing above water within my recollection. The large black oaks in front of Prescott Barrett's are one by one falling into the river, and there are none to succeed them. They were probably left to skirt the stream when the other wood was cut, and now, when they are undermined, there are none behind to supply their places.

Mr. Conant of Acton tells me that there was a grist-mill built over the river there by Sam Barrett's grandfather, and that he remembers going to it when he was fourteen. He went in at the Lee house and crossed the river by a bridge at the mill. He says that it is as much as sixty years since the mill was standing. Minott thinks it is not quite so long since. He remembers the bridge there, not a town one, nor strong enough for a horse and cart. Thinks the mill was discontinued because Dr. Lee complained of its flowing his woodland. They used to stop with their carts this side and carry their bags back and forth over the bridge on their shoulders. Used a small and poor road across to Lee's farm.

Oct. 12. P. M. — To Annursnack.

The eighth fine day, warmer than the last two. I find one or two house-leek blossoms even yet fresh, and all the rest crisp. The fringed gentian by the brook opposite is in its prime, and also along the north edge of the Painted-Cup Meadows. The stems of the blue vervain, whose flowers and leaves are withered and brown, are nearly as handsome and clear a purple as those of the poke have been, from top to bottom.

Looking from the Hill. The autumnal tints generally are much duller now than three or four days ago, or before the last two frosts. I am not sure but the yellow now prevails over the red in the landscape, and even over the green. The general color of the landscape from this hill is now russet, *i. e.* red, yellow, etc., mingled. The maple fires are generally about burnt out. Yet I can see very plainly the colors of the sproutland, chiefly oak, on Fair Haven Hill, about four miles distant, and also yellows on Mt. Misery, five miles off, also on Pine Hill, and even on Mt. Tabor, indistinctly. Eastward, I distinguish red or yellow in the woods as far as the horizon, and it is most distant on that side, — six miles, at least.

The huckleberries on Nagog Hill are *very* red. The smaller and tenderer weeds were in their prime, methinks, some weeks ago. They have felt the frosts earlier than the maples and other trees, and are now withered generally.

I see a very distant mountain house in a direction a little to the west of Carlisle, and two elms in the horizon on the right of it. Measuring carefully on the map

of the county, I think it must be the Baptist Church in North Tewksbury, within a small fraction of fourteen miles from me. I think that this is the greatest distance at which I have seen an elm without a glass. There is another elm in the horizon nearly north, but not so far. It looks very much larger than it is. Perhaps it looms a little. The elm, I think, can be distinguished further than any other tree, and, however faintly seen in the distant horizon, its little dark dome, which the thickness of my nail will conceal, just rising above the line of the horizon, apparently not so big as a prominence on an orange, it suggests ever the same quiet rural and domestic life passing beneath it. It is the vignette to an unseen idyllic poem. Though that little prominence appears so dark there, I know that it is now a rich brownish-yellow canopy of rustling leaves, whose harvest-time is already come, sending down its showers from time to time. Homestead telegraphs to homestead through these distant elms seen from the hilltops. I fancy I hear the house-dog's bark and lowing of the cows asking admittance to their yard beneath it. The tea-table is spread; the master and mistress and the hired men now have just sat down in their shirt-sleeves. Some are so lifted up in the horizon that they seem like portions of the earth detached and floating off by themselves into space. Their dark masses against the sky can be seen as far, at least, as a white spire, though it may be taller. Some of these trees, seen through a glass, are not so large. . . .

This was what those scamps did in California. The trees were so grand and venerable that they could not

afford to let them grow a hair's breadth bigger, or live a moment longer to reproach themselves. They were so big that they resolved they should never be bigger. They were so venerable that they cut them right down. It was not for the sake of the wood; it was only because they were very grand and venerable.

Oct. 13. P. M. — To Poplar Hill.

Maple fires are burnt out generally, and they have fairly begun to fall and look smoky in the swamps. When my eyes were resting on those smoke-like bare trees, it did not at first occur to me why the landscape was not as brilliant as a few days ago. The outside trees in the swamps lose their leaves first.

The brilliancy of young oaks, especially scarlet oaks, in sprout-lands is dulled. These red maples and young scarlet oaks, etc., have been the most conspicuous and important colors, or patches of color, in the landscape. Those *most* brilliant days, then, so far as the autumnal tints are concerned, are over; *i. e.*, when we may be surprised at any turn by the sight of some incredibly bright and dazzling tree or grove of trees.

I noticed the first *large* white oaks wholly changed to a salmon-color, but not brilliant like those sprout-land fires. Are very large oaks never brilliant in their tints?¹

The hickories on Poplar Hill have not lost any of their brilliancy, generally speaking. Some are quite green even. I look down into a mocker-nut, whose recesses and greater part are pure yellow, and from

¹ Yes.

this you pass through a ruddy orange in the more exposed leaves to a rich crispy brown in the leaves of the extreme twigs about the clusters of round green nuts.

The red of oaks, etc., is far more general now than three or four days ago, but it is also much duller, so that some maples that were a bright scarlet can now hardly be distinguished by their color from oaks, which have just turned red.

The Great Fields from this hill are pale-brown, often hoary — there is not yellow enough for russet — pastures, with very large red or purple patches of black-berry vines. You can only appreciate the effect of these by a strong and peculiar intention of the eye. We ordinarily do not see what is before us, but what our prejudices presume to be there.

The pitch and white pines on the north of Sleepy Hollow, *i. e.* north side the hill, are at the height of their change and are falling. Maybe they are later than on the south side of hills. They are at the height of their change, generally, though many needles fallen, carpeting the ground. Pinweeds are brown; how long? Some of the large ash trees, both *a* black and white, are quite bare of leaves already. With the red maples, then. Looking from this hill, green begins to look as rare and interesting as any color, — you may say begins to be a color by itself, — and I distinguish green streaks and patches of grass on most hillsides.

See a pretty large flock of tree sparrows, very lively and tame, drifting along and pursuing each other along a bushy fence and ditch like driving snow. Two

pursuing each other would curve upward like a breaker in the air and drop into the hedge again.

Some white willows are very fresh and green yet. This has been the ninth of those wonderful days, and one of the warmest. I am obliged to sit with my window wide open all the evening as well as all day. It is the earlier Indian summer.

Our cherry trees have now turned to mostly a red-orange color.

Oct. 14. P. M. — To White Pond.

Another, the tenth of these memorable days. We have had some fog the last two or three nights, and this forenoon it was slow to disperse, dog-day-like, but this afternoon it is warmer even than yesterday. I should like it better if it were not so warm. I am glad to reach the shade of Hubbard's Grove; the coolness is refreshing. It is indeed a golden autumn. These ten days are enough to make the reputation of any climate. A tradition of these days might be handed down to posterity. They deserve a notice in history, in the history of Concord. All kinds of crudities have a chance to get ripe this year. Was there ever such an autumn? And yet there was never such a panic and hard times in the commercial world. The merchants and banks are suspending and failing all the country over, but not the sand-banks, solid and warm, and streaked with bloody blackberry vines. You may run upon them as much as you please,¹ — even as the

¹ You cannot break them. If you should slump, 't is to a finer sand.

crickets do, and find their account in it. They are the stockholders in these banks, and I hear them creaking their content. You may see them on change any warmer hour. In these banks, too, and such as these, are my funds deposited, a fund of health and enjoyment. Their (the crickets) prosperity and happiness and, I trust, mine do not depend on whether the New York banks suspend or no. We do not rely on such slender security as the thin paper of the Suffolk Bank. To put your trust in such a bank is to be swallowed up and undergo suffocation. Invest, I say, in these country banks. Let your capital be simplicity and contentment. Withered goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) is no failure, like a broken bank, and yet in its most golden season nobody counterfeits it. Nature needs no counterfeit-detector. I have no compassion for, nor sympathy with, this miserable state of things. Banks built of granite, after some Grecian or Roman style, with their porticoes and their safes of iron, are not so permanent, and cannot give me so good security for capital invested in them, as the heads of withered hardhack in the meadow. I do not suspect the solvency of these. I know who is their president and cashier.

I take all these walks to every point of the compass, and it is always harvest-time with me. I am always gathering my crop from these woods and fields and waters, and no man is in my way or interferes with me. My crop is not their crop. To-day I see them gathering in their beans and corn, and they are a spectacle to me, but are soon out of my sight. I am not gathering beans and corn. Do they think there are no fruits

but such as these? I am a reaper; I am not a gleaner. I go reaping, cutting as broad a swath as I can, and bundling and stacking up and carrying it off from field to field, and no man knows nor cares. My crop is not sorghum nor Davis seedlings. There are other crops than these, whose seed is not distributed by the Patent Office. I go abroad over the land each day to get the best I can find, and that is never carted off even to the last day of November, and I do not go as a gleaner.

The farmer has always come to the field after some material thing; that is not what a philosopher goes there for.

I see, in Hubbard's Grove, a large black birch at the very height of its change. Its leaves a clear, rich yellow; many strew the ground. Near by is a tupelo which is all a distinct yellow with a little green. Within a couple of rods a single hyla peeps interruptedly, bird-like.

Large oaks appear to be now generally turned or turning. The white, most conspicuous in sunny places, say a reddish salmon; began to change at lower limbs. Black oaks a brownish yellow. These large trees are not brilliant.

On the causeway I pass by maples here and there which are bare and smoke-like, having lost their brilliant clothing; but there it lies, nearly as bright as ever, on one side on the ground, making nearly as regular a figure as lately on the tree. I should rather say that I first observed the trees thus flat on the ground like a permanent colored and substantial shadow, and they

alone suggested to look for the trees that had borne them. They preserve these bright colors on the ground but a short time, a day or so, especially if it rains.¹

I see a large flock of grackles, probably young birds, quite near me on William Wheeler's apple trees, pruning themselves and trying to sing. They *never* succeed; make a sort of musical spluttering. Most, I think, have brownish heads and necks, and some purple reflections from their black bodies.

There is a very little gossamer, mostly blowing off in large loops from the south side the bridge, the loose end having caught. I also see it here and there stretched across lanes from side to side, as high as my face.

Sat in the old pasture beyond the Corner Spring Woods to look at that pine wood now at the height of its change, pitch and white. Their change produces a very singular and pleasing effect. They are regularly parti-colored. The last year's leaves, about a foot beneath the extremities of the twigs on all sides, now changed and ready to fall, have their period of brightness as well as broader leaves. They are a clear yellow, contrasting with the fresh and liquid green of the terminal plumes, or this year's leaves. These two quite distinct colors are thus regularly and equally distributed over the whole tree. You have the warmth of the yellow and the coolness of the green. So it should be with our own maturity, not yellow to the very extremity of our shoots, but youthful and untried green ever putting forth afresh at the extremities, foretelling a maturity as yet unknown. The ripe leaves fall to the ground

¹ [Excursions, p. 265: Riv. 325.]

and become nutriment for the green ones, which still aspire to heaven. In the fall of the leaf, there is no fruit, there is no true maturity, neither in our science and wisdom.

Some aspens are a very fair yellow now, and trembling as in summer. I think it is they I see a mile off on Bear Garden Hill, amid the oaks and pines.

There is a very thick haze this afternoon and almost a furnace-like heat. I cannot see far toward the sun through it.

Approaching White Pond by the path, I see on its perfectly smooth surface what I at first mistake for a large raft of dead and black logs and limbs, but it soon elevates itself in the form of a large flock of black ducks, which go off with a loud quacking.

This, as other ponds now, when it is still, has a fine sparkle from skaters on it. I go along near the shore in the woods to the hill recently cleared on the east side. The clethra as an under-bush has an exceedingly pale yellow leaf. The nemopantes on the hillside is like the amelanchier, yellowish with considerable ruddiness; the total effect is russet.

Looking now toward the north side of the pond, I perceive that the reflection of the hillside seen from an opposite hill is not so broad as the hillside itself appears, owing to the different angle at which it is seen. The reflection exhibits such an aspect of the hill, *apparently*, as you would get if your eye were placed at that part of the surface of the pond where the reflection seems to be. In this instance, too, then, Nature avoids repeating herself. Not even reflections in still water are like

their substances as seen by us. This, too, accounts for my seeing portions of the sky through the trees in reflections often when none appear in the substance. Is the reflection of a hillside, however, such an aspect of it as can be obtained by the eye directed to the hill itself from any single point of view? It plainly is not such a view as the eye would get looking upward from the immediate base of the hill or water's edge, for there the first rank of bushes on the lower part of the hill would conceal the upper. The reflection of the top appears to be such a view of it as I should get with my eye at the water's edge above the edge of the reflection; but would the lower part of the hill also appear from this point as it does in the reflection? Should I see as much of the under sides of the leaves there? If not, then the reflection is never a true copy or repetition of its substance, but a new composition, and this may be the source of its novelty and attractiveness, and of this nature, too, may be the charm of an echo. I doubt if you can ever get Nature to repeat herself exactly.

The occasional dimples on this pure sheeny surface in which the sky is reflected make you suspect as soon some mote fallen from the sky as risen from beneath, to disturb it.

Next to the scarlet, methinks the white shrub oaks make, or have made, the most brilliant show at a distance on hillsides. The latter is not very bright, unless seen between you and the sun, but there its abundant inward color is apparent.

At the head of the path by the pond, I saw a red squirrel, only a rod off in a white pine, eating a toad-

stool. It was a slightly convex white disk, (then) two inches in diameter. I saw where he had bitten off its white stump within a few feet of the base of the tree. I should not have called it an edible one; but he knows. He held it vertically with a paw on each side and what had been the lower side toward him, and was nibbling off the inside edge very fast, turning it round from time to time and letting some fragments drop, pausing to look at me. As a boy might nibble a biscuit. Are nuts scarce? I think it was not the edible one; was too big.

Veronica serpyllifolia in bloom.

Oct. 15. Rain at last, and end of the remarkable days. The springs and rivers have been very low. Millers have not water enough to grind their grists.

There has been a great fall of leaves in the night on account of this moist and rainy weather; but hardly yet that touch that brings down the rock maple. The streets are thickly strewn with elm and buttonwood and other leaves, *feuille-morte* color. Some elms and butter-nuts are quite bare. Yet the sugar maples in our streets are now in their prime and show unexpectedly bright and delicate tints, while some white maples by the river are nearly bare. I see, too, that all locusts did not become crisp and fall before this without acquiring a bright color. In the churchyard they are unwithered, just turning a pale yellow. How many plants are either yellow or scarlet! Not only maples, but rose bushes, hazel bushes, etc., etc. Rue is a conspicuous pale yellow for a weed.¹

¹ *Vide* 20th, 1858.

I saw the other day a cricket standing on his head in a chocolate-colored (inside) fungus, only his tail-yards visible. He had sunk a well an inch deep, and was even then sinking it, perpendicularly, unconscious of what was going on above.

The ten days — at least — before this were plainly Indian summer. They were remarkably pleasant and warm. The latter half I sat and slept with an open window, though the first part of the time I had a little fire in the morning. These succeeded to days when you had worn thick clothing and sat by fires for some time.

Our staghorn sumach has just become a very rich scarlet. So, apparently, has the large one at Mrs. Simmonds's. They are later than the others; a yellower scarlet, almost orange.

It is another example of the oddity of the Orientals that yellow "is in the east a regal color, more especially so in China, where it is exclusively royal." (Field on Colors, 139.) Further west it was purple, regal and imperial.

The river lower this morning than before this year. Concord Bank has suspended.

Oct. 16. *Friday*. P. M. — Up Assabet.

It clears up *entirely* by noon, having been cloudy in the forenoon, and is as warm as before now. I stop a while at Cheney's shore to hear an incessant musical twittering from a large flock of young goldfinches which have dull-yellow and drab and black plumage, on maples, etc., while the leaves are falling. Young birds can hardly restrain themselves, and if they did not leave us, might

perchance burst forth into song in the *later* Indian-summer days.

I see dwarf cornel leaves on the hemlock bank, some green, some bright crimson. The onoclea has faded whiter still. Hemlock leaves are falling now faster than ever, and the trees are more parti-colored. The falling leaves look pale-yellow on the trees, but become reddish on the ground. The large poplar (*P. grandidentata*) is now at the height of its change, — clear yellow, but many leaves have fallen. The ostrya still holds its leaves. It is about the color of the elm at its height. I see red oaks now turned various colors, — red-brown or yellow-brown or scarlet-brown, — not commonly bright. The swamp white are greener yet.

Melvin is fishing for pickerel. Thinks this the best day for fishing we have had this long time; just wind enough. Says there are some summer ducks up the stream, the same I saw here the other day. Thinks they are here after acorns. He once caught seven summer ducks by baiting his steel traps with acorns under water. They dove for them, and he caught them by the neck. He saw yesterday a green chestnut bur on the Great Meadows (now bare), fifty rods from the Holt. Could not tell how it came there.

Am surprised to find an abundance of witch-hazel, now at the height of its change, where S. Wheeler cut off, at the bend of the Assabet. The tallest bushes are bare, though in bloom, but the lowest are full of leaves, many of them green, but chiefly clear and handsome yellow of various shades, from a pale lemon in the shade or within the bush to a darker and warmer yellow with-

out. Some are even a hue of crimson; some green, with bright yellow along the veins. This reminds me that, generally, plants exposed turn early, or not at all, while the same species in the shade of the woods at a much later date assume very pure and delicate tints, as more withdrawn from the light.

You notice now many faded, almost white dicksonia ferns, and some brakes about as white.

A great part of the pine-needles have just fallen. See the carpet of pale-brown needles under this pine. How light it lies up on the grass, and that great rock, and the wall, resting thick on its top and its shelves, and on the bushes and underwood, hanging lightly! They are not yet flat and reddish, but a more delicate pale brown, and lie up light as joggle-sticks just dropped. The ground is nearly concealed by them. How beautifully they die, making cheerfully their annual contribution to the soil! They fall to rise again; as if they knew that it was not one annual deposit alone that made this rich mould in which pine trees grow. They live in the soil whose fertility and bulk they increase, and in the forests that spring from it.

The leaves that were floating before the rain have now sunk to the bottom, being wetted above as well as below.

I see a delicate pale brown-bronze wood frog. I think I can always take them up in my hand. They, too, vary in color, like the leaves of many species of plants at present, having now more yellow, now more red; and perhaps for the same reason.

I saw some blackbirds, apparently grackles, singing,

after their fashion, on a tree by the river. Most had those grayish-brown heads and necks; some, at least, much ferruginous or reddish brown reflected. They were pruning themselves and splitting their throats in vain, trying to sing as the other day. All the melody flew off in splinters.¹ Also a robin sings once or twice, just as in spring!

I think that the principal stages in the autumnal changes of trees are these, thus far, as I remember, this year: —

First, there were in September the few prematurely blushing white maples, or blazing red ones in water, that reminded us of October. Next, the red maple swamps blazed out in all their glory, attracting the eyes of all travellers and contrasting with other trees. And hard upon these came the ash trees and yellowing birches, and walnuts, and elms, and the sprout-land oaks, the last streaking the hillsides far off, often occupying more commanding positions than the maples. All these add their fires to those of the maples. But even yet the summer is unconquered. Now the red maple fires are gone out (very few exceptions), and the brightness of those accompanying fires is dulled, their leaves falling; but a general, though duller, fire, yellowish or red, growing more reddish, has seized the masses of the forest, and betrays the paucity of the evergreens, but mingled with it are the delicate tints of aspens, etc., and, beneath, of protected underwoods whose exposed specimens gave us such promise.

What is acorn-color! Is it not as good as chestnut? ²

¹ [Channing, p. 105.]

² [Channing, p. 106.]

Oct. 17. Saturday. Very high wind in the night, shaking the house. I feel it taking hold under the eaves, which project at the end of the house, each time with a jerk. Some rain also, and these two bring down the leaves. A great many more ash trees, elms, etc., are bare now.

What a new beauty the blue of the river acquires, seen at a distance in the midst of the various-tinted woods, great masses of red and yellow, etc.! It appears as color, which ordinarily it does not, — elysian.

The trainers are out with their band of music, and I find my account in it, though I have not subscribed for it. I am walking with a hill between me and the soldiers. I think, perhaps, it will be worth the while to keep within hearing of these strains this afternoon. Yet I hesitate. I am wont to find music unprofitable; it is a luxury. It is surprising, however, that so few habitually intoxicate themselves with music, so many with alcohol. I think, perchance, I may risk it, it will whet my senses so; it will reveal a glory where none was seen before. It is remarkable that men too must dress in bright colors and march to music once in the year. Nature, too, assumes her bright hues now, and think you a subtle music may not be heard amid the hills? No doubt these strains do sometime's suggest to Abner, walking behind in his red-streaked pants, an ideal which he had lost sight of, or never perceived. It is remarkable that our institutions can stand before music, it is so revolutionary.

P. M. — To Clintonia Swamp.

Glossy-brown white oak acorns strew the ground thickly, many of them sprouted. How soon they have sprouted! I find some quite edible, but they too, like

wild apples, require an outdoor appetite. I do not admit their palatableness when I try them in the house. Is not the outdoor appetite the one to be prayed for?

The cinnamon ferns surrounding the swamp have just lost their leaflets, except the terminal ones. They have acquired their November aspect, and the wool now adheres to my clothes as I go through them. The protected ones are not yet bare. The dicksonia ferns are killed sere and brown where exposed, but in woods are still pretty green even, only some faded white. They grow in patches.

The swamp floor is covered with red maple leaves, many yellow with bright-scarlet spots or streaks. Small brooks are almost concealed by them. The *Lycopodium lucidulum* looks suddenly greener amid the withered leaves.¹

It is cooler to-day, and a fire is necessary, which I have not had for about a week. The mountains are more distinct in the horizon, and as I come home the sunset sky is white and cold; recently it was a warm orange (?) tint.

Oct. 18. P. M. — To Conantum.

Clear and pleasant afternoon, but cooler than before. At the brook beyond Hubbard's Grove, I stand to watch the water-bugs (*Gyrinus*). The shallow water appears now more than usually clear there, as the weather is cooler, and the shadows of these bugs on the bottom, half a dozen times as big as themselves, are very distinct and interesting, with a narrow and well-defined

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 266; Riv. 326.]

halo about them. But why are they composed, as it were, of two circles run together, the foremost largest? Is it owing to the manner in which the light falls on their backs, in two spots? You think that the insect must be amused with this pretty shadow. I also see plainly the shadows of ripples they make, which are scarcely perceptible on the surface.

Many alders and birches just bare.

I should say that the autumnal change and brightness of foliage began fairly with the red maples (not to speak of a very few premature trees in water) September 25th, and ends this year, say generally October 22d, or maybe two or three days earlier. The fall of the leaf, in like way, began fairly with the fall of the red maple leaves, October 13th, and ended at least as early as when the pitch pines had *generally* fallen, November 5th (the larches are about a week later). The red maples are now fairly bare, though you may occasionally see one full of leaves.

So gradually the leaves fall, after all, — though individuals will be completely stripped in one short windy rain-storm, — that you scarcely miss them out of the landscape; but the earth grows more bare, and the fields more hoary, and the heavy shadows that began in June take their departure, November being at hand.

I go along the sunny west side of the Holden wood. Snakes lie out now on sunny banks, amid the dry leaves, now as in spring. They are chiefly striped ones. They crawl off a little into the bushes, and rest there half-concealed till I am gone.

The bass and the black ash are completely bare;

how long? Red cedar is fallen and falling. Looking across to the sprout-land beneath the Cliffs, I see that the pale brown of withered oak leaves begins to be conspicuous, amid the red, in sprout-lands.

In Lee's Wood, white pine leaves are now fairly fallen (not pitch pine yet), — a pleasant, soft, but slippery carpet to walk on. They sometimes spread leafy twigs on floors. Would not these be better? Where the pines stand far apart on grassy pasture hillsides, these tawny patches under each tree contrast singularly with the green around. I see them under one such tree completely and evenly covering and concealing the grass, and more than an inch deep, as they lie lightly. These leaves, like other, broader ones, pass through various hues (or shades) from green to brown, — first yellow, giving the tree that parti-colored look, then pale brown when they fall, then reddish brown after lying on the ground, and then darker and darker brown when decaying.

I see many robins on barberry bushes, probably after berries. The red oaks I see to-day are full of leaves, — a brownish yellow (with more or less green, but no red or scarlet). I find an abundance of those small, densely clustered grapes, — not the smallest quite, — still quite fresh and full on green stems, and leaves crisp but not all fallen; so much later than other grapes, which were further advanced October 4th when it was too late to get many. These are not yet ripe and may fairly be called frost grapes. Half-way up Blackberry Steep, above the rock. The huckleberries on Conantum appear to have been softened and spoilt by

the recent rain, for they are quite thick still on many bushes. Their leaves have fallen. So many leaves have now fallen in the woods that a squirrel cannot run after a nut without being heard.

As I was returning over Hubbard's stump fence pasture, I heard some of the common black field crickets¹ (three quarters of an inch long), two or three rods before me, make, as I thought, a peculiar shrilling, like a clear and sharp twittering of birds, [so] that I looked up for some time to see a flock of small birds going over, but they did not arrive. These fellows were, one or two, at the mouth of their burrows, and as I stood over one I saw how he produced the sound, by very slightly lifting his wing-cases (if that is the name of them), and shuffling them (transversely of course) over each other about an eighth of an inch, perhaps three or four times, and then stopping. Thus they stand at the mouths of their burrows, in the warm pastures, near the close of the year, shuffling their wing-cases over each other (the males only), and produce this sharp but pleasant creaking sound, — helping to fetch the year about. Thus the sounds of human industry and activity — the roar of cannon, blasting of rocks, whistling of locomotives, rattling of carts, tinkering of artisans, and voices of men — may sound to some distant ear like an earth-song and the creaking of crickets. The crickets keep about the mouths of their burrows as if apprehending cold.

The fringed gentian closes every night and opens every morning in my pitcher.

¹ *Acheta abbreviata*.

Oct. 19. Mr. Sanborn tells me that he looked off from Wachusett last night, and that he saw the shadow of the mountain gradually extend itself eastward not only over the earth but finally *on to the sky* in the horizon. Thought it extended as much as two diameters of the moon on to the sky, in a small cone. This was like the spectre of the Brocken.

Harris says the crickets produce their shrilling by shuffling their wing-covers together *lengthwise*. I should have said it was sidewise, or transversely to the insect's length, as I looked down on it. You may see these crickets now everywhere in the ruts, as in the cross-road from the Turnpike to the Great Road, creeping along, or oftenest three or four together, absorbed in feeding on, *i. e.* sucking the juices of, a crushed companion. There are two broad ruts made by ox-carts loaded with muck, and a cricket has been crushed or wounded every four or five feet in each. It is one long slaughter-house. But as often as a cart goes by, the survivors each time return quickly to their seemingly luscious feast. At least two kinds there.

Oct. 20. P. M. — To the Easterbrooks Country.

I go along the riverside and by Dakin the pump-maker's. There is a very strong northwest wind, Novemberish and cool, raising waves on the river and admonishing to prepare for winter.

I see two *Chenopodium album* with stems as bright purple and fair as the poke has been, and the calyxlobes enveloping the seeds the same color.

Apples are gathered; only the ladders here and there, left leaning against the trees.

I had gone but little way on the old Carlisle road when I saw Brooks Clark, who is now about eighty and bent like a bow, hastening along the road, bare-footed, as usual, with an axe in his hand; was in haste perhaps on account of the cold wind on his bare feet. It is he who took the *Centinel* so long. When he got up to me, I saw that besides the axe in one hand, he had his shoes in the other, filled with knurly apples and a dead robin. He stopped and talked with me a few moments; said that we had had a noble autumn and might now expect some cold weather. I asked if he had found the robin dead. No, he said, he found it with its wing broken and killed it. He also added that he had found some apples in the woods, and as he had n't anything to carry them in, he put 'em in his shoes. They were queer-looking trays to carry fruit in. How many he got in along toward the toes, I don't know. I noticed, too, that his pockets were stuffed with them. His old tattered frock coat was hanging in strips about the skirts, as were his pantaloons about his naked feet. He appeared to have been out on a scout this gusty afternoon, to see what he could find, as the youngest boy might. It pleased me to see this cheery old man, with such a feeble hold on life, bent almost double, thus enjoying the evening of his days. Far be it from me to call it avarice or penury, this childlike delight in finding something in the woods or fields and carrying it home in the October evening, as a trophy to be added to his winter's store. Oh, no;

he was happy to be Nature's pensioner still, and bird-like to pick up his living. Better his robin than your turkey, his shoes full of apples than your barrels full; they will be sweeter and suggest a better tale. He can afford to tell how he got them, and we to listen. There is an old wife, too, at home, to share them and hear how they were obtained. Like an old squirrel shuffling to his hole with a nut. Far less pleasing to me the loaded wain, more suggestive of avarice and of spiritual penury.

This old man's cheeriness was worth a thousand of the church's sacraments and *memento mori's*. It was better than a prayerful mood. It proves to me old age as tolerable, as happy, as infancy. I was glad of an occasion to suspect that this afternoon he had not been at "work" but living somewhat after my own fashion (though he did not explain the axe), — had been out to see what nature had for him, and now was hastening home to a burrow he knew, where he could warm his old feet. If he had been a young man, he would probably have thrown away his apples and put on his shoes when he saw me coming, for shame. But old age is manlier; it has learned to live, makes fewer apologies, like infancy. This seems a very manly man. I have known him within a few years building stone wall by himself, barefooted. I keep along the old Carlisle road. The leaves having mostly fallen, the country now seems deserted, and you feel further from home and more lonely. I see where squirrels, apparently, have gnawed the apples left in the road. The barberry bushes are now alive with, I should say, thousands

of robins feeding on them. They must make a principal part of their food now. I see the yellowish election-cake fungi. Those large chocolate-colored ones have been burst some days (at least).

Warren Brown, who owns the Easterbrooks place, the west side the road, is picking barberries. Allows that the soil thereabouts is excellent for fruit, but it is so rocky that he has not patience to plow it. That is the reason this tract is not cultivated. The yellow birches are generally bare. The sassafras in Sted Buttrick's pasture near to E. Hubbard's Wood, nearly so; leaves all withered. Much or most of the fever-bush still green, though somewhat wrinkled.¹

There was Melvin, too, a-barberrying and nutting. He had got two baskets, one in each hand, and his game-bag, which hung from his neck, all full of nuts and barberries, and his mouth full of tobacco. Trust him to find where the nuts and berries grow. He is hunting all the year and he marks the bushes and the trees which are fullest, and when the time comes, for once leaves his gun, though not his dog, at home, and takes his baskets to the spot. It is pleasanter to me to meet him with his gun or with his baskets than to meet some portly caterer for a family, basket on arm, at the stalls of Quincy Market. Better Melvin's pignuts than the others' shagbarks. It is to be observed that the best things are generally most abused, and so are not so much enjoyed as the worst. Shagbarks are eaten by epicures with diseased appetites; pignuts by the country boys who gather them. So

¹ Fever-bush in '61, Oct. 9th, at height of change!!

fagots and rubbish yield more comfort than sound wood.

Melvin says he has caught partridges in his hands. If there's only one hole, knows they've not gone out. Sometimes shoots them through the snow.

What a wild and rich domain that Easterbrooks Country! Not a cultivated, hardly a cultivatable field in it, and yet it delights all natural persons, and feeds more still. Such great rocky and moist tracts, which daunt the farmer, are reckoned as unimproved land, and therefore worth but little; but think of the miles of huckleberries, and of barberries, and of wild apples, so fair, both in flower and fruit, resorted to by men and beasts; Clark, Brown, Melvin, and the robins, these, at least, were attracted thither this afternoon. There are barberry bushes or clumps there, behind which I could actually pick two bushels of berries without being seen by you on the other side. And they are not a quarter picked at last, by all creatures together. I walk for two or three miles, and still the clumps of barberries, great sheaves with their wreaths of scarlet fruit, show themselves before me and on every side, seeming to issue from between the pines or other trees, as if it were they that were promenading there, not I.

That very dense and handsome maple and pine grove opposite the pond-hole on this old Carlisle road is Ebby Hubbard's.¹ Melvin says there are those alive who remember mowing there. Hubbard loves to come with his axe in the fall or winter and trim up his woods.

¹ Sted Buttrick's, according to Melvin.

Melvin tells me that Skinner says he thinks he heard a wildcat scream in E. Hubbard's Wood, by the Close. It is worth the while to have a Skinner in the town; else we should not know that we had wildcats. They had better look out, or he will skin them, for that seems to have been the trade of his ancestors. How long Nature has manœuvred to bring our Skinner within ear-shot of that wildcat's scream! Saved Ebby's wood to be the scene of it! Ebby, the *wood-saver*.

Melvin says that Sted sold the principal log of one of those pasture oaks to Garty for ten dollars and got several cords besides. What a mean bribe to take the life of so noble a tree!

Wesson is so gouty that he rarely comes out-of-doors, and is a spectacle in the street; but he loves to tell his old stories still! How, when he was stealing along to get a shot at his ducks, and was just upon them a red squirrel sounded the alarm, *chickaree chickaree chickaree*, and off they went; but he turned his gun upon the squirrel to avenge himself.

It would seem as if men generally could better appreciate honesty of the John Beaton stamp, which gives you your due to a mill, than the generosity which habitually throws in the half-cent.

Oct. 21. First ice that I've seen or heard of, a tenth of an inch thick in yard, and the ground is slightly frozen.

I see many myrtle-birds now about the house this forenoon, on the advent of cooler weather. They keep flying up against the house and the window and flut-

tering there, as if they would come in, or alight on the wood-pile or pump. They would commonly be mistaken for sparrows, but show more white when they fly, beside the yellow on the rump and sides of breast seen near to and two white bars on the wings. Chubby birds.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

Cool and windy. Those who have put it off thus long make haste now to collect what apples were left out and dig their potatoes before the ground shall freeze hard. Now again, as in the spring, we begin to look for sheltered and sunny places where we may sit.

I see, hanging over an alder bough above the hemlocks, five inches above the water, a great eel, over two feet long and two inches wide or thick horizontally (more vertically) in the forward part of its body. It must weigh two and a half pounds; the biggest I ever saw. What a repulsive and gluttonous-looking creature, with its vomer made to plow the mud and wallow in filth, and its slimy skin (I had forgotten it was scaly, it is so fine). It was somewhat bloated, perhaps, and its skin distended, but at any rate it had got its skin full. It is more repulsive to me than a snake, and I think must be less edible. Its dead-white eye-spots — for the eyes were closed flat on its black and shiny vomer — and the fringed gelatinous kind of alga or what-not that covered like a lichen the parts submerged made it yet more repulsive.

I cannot go by a large dead swamp white oak log this cool evening, but with no little exertion get it aboard, and some blackened swamp white oak stumps, whose

earthy parts are all gone. I see a robin eating prinus berries. Is not the robin the principal berry-eating bird nowadays? There must be more about the barberry bushes in Melvin's Preserve than anywhere.

As I am paddling home swiftly before the northwest wind, absorbed in my wooding, I see, this cool and grayish evening, that peculiar yellow light in the east, from the sun a little before its setting. It has just come out beneath a great cold slate-colored cloud that occupies most of the western sky, as smaller ones the eastern, and now its rays, slanting over the hill in whose shadow I float, fall on the eastern trees and hills with a thin yellow light like a clear yellow wine, but somehow it reminds me that now the hearth-side is getting to be a more comfortable place than out-of-doors. Before I get home the sun has set and a cold white light in the west succeeded.

I saw wood tortoises coupled, up the Assabet, the back of the upper above water. It held the lower with its claws about the head, and they were not to be parted.

It is pitiful to see a man of sixty, a philosopher, perchance, inquiring for a bearing apple orchard for sale. If he must have one, why did he not set it out when he was thirty? How mean and lazy, to be plucking the fruit of another man's labor. The old man I saw yesterday lives on peaches and milk in their season, but then he planted them.

Is not the poet bound to write his own biography? Is there any other work for him but a good journal? We do not wish to know how his imaginary hero, but how he, the actual hero, lived from day to day.

That big swamp white oak limb or tree which I found prostrate in the swamp was longer than my boat and tipped it well. One whole side, the upper, was covered with green hypnum, and the other was partly white with fungi. That green coat adhered when I split it. Immortal wood! that had begun to live again. Others burn unfortunate trees that lose their lives prematurely. These old stumps stand like anchorites and yogees, putting off their earthy garments, more and more sublimed from year to year, ready to be translated, and then they are ripe for my fire. I administer the last sacrament and purification. I find old pitch pine sticks which have lain in the mud at the bottom of the river, nobody knows how long, and weigh them up, — almost as heavy as lead, — float them home, saw and split them. Their pitch, still fat and yellow, has saved them for me, and they burn like candles at last. I become a connoisseur in wood at last, take only the best.

Oct. 22. 6 A. M. — To Hill.

Ground pretty white with frost. The stiffened and frosted weeds and grass have an aggrieved look. The lately free-flowing blades of grass look now like mourning tresses sculptured stiffly in marble; they lie stiff and dishevelled. A very narrow strip of ice has formed along the riverside, in which I see a pad or two, wearing the same aggrieved look, like the face of the child that cried for spilt milk, its summer irrevocably gone. Going through the stiff meadow-grass, I collect the particles of white frost on the top of my shoes. Under

the ash trees their peculiar club-shaped leaf-stems thickly strew the ground. The bright tints of autumn are now fairly and generally over. Perhaps the brightest trees I see this moment are some aspens. Large oaks are already generally brown. Reddish brown is the prevailing color of deciduous woods. The swamp white oaks are greener than the rest yet. The black willows along the river are about as bare as in November. The button-bushes are completely bare, letting in more light to the water, and these days I see on their stems the ribbed reflections of the waves I have made. Blackbirds go over, chattering, and a small hawk — pigeon or sparrow — glides along and alights on an elm.

P. M. — To and round Flint's Pond.

Crossing my old bean-field, I see the blue pond between the green white pines in the field and am reminded that we are almost reduced to the russet (*i. e.* pale-brown grass tinged with red blackberry vines) of such fields as this, the blue of water, the green of pines, and the dull reddish brown of oak leaves. The sight of the blue water between the now perfectly green white pines, seen over the light-brown pasture, is peculiarly Novemberish, though it may be like this in early spring.

As I go through the woods now, so many oak and other leaves have fallen the rustling noise somewhat disturbs my musing. However, Nature in this may have intended some kindness to the ducks, which are now loitering hereabouts on their migration south-

ward, mostly young and inexperienced birds, for, as they are feeding [in] Goose Pond, for instance, the rustling of the leaves betrays the approach of the sportsman and his dog, or other foe; so perhaps the leaves on the ground protect them more than when on the trees.

There is scarcely a square rod of sand exposed, in this neighborhood, but you may find on it the stone arrowheads of an extinct race. Far back as that time seems when men went armed with bows and pointed stones here, yet so numerous are the signs of it. The finer particles of sand are blown away and the arrow-point remains. The race is as clean gone — from here — as this sand is clean swept by the wind. Such are our antiquities. These were our predecessors. Why, then, make so great ado about the Roman and the Greek, and neglect the Indian? We [need] not wander off with boys in our imaginations to Juan Fernandez, to wonder at footprints in the sand there. Here is a print still more significant at our doors, the print of a race



that has preceded us, and this the little symbol that Nature has transmitted to us. Yes, *this* arrow-headed character is probably more ancient than any other, and to my mind it has not been deciphered. Men should not go to New Zealand to write or think of Greece and Rome, nor more to New England. New earths, new themes expect us. Celebrate not the Garden of Eden, but your own.

I see what I call a hermit thrush on the bushes by

the shore of Flint's Pond; pretty tame. It has an olive-brown back, with a more ferruginous tail, which [is] very narrowly tipped with whitish; an apparently cream-colored throat; and dusky cream-color beneath. The breast is richly spotted with black. The legs are flesh-colored and transparent; the bill black. Yet Wilson says the legs are dusky. Can it be the *Turdus olivaceus* of Giraud?

Chestnut trees are almost bare. Now is just the time for chestnuts. The white oak generally withers earlier than other large oaks. On the north side of the chestnut oak hill, in the woods, I see a scarlet oak and even a white one, still almost entirely green! The chestnut oak there is also generally green still, some leaves turned yellow-brown and withering so.

Look from the high hill, just before sundown, over the pond. The mountains are a mere cold slate-color. But what a perfect crescent of mountains we have in our northwest horizon! Do we ever give thanks for it? Even as pines and larches and hemlocks grow in communities in the wilderness, so, it seems, do mountains love society and form a community in the horizon. Though there may be two or more ranges, one behind the other, and ten or twelve miles between them, yet if the farthest are the highest, they are all seen as one group at this distance. I look up northwest toward my mountains, as a farmer to his hill lot or rocky pasture from his door. I drive no cattle to Ipswich hills. I own no pasture for them there. My eyes it is alone that wander to those blue pastures, which no drought affects. They are my flocks and herds. See how they

look. They are shaped like tents, inclining to sharp peaks. What is it lifts them upward so? Why not rest level along the horizon? They seem not perfect, they seem not satisfied, until their central parts have curved upward to a sharp summit. They are a succession of pickets with scallops between. That side my pasture is well fenced. This being their upper side, I fancy they must have a corresponding under side and roots also. Might they not be dug up like a turnip? Perhaps they spring from seeds which some wind sowed. Can't the Patent Office import some of the seed of Himmalch with its next rutabagas? Spore of mountains has fallen there; it came from the gills of an agaric. Ah, I am content to dwell there and see the sun go down behind my mountain fence.

It is just about nine miles, as I walk, from here around Flint's Pond.

The hickory leaves, now after they have fallen, are often if not oftenest a dark rich yellow, very conspicuous upon the brown leaves of the forest floor, seeming to have more life in them than those leaves which are brown. I saw some hickory sprouts above the perfoliate bellwort near the pond, with very large leaves. One of five leaflets had the terminal one fourteen inches long by ten and three quarters wide, and the general leaf-stalk was ten and a half inches long.

The leaf-stalk commonly adheres to the leaf when fallen, but in the case of the ash, hickory, and probably other compound leaves, it separates from them and by its singular form puzzles the uninitiated.

What a perfect chest the chestnut is packed in! I

now hold a green bur in my hand which, round, must have been two and a quarter inches in diameter, from which three plump nuts have been extracted. It has a straight, stout stem three sixteenths of an inch in diameter, set on strongly and abruptly. It has gaped in four segments or quarters, revealing the thickness of its walls, from five eighths to three quarters of an inch. With such wonderful care Nature has secluded and defended these nuts, as if they were her most precious fruits, while diamonds are left to take care of themselves. First it bristles all over with sharp green prickles, some nearly half an inch long, like a hedgehog rolled into a ball; these rest on a thick, stiff, bark-like rind, one sixteenth to one eighth of an inch thick, which, again, is most daintily lined with a kind of silvery fur or velvet plush one sixteenth of an inch thick, even rising in a ridge between the nuts, like the lining of a casket in which the most precious commodities are kept. I see the brown-spotted white cavities where the bases of the nuts have rested and sucked up nourishment from the stem. The little stars on the top of the nuts are but shorter and feebler spines which mingle with the rest. They stand up close together, three or more, erecting their tiny weapons, as an infant in the brawny arms of its nurse might put out its own tiny hands, to fend off the aggressor. There is no waste room. The chest is packed quite full; half-developed nuts are the waste paper used in the packing, to fill the vacancies. At last Frost comes to unlock this chest; it alone holds the true key. Its lids straightway gape open, and the October air rushes in, dries the ripe

nuts, and then with a ruder gust shakes them all out in a rattling shower down upon the withered leaves.

Such is the cradle, thus daintily lined, in which they have been rocked in their infancy. With what steadiness the nuts must be held within these stout arms, — there can be no motion on their base, — and yet how tenderly, by a firm hold that relaxes only as they grow, the walls that confine them, superfluously strong as they seem, expanding as they grow!

The chestnut, with its tough shell, looks as if it were able to protect itself, but see how tenderly it has been reared in its cradle before its green and tender skin hardened into a shell. The October air comes in, as I have said, and the light too, and proceed to paint the nuts that clear, handsome reddish (?) brown which we call chestnut. Nowadays the brush that paints chestnuts is very active. It is entering into every open bur over the stretching forests' tops for hundreds of miles, without horse or ladder, and putting on rapid coats of this wholesome color. Otherwise the boys would not think they had got perfect nuts. And that this may be further protected, perchance, both within the bur and afterward, the nuts themselves are partly covered toward the top, where they are first exposed, with that same soft velvety down. And then Nature drops it on the rustling leaves, a *done* nut, prepared to begin a chestnut's course again. Within itself, again, each individual nut is lined with a reddish velvet, as if to preserve the seed from jar and injury in falling and, perchance, from sudden damp and cold, and, within that, a thin white skin enwraps the germ. Thus it is lining

within lining and unwearied care, — not to count closely, six coverings at least before you reach the contents!

But it is a barbarous way to jar the tree, and I trust I do repent of it. Gently shake it only, or let the wind shake it for you. You are gratified to find a nut that has in it no bitterness, altogether palatable.

Oct. 23. P. M. — Up Assabet.

The ferns which I can see on the bank, apparently all evergreens, are polypody at rock, marginal shield fern, terminal shield fern, and (I think it is) *Aspidium spinulosum*, which I had not identified. Apparently *Aspidium cristatum* elsewhere.¹

I can find no bright leaves now in the woods. Witch-hazel, etc., are withered, turned brown, or yet green. See by the droppings in the woods where small migrating birds have roosted.

I see a squirrel's nest in a white pine, recently made, on the hillside near the witch-hazels.

The high bank-side is mostly covered with fallen leaves of pines and hemlocks, etc. The above-named evergreen ferns are so much the more conspicuous on that pale-brown ground. They stand out all at once and are seen to be evergreen; their character appears. The fallen pine-needles, as well as other leaves, now actually paint the surface of the earth brown in the woods, covering the green and other colors, and the few evergreen plants on the forest floor stand out distinct and have a rare preëminence.

Sal Cummings, a thorough countrywoman, conversant

¹ *Vide* pp. [134] and [149].

with nuts and berries, calls the soapwort gentian "blue vengeance," mistaking the word. A masculine wild-eyed woman of the fields. Somebody has her daguerreotype. When Mr. — was to lecture on Kansas, she was sure "she wa'n't going to hear him. None of her folks had ever had any."

Oct. 24. P. M. — To Smith's chestnut grove.

Rain last night, raising the springs a little. To-day and yesterday still, gray days, but not cold. The sugar maple leaves are now falling fast.

I get a couple of quarts of chestnuts by patiently brushing the thick beds of leaves aside with my hand in successive concentric circles till I reach the trunk; more than half under one tree. I believe I get more by resolving, where they are reasonably thick, to pick all under one tree first. Begin at the tree and brush the leaves with your right hand in toward the stump, while your left holds the basket, and so go round and round it in concentric circles, each time laying bare about two feet in width, till you get as far as the boughs extend. You may presume that you have got about all then. It is best to reduce it to a system. Of course you will shake the tree first, if there are any on it. The nuts lie commonly two or three together, as they fell.

I find on a chestnut tree, while shaking it, fifteen or twenty feet high, on the bark of the trunk, a singular green kind of slug nearly half an inch long, of this form, and about three sixteenths high from the paper up, narrower on back, as appears in sketch; a brown mark across middle of



back and near tail as drawn (only full). It can elongate itself and also run out its head a little from beneath this soft kind of shell. Beneath, quite flat and fleshy-ribbed. Climbs up glass slowly but easily. Reminds me of a green beechnut, but flat-backed. Would hardly suspect it to have life at first sight. Sticks very firmly to the bark or glass; hard to be pushed aside.

I find one of those small, hard, dark-brown millipede worms partly crawled into a hole in a chestnut.

I read of an apple tree in this neighborhood that had blossomed again about a week ago.

I find my account in this long-continued monotonous labor of picking chestnuts all the afternoon, brushing the leaves aside without looking up, absorbed in that, and forgetting better things awhile. My eye is educated to discover anything on the ground, as chestnuts, etc. It is probably wholesomer to look at the ground much than at the heavens. As I go stooping and brushing the leaves aside by the hour, I am not thinking of chestnuts merely, but I find myself humming a thought of more significance. This occupation affords a certain broad pause and opportunity to start again afterward, — turn over a new leaf.

I hear the dull thump of heavy stones against the trees from far through the rustling wood, where boys are ranging for nuts.

Oct. 25. Rain in night.

P. M. — By boat to Battle-Ground.

A rainy day and easterly wind, — an easterly storm.

I see flying very high over the meadow, from the east, eleven large birds, leisurely circling a little by the way, surveying the bare meadow. I think they must be fish hawks.

I am amused to see that Varro tells us that the Latin *e* represents the vowel sound in the bleat of a sheep (*Bee*). If he had said in any word pronounced by the Romans we should be not the wiser, but we do not doubt that sheep bleat to-day as they did then.

The fresh clamshells opened by the musquash begin to be conspicuous.

Oct. 26. Hard rain in the night and almost steady rain through the day, the second day. Wind still easterly or northeasterly.

P. M. — Round by Puffer's *via* Clamshell.

A driving east or northeast storm. I can see through the drisk only a mile. The river is getting partly over the meadows at last, and my spirits rise with it. Methinks this rise of the waters must affect every thought and deed in the town. It qualifies my sentence and life. I trust there will appear in this Journal some flow, some gradual filling of the springs and raising of the streams, that the accumulating grists may be ground. A storm is a new, and in some respects more active, life in nature. Larger migrating birds make their appearance. They, at least, sympathize with the movements of the watery element and the winds. I see two great fish hawks (*possibly* blue herons) slowly beating northeast against the storm, by what a curious tie circling ever near each other and in the same direction,

as if you might expect to find the very notes in the air to be paired; two long undulating wings conveying a feathered body through the misty atmosphere, and this inseparably associated with another planet of the same species. I can just glimpse their undulating lines. Damon and Pythias they must be. The waves beneath, which are of kindred form, are still more social, multitudinous, ἀνήρηθμον. Where is my mate, beating against the storm with me? They fly according to the valley of the river, northeast or southwest.

I start up snipes also at Clamshell Meadow. This weather sets the migratory birds in motion and also makes them bolder.

These regular phenomena of the seasons get at last to be — they were *at first*, of course — simply and plainly phenomena or phases of my life. The seasons and all their changes are in me. I see not a dead eel or floating snake, or a gull, but it rounds my life and is like a line or accent in its poem. Almost I believe the Concord would not rise and overflow its banks again, were I not here. After a while I learn what my moods and seasons are. I would have nothing subtracted. I can imagine nothing added. My moods are thus periodical, not two days in my year alike. The perfect correspondence of Nature to man, so that he is at home in her!

Going along the road toward the bæomyces, I see, as I think, a space a yard or two square where the bank has been [burnt] over by accident, by some traveler or sportsman. Even as I stand within four or five feet I take it to be so. It was the fallen leaves of the

Salix tristis, thickly covering the ground, so black, with an ashy reflection, that they look exactly like cinders of leaves. And the small twigs were also blackened and inconspicuous; I could hardly detect them. Just the right mingling of black and ash-color. It was a wet day, which made them look blacker. Mere evergreen mossy banks, as that by this road in the woods, now more attract us when greenness is so rare.

At the hewing-place on the flat above, many sparrows are flitting past amid the birches and willows. They are chiefly *Fringilla hyemalis*. How often they may be [seen] thus flitting along in a straggling manner from bush to bush, so that the hedgerow will be all alive with them, each uttering a faint *chip* from time to time, as if to keep together, bewildering you so that you know not if the greater part are gone by or still to come. One rests but a moment on the tree before you and is gone again. You wonder if they know whither they are bound, and how their leader is appointed.

The pitch pine leaves not yet quite fallen. Yellowish leaves still adhere to the very tops of the birches.

Those sparrows, too, are thoughts I have. They come and go; they flit by quickly on their migrations, uttering only a faint *chip*, I know not whither or why exactly. One will not rest upon its twig for me to scrutinize it. The whole copse will be alive with my rambling thoughts, bewildering me by their very multitude, but they will be all gone directly without leaving me a feather. My loftiest thought is somewhat like an eagle that suddenly comes into the field of view, sug-

gesting great things and thrilling the beholder, as if it were bound hitherward with a message for me; but it comes no nearer, but circles and soars away, growing dimmer, disappointing me, till it is lost behind a cliff or a cloud.

Spring is brown; summer, green; autumn, yellow; winter, white; November, gray.

Oct. 27. P. M. — Up river.

The third day of steady rain; wind northeast. The river has now risen so far over the meadows that I can just cross Hubbard's Great Meadow in my boat.

Stedman Buttrick tells me that a great many ducks and large yellow-legs have been killed within a day or two. It is rather late for ducks generally. He says that the spruce swamp beyond Farmer's is called Fox Castle Swamp and has been a great place for foxes. Some days ago he was passing under a black oak on his land, when he saw the *dust* of acorn shells (or cups?) falling about him. Looking up, he saw as many as twenty (!) striped squirrels busily running out to ends of the twigs, biting off the nuts, running back and taking off the shells (cups?) and stowing the nuts away in their cheeks.

I go up the river as far as Hubbard's Second Grove, in order to share the general commotion and excitement of the elements, — wind and waves and rain. A half-dozen boats at the landing were full, and the waves beating over them. It was hard work getting at and hauling up and emptying mine. It was a rod and a half from the water's edge. Now look out for your rails

and other fencing-stuff and loose lumber, lest it be floated off. I sailed swiftly, standing up and tipping my boat to make a keel of its side, though at first it was hard to keep off a lee shore. I looked for cranberries drifted up on the lee side of the meadows, but saw few. It was exciting to feel myself tossed by the dark waves and hear them surge about me. The reign of water now begins, and how it gambols and revels! Waves are its leaves, foam its blossoms. How they run and leap in great droves, deriving new excitement from each other! Schools of porpoises and blackfish are only more animated waves and have acquired the gait and game of the sea itself. The high wind and the dashing waves are very inspiring. The clumps of that "west of rock" willow and a *discolor* are still thinly leaved, with peculiar silvery-yellow leaves in this light. The rising water is now rolling and washing up the river wreck of sparganium, etc., etc. Wool-grass tops appear thickly above the flood.

When I turn about, it requires all my strength and skill to push the boat back again. I must keep it pointed directly in the teeth of the wind. If it turns a little, the wind gets the advantage of me and I lose ground. The wind being against the stream makes it rise the faster, and also prevents the driftwood from coming down. How many a meadow my boat's bottom has rubbed over! I might perhaps consult with it respecting cranberry vines, cut-grass, pitcher-plant, etc., etc. I hear that Sammy Hoar saw geese go over to-day.

The fall (strictly speaking) is approaching an end in this probably annual northeast storm. Thus the

summer winds up its accounts. The Indians, it is said, did not look for winter till the springs were full. Long-continued rain and wind come to settle the accounts of the year, filling the springs for winter. The ducks and other fowl, reminded of the lateness thus, go by. The few remaining leaves come fluttering down. The snow-flea (as to-day) is washed out of the bark of meadow trees and covers the surface of the flood. The winter's wood is bargained for and being hauled. This storm reminds men to put things on a winter footing. There is not much more for the farmer to do in the fields.

The real facts of a poet's life would be of more value to us than any work of his art. I mean that the very scheme and form of his poetry (so called) is adopted at a sacrifice of vital truth and poetry. Shakespeare has left us his fancies and imaginings, but the truth of his life, with its becoming circumstances, we know nothing about. The writer is reported, the liver not at all. Shakespeare's house! how hollow it is! No man can conceive of Shakespeare in that house. But we want the basis of fact, of an actual life, to complete our Shakespeare, as much as a statue wants its pedestal. A poet's life with this broad actual basis would be as superior to Shakespeare's as a lichen, with its base or thallus, is superior in the order of being to a fungus.

The Littleton Giant brought us a load of coal within the week. He appears deformed and weakly, though naturally well formed. He does not nearly stand up straight. His knees knock together; they touch when

he is standing most upright, and so reduce his height at least three inches. He is also very round-shouldered and stooping, probably from the habit of crouching to conceal his height. He wears a low hat for the same purpose. The tallest man looks like a boy beside him. He has a seat to his wagon made on purpose for him. He habitually stops before all doors. You wonder what his horses think of him, — that a strange horse is not afraid of him. His voice is deep and full, but mild, for he is quite modest and retiring, — really a worthy man, 't is said. Pity he could n't have been undertaken by a committee in season and put through, like the boy Safford, been well developed bodily and also mentally, taught to hold up his head and not mind people's eyes or remarks. It is remarkable that the giants have never correspondingly great hearts.

Oct. 28. P. M. — To Conantum.

To-day it does not rain, but is cloudy all the day. Large oak leaves have been falling for a week at least, but the oaks are not yet reduced to their winter state. On the causeway I see fox-colored sparrows flitting along in the willows and alders, uttering a faint *cheep*, and tree sparrows with them. On a black willow, a single grackle with *the bright iris*. (I doubt if some of the brown-headed blackbirds I have seen within three weeks *were* grackles.)

As I sat at the wall-corner, high on Conantum, the sky generally covered with continuous cheerless-looking slate-colored clouds, except in the west, I saw, through the hollows of the clouds, here and there the

blue appearing. All at once a low-slanted glade of sunlight from one of heaven's west windows behind me fell on the bare gray maples, lighting them up with an incredibly intense and pure white light; then, going out there, it lit up some white birch stems south of the pond, then the gray rocks and the pale reddish young oaks of the lower cliffs, and then the very pale brown meadow-grass, and at last the brilliant white breasts of two ducks, tossing on the agitated surface far off on the pond, which I had not detected before. It was but a transient ray, and there was no sunshine afterward, but the intensity of the light was surprising and impressive, like a halo, a glory in which only the just deserved to live.

It was as if the air, purified by the long storm, reflected these few rays from side to side with a complete illumination, like a perfectly polished mirror, while the effect was greatly enhanced by the contrast with the dull dark clouds and sombre earth. As if Nature did not dare at once to let in the full blaze of the sun to this combustible atmosphere. It was a serene, elysian light, in which the deeds I have dreamed of but not realized might have been performed. At the eleventh hour, late in the year, we have visions of the life we might have lived. No perfectly fair weather ever offered such an arena for noble acts. It was such a light as we behold but dwell not in! In each case, every recess was filled and lit up with this pure white light. The maples were Potter's, far down stream, but I dreamed I walked like a liberated spirit in their maze. The withered meadow-grass was as soft and glorious

as paradise. And then it was remarkable that the light-giver should have revealed to me, for all life, the heaving white breasts of those two ducks within this glade of light. It was extinguished and relit as it travelled.

Tell me precisely the value and significance of these transient gleams which come sometimes at the end of the day, before the close of the storm, final dispersion of the clouds, too late to be of any service to the works of man for the day, and notwithstanding the whole night after may be overcast! Is not this a language to be heard and understood? There is, in the brown and gray earth and rocks, and the withered leaves and bare twigs at this season, a purity more correspondent to the light itself than summer offers.

These two ducks, as near as I could see with my glass, were all dark above, back and wings, but had bright white breasts and necks. They were swimming and tacking about in the midst of the pond, with their heads half the time plunged beneath the surface. Were they grebes? or young sheldrakes? Even at this distance they warily withdraw still further off till I am gone.

Both aspleniums and the small botrychium are still fresh, as if they were evergreen. The latter sheds pollen. The former are most fresh under the shelter of rocks.

I look up and see a male marsh hawk with his clean-cut wings, that has just skimmed past above my head, — not at all disturbed, only tilting his body a little, now twenty rods off, with demi-semi-quaver of his wings. He is a very neat flyer. Again, I hear the scream

of a hen-hawk, soaring and circling onward. I do not often see the marsh hawk thus. What a regular figure this fellow makes on high, with his broad tail and broad wings! Does he perceive me, that he rises higher and circles to one side? He goes round now one full circle without a flap, tilting his wing a little; then flaps three or four times and rises higher. Now he comes on like a billow, screaming. Steady as a planet in its orbit, with his head bent down, but on second thought that small sprout-land seems worthy of a longer scrutiny, and he gives one circle backward over it. His scream is somewhat like the whinnying of a horse, if it is not rather a *split squeal*. It is a hoarse, tremulous breathing forth of his winged energy. But why is it so regularly repeated at that height? Is it to scare his prey, that he may see by its motion where it is, or to inform its mate or companion of its whereabouts? Now he crosses the at present broad river steadily, deserving to have one or two rabbits at least to swing about him. What majesty there is in this small bird's flight! The hawks are large-souled.

Those late grapes on Blackberry Steep are now as ripe as ever they will be. They are sweet and shrivelled but on the whole poor. They ripen there the latter part of October.

The white pine needles on the ground are already turned considerably redder. The pitch pines, which are yellower than the white when they fall, are three quarters fallen. I see some which look exactly like bamboo, very prettily barred with brown every tenth of an inch or so.

Going up the cliffy hillside, just north of the witch-hazel, I see a vigorous young apple tree, which, planted by birds or cows, has shot up amid the rocks and woods, and has much fruit on it and more beneath it, uninjured by the frosts, now when all other fruits are gathered. It is of a rank, wild growth, with many green leaves on it still, and makes an impression, at least, of thorniness. The fruit is hard and green, but looks like palatable winter fruit; some dangling on the twigs, but more half buried in the wet leaves, or rolled far down the hill amid the rocks. The owner, Lee, knows nothing of it. There is no hand to pluck its fruit; it is only gnawed by squirrels, I perceive. It has done double duty, — not only borne this crop, but each twig has grown a foot into the air. And this is such a fruit! Bigger than *many* berries, and carried home will be sound and palatable, perchance, next spring. Who knows but this chance wild fruit may be equal to those kinds which the Romans and the English have so prized, — may yet become the favorite of the nations? When I go by this shrub, thus late and hardy, and its dangling fruit strikes me, I respect the tree and am grateful for Nature's bounty.

Even the sourest and crabbedest apple, growing in the most unfavorable position, suggests such thoughts as these, it [is] so noble a fruit. Planted by a bird on a wild and rocky hillside, it bears a fruit, perchance, which foreign potentates shall hear of and send for, though the virtues of the owner of the soil may never be heard of beyond the limits of his village. It may be the choicest fruit of its kind. Every wild apple

shrub excites our expectation thus. It is a prince in disguise, perhaps.¹

There is, apparently, limestone just above this apple tree.

I see pignuts which squirrels have industriously gnawed, the thick rind closely adhering, so that at last they are left brown and very rough; but in no case is the shell cut quite through, for, as I find, they contain no meat, but, under a shell of double thickness, a mere dry brown skin, and it seems the squirrels knew this!

Is that small fern (still partly green) *Aspidium cristatum*, at Lee's Cliff, northwest of the witch-hazel?

Suppose I see a single green apple, brought to perfection on some thorny shrub, far in a wild pasture where no cow has plucked it. It is an agreeable surprise. What chemistry has been at work there? It affects me somewhat like a work of art. I see some shrubs which cattle have browsed for twenty years, keeping them down and compelling them to spread, until at last they are so broad they become their own fence and some interior shoot darts upward and bears its fruit! What a lesson to man! So are human beings, referred to the highest standard, the celestial fruit which they suggest and aspire to bear, browsed on by fate, and only the most persistent and strongest genius prevails, defends itself, sends a tender scion upward at last, and drops its perfect fruit on the ungrateful earth; and that fruit, though somewhat smaller, perchance, is

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 299-301, 307; Riv. 368, 369, 376, 377.]

essentially the same in flavor and quality as if it had grown in a garden. That fruit seems all the sweeter and more palatable even for the very difficulties it has contended with.

Here, on this rugged and woody hillside, has grown an apple tree, not planted by man, no relic of a former orchard, but a natural growth like the pines and oaks. Most fruits we prize and use depend entirely on our care. Corn and grain, potatoes, peaches (*here*), and melons, etc., depend altogether on our planting, but the apple emulates man's independence and enterprise. Like him to some extent, it has migrated to this new world and is ever here and there making its way amid the aboriginal trees. It accompanies man like the ox and dog and horse, which also sometimes run wild and maintain themselves.

Spite of wandering kine and other adverse circumstance, that scorned shrub, valued only by small birds as a covert, a shelter from hawks, has its blossom week, and in course its harvest, sincere, though small.¹

'T was thirty years ago,
 In a rocky pasture field
 Sprang an infant apple grove
 Unplanted and concealed.
 I sing the wild apple, theme enough for me.
 I love the racy fruit and I reverence the tree.

In that small family there was one that loved the sun, which sent its root down deep and took fast hold on life, while the others went to sleep.

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 300, 305-307; Riv. 369, 374-377.]

In two years' time 't had thus
 Reached the level of the rocks,
 Admired the stretching world,
 Nor feared the wandering flocks.
 But at this tender age
 Its sufferings began:
 There came a browsing ox
 And cut it down a span.
 Its heart did bleed all day,
 And when the birds were hushed, —

Oct. 29. P. M. — Down river in boat.

Though it did not rain yesterday, as I remember, it was overcast all day, — did n't clear up, — and this forenoon it has rained again. The sun only comes out once or twice for a moment this afternoon.¹ Accordingly, this being the seventh day of cloud and the fourth of rain (skipping yesterday), the river is very high for the season and all over the meadow in front of the house, and still rising. Many are out (as yesterday) shooting musquash.

I see evidently what Storer calls the little brown snake (*Coluber ordinatus*), driven out of the grass of the meadow by the flood. Its head is raised to the surface for air, and it appears sluggish and enfeebled by the water. Putting out my paddle, it immediately coils about it and is raised into the boat. It has a distinct pale-pink abdomen, slightly bluish forward. Above it is pale-brown, with a still lighter brown stripe running down the middle of the back, on each side of

¹ This is the fall storm.

which is a line of dark-brown spots about an eighth of an inch apart, as the two lines are also an eighth of an inch apart. This snake is about one foot long. I hold it in my hand, and it is quite inoffensive.

The sun comes out once or twice, the water is smooth, and the cocks crow as in spring. As I am picking cranberries below Flint's Bridge, they being drifted against the shore together with much loose meadow wreck, I notice many crickets wrecked with them and half drowned, as well as snails' shells. Spiders, however, are in their element.

A flock of about eighty crows flies ramblingly over toward the sowing, cawing and loitering and making a great ado, apparently about nothing. I meet Goodwin and afterward Melvin. They are musquash-shooting. The latter has killed nineteen to-day downstream, thirty-one yesterday up the Assabet. He has also a coot, which he calls a little black dipper! It has some clear white under its tail. Is this, then, the name of that dipper? and are the young dippers of Moosehead different? ¹ The latter were in flocks and had some white in front, I have said. Melvin asked if I had seen "Pink-eye," meaning Goodwin.

There is a large square-sided black rock, say five or six feet high, eight long, and five wide, on Mrs. Ripley's shore, wedged close between two small elms, and your first thought on seeing it is that it has according to some law occupied that space between the trees, not reflecting that it is more ancient than the trees by a geological period, and that the latter have but re-

¹ *Vide* Nov. 27, 1857.

cently sprung up under its protection. I thought the rock had been accurately fitted into that space.

There are some things of which I cannot at once tell whether I have dreamed them or they are real; as if they were just, perchance, establishing, or else losing, a real basis in my world. This is especially the case in the early morning hours, when there is a gradual transition from dreams to waking thoughts, from illusions to actualities, as from darkness, or perchance moon and star light, to sunlight. Dreams are real, as is the light of the stars and moon, and theirs is said to be a *dreamy* light. Such early morning thoughts as I speak of occupy a debatable ground between dreams and waking thoughts. They are a sort of permanent dream in my mind. At least, until we have for some time changed our position from prostrate to erect, and commenced or faced some of the duties of the day, we cannot tell what we have dreamed from what we have actually experienced.

This morning, for instance, for the twentieth time at least, I thought of that mountain in the easterly part of our town (where no high hill actually is) which once or twice I had ascended, and often allowed my thoughts alone to climb. I now contemplate it in my mind as a familiar thought which I have surely had for many years from time to time, but whether anything could have reminded me of it in the middle of yesterday, whether I ever before remembered it in broad daylight, I doubt. I can now eke out the vision I had of it this morning with my old and yesterday forgotten dreams.

My way up used to lie through a dark and unfrequented wood at its base, — I cannot now tell exactly, it was so long ago, under what circumstances I first ascended, only that I shuddered as I went along (I have an indistinct remembrance of having been out overnight alone), — and then I steadily ascended along a rocky ridge half clad with stunted trees, where wild beasts haunted, till I lost myself quite in the upper air and clouds, seeming to pass an imaginary line which separates a hill, mere earth heaped up, from a mountain, into a superterranean grandeur and sublimity. What distinguishes that summit above the earthy line, is that it is unhandselled, awful, grand. It can never become familiar; you are lost the moment you set foot there. You know no path, but wander, thrilled, over the bare and pathless rock, as if it were solidified air and cloud. That rocky, misty summit, secreted in the clouds, was far more thrillingly awful and sublime than the crater of a volcano spouting fire.

This is a business we can partly understand. The perfect mountain height is already thoroughly purified. It is as if you trod with awe the face of a god turned up, unwittingly but helplessly, yielding to the laws of gravity. And are there not such mountains, east or west, from which you may look down on Concord in your thought, and on all the world? In dreams I am shown this height from time to time, and I seem to have asked my fellow once to climb there with me, and yet I am constrained to believe that I never actually ascended it. It chances, now I think of it,¹ that

¹ Now *first think of it*, at this stage of my description, which makes

it rises in my mind where lies the Burying-Hill. You might go through its gate to enter that dark wood,¹ but that hill and its graves are so concealed and obliterated by the awful mountain that I never thought of them as underlying it. Might not the graveyards of the just always be hills, ways by which we ascend and overlook the plain?

But my old way down was different, and, indeed, this was another way up, though I never so ascended. I came out, as I descended, breathing the thicker air. I came out the belt of wood into a familiar pasture, and along down by a wall. Often, as I go along the low side of this pasture, I let my thoughts ascend toward the mount, gradually entering the stunted wood (Nature subdued) and the thinner air, and drape themselves with mists. There are ever two ways up: one is through the dark wood, the other through the sunny pasture. That is, I reach and discover the mountain only through the dark wood, but I see to my surprise, when I look off between the mists from its summit, how it is ever adjacent to my native fields, nay, imminent over them, and accessible through a sunny pasture. Why is it that in the lives of men we hear more of the dark wood than of the sunny pasture?

A hard-featured god reposing, whose breath hangs about his forehead.

it the more singularly symbolical. The interlineations on the last page were made before this. [The interlineations referred to comprise the words "only that I shuddered . . . overnight alone" in the last paragraph.]

¹ Perchance that was the grave.

Though the pleasure of ascending the mountain is largely mixed with awe, my thoughts are purified and sublimed by it, as if I had been translated.

I see that men may be well-mannered or conventionally polite toward men, but skeptical toward God.

Forever in my dream and in my morning thought,

Eastward a mount ascends;

But when in the sunbeam its hard outline is sought,

It all dissolves and ends.

The woods that way are gates; the pastures too slope
up

To an unearthly ground;

But when I ask my mates to take the staff and cup,

It can no more be found.

Perhaps I have no shoes fit for the lofty soil

Where my thoughts graze,

No properly spun clues, nor well-strained mid-day oil,

Or must I mend my ways?

It is a promised land which I have not yet earned.

I have not made beginning

With consecrated hand, nor have I ever learned

To lay the underpinning.

The mountain sinks by day, as do my lofty thoughts,

Because I'm not high-minded.

If I could think alway above these hills and warts,

I should see it, though blinded.

It is a spiral path within the pilgrim's soul

Leads to this mountain's brow;

Commencing at his hearth he climbs up to this goal

He knows not when nor how.

We see mankind generally either (from ignorance or avarice) toiling too hard and becoming mere machines in order to acquire wealth, or perhaps inheriting it or getting it by other accident, having recourse, for relaxation after excessive toil or as a mere relief to their idle ennui, to artificial amusements, rarely elevating and often debasing. I think that men generally are mistaken with regard to amusements. Every one who deserves to be regarded as higher than the brute may be supposed to have an earnest purpose, to accomplish which is the object of his existence, and this is at once his work and his supremest pleasure; and for diversion and relaxation, for suggestion and education and strength, there is offered the never-failing amusement of getting a living, — never-failing, I mean, when temperately indulged in. I know of no such amusement, — so wholesome and in every sense profitable, — for instance, as to spend an hour or two in a day picking some berries or other fruits which will be food for the winter, or collecting driftwood from the river for fuel, or cultivating the few beans or potatoes which I want. Theatres and operas, which intoxicate for a season, are as nothing compared to these pursuits. And so it is with all the true arts of life. Farming and building and manufacturing and sailing are the greatest and wholesomest amusements that were ever invented (for God invented them), and I suppose that the farmers and mechanics know it, only I think they indulge to excess generally, and so what was meant for a joy becomes the sweat of the brow. Gambling, horse-racing, loafing, and rowdyism generally, after all tempt but

few. The mass are tempted by those other amusements, of farming, etc. It is a great amusement, and more profitable than I could have invented, to go and spend an afternoon hour picking cranberries. By these various pursuits your experience becomes singularly complete and rounded. The novelty and significance of such pursuits are remarkable. Such is the path by which we climb to the heights of our being; and compare the poetry which such simple pursuits have inspired with the unreadable volumes which have been written about art.

Who is the most profitable companion? He who has been picking cranberries and chopping wood, or he who has been attending the opera all his days? I find when I have been building a fence or surveying a farm, or even collecting simples, that these were the true paths to perception and enjoyment. My being seems to have put forth new roots and to be more strongly planted. This is the true way to crack the nut of happiness. If, as a poet or naturalist, you wish to explore a given neighborhood, go and live in it, *i. e.* get your living in it. Fish in its streams, hunt in its forests, gather fuel from its water, its woods, cultivate the ground, and pluck the wild fruits, etc., etc. This will be the surest and speediest way to those perceptions you covet. No amusement has worn better than farming. It tempts men just as strongly to-day as in the day of Cincinnatus. Healthily and properly pursued, it is not a whit more grave than huckleberrying, and if it takes any airs on itself as superior there's something wrong about it.

I have aspired to practice in succession all the honest arts of life, that I may gather all their fruits. But then, if you are intemperate, if you toil to raise an unnecessary amount of corn, even the large crop of wheat becomes as a small crop of chaff.

If our living were once honestly got, then it would be time to invent other amusements.

After reading Ruskin on the love of Nature, I think, "Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring." He there, to my surprise, expresses the common infidelity of his age and race. He has not implicitly surrendered himself to her. And what does he substitute for that Nature? I do not know, unless it be the Church of England. Questioning whether that relation to Nature was of so much value, after all! It is sour grapes! He does not speak to the condition of foxes that have more spring in their legs. The love of Nature and fullest perception of the revelation which she is to man is not compatible with the belief in the peculiar revelation of the Bible which Ruskin entertains.

Oct. 30. Another, the eighth, day of cloudy weather, though no rain to-day.

P. M. — Near the island, in my boat, I scare up a bittern (*Ardea minor*), and afterward half a dozen ducks, probably summer ducks. Saw a large flock of blackbirds yesterday.

There's a very large and complete circle round the moon this evening, which part way round is a faint rainbow. It is a clear circular space, sharply and mathematically cut out of a thin mackerel sky. You

see no mist within it, large as it is, nor even a star.

I find thousands of ants now apparently gone into winter quarters in my stumps, large black ones, red in the middle, partly dormant even this warm weather, yet with white grubs or young. Some are winged. . . .

The clintonia was perfectly at home there.¹ Its leaves were just as handsomely formed and green and disposed commonly in triangles about its stem, and its berries were just as blue and glossy as if they grew by some botanist's favorite walk in Concord. . . .

Oct. 31. Cloudy still and, in the afternoon, rain, the ninth day. The sugar maple and elm leaves are fallen, but I still see many large oaks, especially scarlet ones, which have lost very few leaves. Some scarlet oaks are pretty bright yet. The white birches, too, still retain many yellow leaves at their very tops, having a lively flame-like look when seen against the woods. River probably at its height, higher than before since spring.

I see some of those great chocolate-colored fungi already emptied. They burst open and expand into a saucer, and the dust blows out, leaving a distinct spongy bottom or base, often more than an inch thick. Like sponge to the eye, but how unlike it in its repugnance to water! Many small grubs, covered and disguised with the dust, are feeding on these fungi. What primitive and simple bread or manna these are!

Out of a natural curiosity, the growth of the woods,

¹ [In the Maine woods.]

we walked into the dark and musty log house there,¹ trampling down the rank herd's-grass three feet high which grew close up to the door, and the hunter followed us as if to see us put the house on as he had done. He behaved as if he were the latest comer, and was so absorbed in us that he did not appear to own the newly baked loaf of bread in a blackened Yankee baker on the counter by his side, and I thought at first it had lain over from another season.

In the Lee farm swamp, by the old Sam Barrett mill site, I see two kinds of ferns still green and much in fruit, apparently the *Aspidium spinulosum* (?) and *cristatum* (?).² They are also common in other swamps now. They are quite fresh in those cold and wet places and almost flattened down now. The atmosphere of the house is less congenial to them. In the summer you might not have noticed them. Now they are conspicuous amid the withered leaves. You are inclined to approach and raise each frond in succession, moist, trembling, fragile greenness. They linger thus in all moist clammy swamps under the bare maples and grape-vines and witch-hazels, and about each trickling spring which is half choked with fallen leaves. What means this persistent vitality, invulnerable to frost and wet? Why were these spared when the brakes and osmundas were stricken down? They stay as if to keep up the spirits of the cold-blooded frogs which have not yet gone into the mud; that the summer may die with decent and graceful moderation,

¹ [At Telos Lake. See *Maine Woods*, pp. 268, 269; Riv. 333, 334.]

² *Vide* page [117].

gradually. Is not the water of the spring improved by their presence? They fall back and droop here and there, like the plumes of departing summer, — of the departing year. Even in them I feel an argument for immortality. Death is so far from being universal. The same destroyer does not destroy all. How valuable they are (with the lycopodiums) for cheerfulness. Greenness at the end of the year, after the fall of the leaf, as in a hale old age. To my eyes they are tall and noble as palm groves, and always some forest nobleness seems to have its haunt under their umbrage. Each such green tuft of ferns is a grove where some nobility dwells and walks. All that was immortal in the swamp's herbage seems here crowded into smaller compass, — the concentrated greenness of the swamp. How dear they must be to the chickadee and the rabbit! The cool, slowly retreating rear-guard of the swamp army. What virtue is theirs that enables them to resist the frost?

If you are afflicted with melancholy at this season, go to the swamp and see the brave spears of skunk-cabbage buds already advanced toward a new year. Their gravestones are not bespoken yet. Who shall be sexton to them? Is it the winter of their discontent? Do they seem to have lain down to die, despairing of skunk-cabbagedom? "Up and at 'em," "Give it to 'em," "Excelsior," "Put it through," — these are their mottoes. Mortal human creatures must take a little respite in this fall of the year; their spirits do flag a little. There is a little questioning of destiny, and thinking to go like cowards to where the "weary shall

be at rest." But not so with the skunk-cabbage. Its withered leaves fall and are transfixed by a rising bud. Winter and death are ignored; the circle of life is complete. Are these false prophets? Is it a lie or a vain boast underneath the skunk-cabbage bud, pushing it upward and lifting the dead leaves with it? They rest with spears advanced; they rest to shoot!

I say it is good for me to be here, slumping in the mud, a trap covered with withered leaves. See those green cabbage buds lifting the dry leaves in that watery and muddy place. There is no can't nor cant to them. They see over the brow of winter's hill. They see another summer ahead.