

## IV

OCTOBER, 1858

(ÆT. 41)

Oct. 1. P. M. — To Hubbard's Close. Clintonia Maple Swamp is very fair now, especially a quarter of a mile off, where you get the effect of the light colors without detecting the imperfections of the leaves. Look now at such a swamp, of maples mixed with the evergreen pines, at the base of a pine-clad hill, and see their yellow and scarlet and crimson fires of all tints, mingled and contrasted with the green. Some maples are yet green, only yellow-tipped on the edges of their flakes, as the edges of a hazelnut bur. Some are wholly brilliant scarlet, raying out regularly and finely every way. Others, of more regular form, seem to rest heavily, flake on flake, like yellow or scarlet snow-drifts.<sup>1</sup>

The cinnamon ferns are crisp and sour [?] in open grounds.

The fringed gentians are now in prime. These are closed in the afternoon,<sup>2</sup> but I saw them open at 12 m. a day or two ago, and they were exceedingly beautiful, especially when there was a single one on a stem. They who see them closed, or in the afternoon only, do not suspect their beauty.

*Viola lanceolata* again.

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, pp. 261, 262; Riv. 320, 321.]

<sup>2</sup> No. Vide forward.

See larks in small flocks.

Was overtaken by a sudden gust and rain from the west. It broke off some limbs and brought down many leaves. Took refuge in Minott's house at last. He told me his last duck-shooting exploit for the fifth or sixth time. Says that Jake Potter, who died over eighty some dozen years since, told him that when he was a boy and used to drive his father Ephraim's cows to pasture in the meadows near Fair Haven, after they were mown in the fall, returning with them at evening, he used to hear the wildcats yell in the Fair Haven woods.

Minott tells of a great rise of the river once in August, when a great many "marsh-birds," as peeps, killdees, yellow-legs, etc., came inland, and he saw a flock of them reaching from Flint's Bridge a mile down-stream over the meadows, and making a great noise. Says the "killdees" used to be common here, and the yellow-legs, called "humilities," used commonly to breed here on the tussocks in the meadows. He has often found their nests.

Let a full-grown but young cock stand near you. How full of life he is, from the tip of his bill through his trembling wattles and comb and his bright eye to the extremity of his clean toes! How alert and restless, listening to every sound and watching every motion! How various his notes, from the finest and shrillest alarum as a hawk sails over, surpassing the most accomplished violinist on the short strings, to a hoarse and terrene voice or cluck! He has a word for every occasion; for the dog that rushes past, and partlet cackling in the barn. And then how, elevating himself and flapping his wings, he gathers

impetus and air and launches forth that world-renowned ear-piercing strain! not a vulgar note of defiance, but the mere effervescence of life, like the bursting of a bubble in a wine-cup. Is any gem so bright as his eye?

The elms are now great brownish-yellow masses hanging over the street. Their leaves are perfectly ripe. I wonder if there is any answering ripeness in the lives of those who live beneath them.<sup>1</sup> The harvest of elm leaves is come, or at hand.

The cat sleeps on her head! What does this portend? It is more alarming than a dozen comets. How long prejudice survives! The big-bodied fisherman asks me doubtingly about the comet seen these nights in the northwest, — if there is any danger to be apprehended from that side! I would fain suggest that only he is dangerous to himself.

*Oct. 2.* A dark and windy night the last. It is a new value when darkness amounts to something positive. Each morning now, after rain and wind, is fresher and cooler, and leaves still green reflect a brighter sheen.

Minott told me yesterday that he had never seen the seashore but once, and that was Noddle's Island in the War of 1812.

The garden is alive with migrating sparrows these mornings. The cat comes in from an early walk amid the weeds. She is full of sparrows and wants no more breakfast this morning, unless it be a saucer of milk, the dear creature. I saw her studying ornithology between the corn-rows.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 263; Riv. 322.]

<sup>2</sup> [Channing, p. 298.]

As I approached Perch Pool the other day, half a dozen frogs leaped into it and buried themselves in the mass of callitriche at the bottom. I stood looking for perch a minute or two, when one after another up came the frogs from out the callitriche, just as a piece of cork would rise by mere buoyancy to the surface; and then, by a distinct effort, they let go all, drop anchor, elevate or let float up their heels, and lie spread out on the surface. They were probably *Rana fontinalis*.

Sailed to Baker Farm with a strong northwest wind. Got a peck of the small long-bunched grapes now turned purple under Lee's Cliff. One or two vines bear very plentifully. The bunches are about six inches long by one and a half, and quite dense and cylindrical commonly. They are now apparently just in their prime, to judge from color. Considerably later than the *Vitis Labrusca*, but are not good.<sup>1</sup> A large chocolate-colored puffball "smokes."

Oct. 3. One brings me this morning a Carolina rail alive, this year's bird evidently from its marks. He saved it from a cat in the road near the Battle-Ground. On being taken up, it pecked a little at first, but was soon quiet. It staggers about as if weak on my window-sill and pecks at the glass, or stands with its eyes shut, half asleep, and its back feathers hunched up. Possibly it is wounded. I suspect it may have been hatched here. Its feet are large and spreading, qualifying it to run on mud or pads. Its crown is black, but chin white, and its back feathers are distinctly edged with white in streaks.

<sup>1</sup> Mother [made] a nice jelly of them afterward.

I compare my hazelnuts gathered some time ago. The beaked are pointed nuts, while the common are blunt; and the former are a much paler brown, also have a yellower and much sweeter meat.



A fringed gentian, plucked day before yesterday, at length, this forenoon, untwists and turns its petals partially, in my chamber.

Have noticed a very brilliant scarlet blackberry patch within a week.

The red maples which changed first, along the river, are now faded and partly fallen. They look more pink. But others are lit, and so there is more color than before. Some particular maple among a hundred will be of a peculiarly bright and pure scarlet, and, by its difference of tint and intenser color, attract our eyes even at a distance in the midst of the crowd.<sup>1</sup> Looking all around Fair Haven Pond yesterday, where the maples were glowing amid the evergreens, my eyes invariably rested on a particular small maple of the purest and intensest scarlet.

P. M. — Paddle about Walden.

As I go through the Cut, I discover a new locality for the crotalaria, being attracted by the pretty blue-black pods, now ripe and dangling in profusion from these low plants, on the bare sandy and gravelly slope of the Cut. The vines or plants are but half a dozen times longer (or higher) than the pods. It was the contrast of these black pods with the yellowish sand which betrayed them.

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 261; Riv. 320.]

How many men have a fatal excess of manner! There was one came to our house the other evening, and behaved very simply and well till the moment he was passing out the door. He then suddenly put on the airs of a well-bred man, and consciously described some arc of beauty or other with his head or hand. It was but a slight flourish, but it has put me on the alert.

It is interesting to consider how that crotalaria spreads itself, sure to find out the suitable soil. One year I find it on the Great Fields and think it rare; the next I find it in a new and unexpected place. It flits about like a flock of sparrows, from field to field.

The maples about Walden are quite handsome now. Standing on the railroad, I look across the pond to Pine Hill, where the outside trees and the shrubs scattered generally through the wood glow through the green, yellow, and scarlet, like fires just kindled at the base of the trees, — a general conflagration just fairly under way, soon to envelop every tree. The hillside forest is all aglow along its edge and in all its cracks and fissures, and soon the flames will leap upward to the tops of the tallest trees. About the pond I see maples of all their tints, and black birches (on the southwest side) clear pale yellow; and on the peak young chestnut clumps and walnuts are considerably yellowed.

I hear, out toward the middle, or a dozen rods from me, the plashing made apparently by the shiners, — for they look and shine like them, — leaping in schools on the surface. Many lift themselves quite out for a foot or two, but most rise only part way out, — twenty black points at once. There are several schools indulging in

this sport from time to time as they swim slowly along. This I ascertain by paddling out to them. Perhaps they leap and dance in the water just as gnats dance in the air at present. I have seen it before in the fall. Is it peculiar to this season?

Hear a hylodes peeping on shore.

A general reddening now of young and scrub oaks. Some chinquapin bright-red. White pines fairly begin to change. The large leaves of some black oak sprouts are dark-purple, almost blackish, above, but greenish beneath. See locust leaves all crisped by frost in Laurel Glen Hollow, but only part way up the bank, as on the shore of a lake.

*Oct. 4.* Going by Dr. Barrett's, just at the edge of evening, I saw on the sidewalk something bright like fire, as if molten lead were scattered along, and then I wondered if a drunkard's spittle were luminous, and proceeded to poke it on to a leaf with a stick. It was rotten wood. I found that it came from the bottom of some old fence-posts which had just been dug up near by and there glowed for a foot or two, being quite rotten and soft, and it suggested that a lamp-post might be more luminous at bottom than at top. I cut out a handful and carried it about. It was quite soft and spongy and a very pale brown — some almost white — in the light, quite soft and flaky; and as I withdrew it gradually from the light, it began to glow with a distinctly blue fire in its recesses, becoming more universal and whiter as the darkness increased. Carried toward a candle, it is quite a blue light. One man whom I met in the street was able

to tell the time by his watch, holding it over what was in my hand. The posts were oak, probably white. Mr. Melvin, the mason, told me that he heard his dog barking the other night, and, going out, found that it was at the bottom of an old post he had dug up during the day, which was all aglow.

P. M. (before the above). — Paddled up the Assabet. Strong north wind, bringing down leaves.

Many white and red maple, bass, elm, and black willow leaves are strewn over the surface of the water, light, crisp colored skiffs. The bass is in the prime of its change, a mass of yellow.

See B—— a-fishing notwithstanding the wind. A man runs down, fails, loses self-respect, and goes a-fishing, though he were never seen on the river before. Yet methinks his "misfortune" is good for him, and he is the more mellow and humane. Perhaps he begins to perceive more clearly that the object of life is something else than acquiring property, and he really stands in a truer relation to his fellow-men than when he commanded a false respect of them. There he stands at length, perchance better employed than ever, holding communion with nature and himself and coming to understand his real position and relation to men in this world. It is better than a poor debtors' prison, better than most successful money-getting.

I see some rich-weed in the shade of the Hemlocks, for some time a clear, almost ivory, white, and the boehmeria is also whitish. *Rhus Toxicodendron* in the shade is a pure yellow; in the sun, more scarlet or reddish.

Grape leaves apparently as yellow as ever. Witch-hazel apparently at height of change, yellow below, green above, the yellow leaves by their color concealing the flowers. The flowers, too, are apparently in prime. The leaves are often richly spotted reddish and greenish brown. The white maples that changed first are about bare. The brownish-yellow clethra leaves thickly paint the bank. *Salix lucida* leaves are one third clear yellow. The *Osmunda regalis* is yellowed and partly crisp and withered, but a little later than the cinnamon, etc.

Scare up two ducks, which go off with a sharp creaking *ar-r-week, ar-r-week, ar-r-week*. Is not this the note of the wood duck?

Hornets are still at work in their nests.

Ascend the hill. The cranberry meadows are a dull red. See crickets eating the election-cake toadstools. The Great Meadows, where not mown, have long been brown with wool-grass.

The hickories on the northwest side of this hill are in the prime of their color, of a rich orange; some intimately mixed with green, handsomer than those that are wholly changed. The outmost parts and edges of the foliage are orange, the recesses green, as if the outmost parts, being turned toward the sunny fire, were first baked by it.

Oct. 5. I still see large flocks, apparently of chip-birds, on the weeds and ground in the yard; without very distinct chestnut crowns, and they are divided by a light line. They are eating seeds of the *Amaranthus hybridus*, etc.

8 A. M. — I go to Hubbard's Close to see when the

fringed gentians open. They begin to open *in the sun* about 8.30 A. M., or say 9.

Chewink note still. Grackles in flocks. *Phebe* note of chickadee often these days.

Much green is indispensable for maples, hickories, birches, etc., to contrast with, as of pines, oaks, alders, etc. The former are fairest when seen against these. The maples, being in their prime, say yesterday, before the pines, are conspicuously parti-colored.

P. M. — To Easterbrooks Country.

White pines in low ground and swamps are the first to change. Some of these have lost many needles. Some on dry ground have so far changed as to be quite handsome, but most only so far as to make the misty glaucous (green) leaves more soft and indefinite. The fever-bush is in the height of its change and is a showy clear lemon-yellow, contrasting with its scarlet berries. The yellow birch is apparently at the height of its change, clear yellow like the black. I think I saw a white ash which was all turned clear yellowish, and no mulberry, in the Botrychium Swamp.

Looking on the Great Meadows from beyond Nathan Barrett's, the wool-grass, where uncut, is very rich brown, contrasting with the clear green of the portions which are mown; all rectangular.

The staghorn sumach apparently in the prime<sup>1</sup> of its change.

In the evening I am glad to find that my phosphorescent wood of last night still glows somewhat, but I im-

<sup>1</sup> [Queried in pencil.]

prove it much by putting it in water. The little chips which remain in the water or sink to the bottom are like so many stars in the sky.

The comet makes a great show these nights. Its tail is at least as long as the whole of the Great Dipper, to whose handle, till within a night or two, it reached, in a great curve, and we plainly see stars through it.<sup>1</sup>

Huckleberry bushes generally red, but dull Indian-red, not scarlet.

The red maples are generally past their prime (of color). They are duller or faded. Their first fires, like those of genius, are brightest. In some places on the edges of swamps many of their tops are bare and smoky. The dicksonia fern is for the most part quite crisp and brown along the walls.

Oct. 6. P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook and Flint's Pond.

Now, methinks, the autumnal tints are brightest in our streets and in the woods generally. In the streets, the *young* sugar maples make the most show. The street is never more splendid. As I look up the street from the Mill-Dam, they look like painted screens standing before the houses to celebrate a gala-day.<sup>2</sup> One half of each tree glows with a delicate scarlet. But only one of the large maples on the Common is yet on fire. The butternuts on the street are with, or a little later than, the walnuts. The three-thorned acacias have turned (one half) a pe-

<sup>1</sup> It finally reaches between one fourth and one third from the horizon to the zenith.

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 271; Riv. 332.]

cularly clear bright and delicate yellow, peculiar also for the smallness of the leaf. Asparagus-beds are a soft mass of yellow and green. Buttonwoods have no bright colors, but are a brownish and yellowish green, somewhat curled and crisp and looking the worse for the wear. Stand where half a dozen large elms droop over a house. It is as if you stood within a ripe pumpkin rind, and you feel as mellow as if you were the pulp.<sup>1</sup>

In Saw Mill Brook Path, and in most wood-paths, the *Aster undulatus* is now very fair and interesting. Generally a tall and slender plant with a very long panicle of middle-sized lilac or paler purple flowers, bent over to



one side the path. The *Rhus Toxicodendron* leaves are completely changed and of very various colors, pale yellow to deep scarlet and delicate. The leaf-stalks are commonly drooping, being bent short downward near the base in a peculiar manner. Several species of ferns are faded quite white in the swamp, — dicksonia and another, and some brakes, — for in moist woods and swamps they are preserved longer than in dry places. *Solidago latifolia* in bloom still, but always sparingly. Cinnamon ferns are generally crisped, but in the swamp I saw some handsomely spotted green and yellowish, and one clump, the handsomest I ever saw, perfect in outline, falling over each way from the centre, of a very neat drab color, quaker-like, fit to adorn an Oriental drawing-room. The evergreens seem positively greener, owing to the browning of other leaves. I should not suspect that the white birches had changed so much and

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, pp. 263; Riv. 323.]

lost so many leaves, if I did not see them against the unchanged pitch pines on the hillside. I notice *Hieracium paniculatum* and *scabrum* in dark, low wood-paths, turned a hoary white. The medeola leaves are a pale straw-color with a crimson centre; perhaps getting stale now. The tupelo at Wharf Rock is completely scarlet, with blue berries amid its leaves.

Leaves now have fairly begun to rustle under foot in wood-paths, especially in chestnut woods, scaring the ducks as you approach the ponds. And what is that common scent there so much like fragrant everlasting?

The smooth sumachs, which are in their prime, or perhaps a little past, are, methinks, the most uniform and intense scarlet of any shrub or tree. They stand perfectly distinct amid the pines, with slender spreading arms, their leaflets drooping and somewhat curled though fresh. Yet, high-colored as they are, from their attitude and drooping, like scarfs, on rather bare and dark stems, they have a funereal effect, as if you were walking in the cemetery of a people who mourned in scarlet.

Most *S. nemoralis*, and most other goldenrods, now look hoary, killed by frost.

The corn stands bleached and faded — quite white in the twilight — in the fields. No greenness there has the frost and sun left. Seen against the dark earth.

My phosphorescent wood still glows a little, though it has lain on my stove all day, and, being wet, it is much improved still.

Oct. 8. Fine pasture grass, seen in the sun, begins to look faded and bleached like the corn.

Strong northwest wind. The button-bushes and black willows are rapidly losing leaves, and the shore begins to look Novemberish.

Mulberry leaves of ash are apparently dulled.

Oct. 9. Cold and northwest wind still. The maple swamps begin to look smoky, they are already so bare. Their fires, so faded, are pale-scarlet or pinkish. Some *Cornus sericea* looks quite greenish yet. Huckleberry leaves falling fast.

I go to the Cliffs. The air is clear, with a cold northwest wind, and the trees beginning to be bare. The mountains are darker and distincter, and Walden, seen from this hill, darker blue. It is quite Novemberish. People are making haste to gather the remaining apples this cool evening.<sup>1</sup> Bay-wings flit along road.

Crows fly over and caw at you now.

Methinks hawks are more commonly seen now, — the slender marsh hawk for one. I see four or five in different places. I watch two marsh hawks which rise from the woods before me as I sit on the Cliff, at first plunging at each other, gradually lifting themselves as they come round in their gyrations, higher and higher, and floating toward the southeast. Slender dark motes they are at last, almost lost to sight, but every time they come round eastward I see the light of the westering sun reflected from the under sides of their wings.

Those little bits of phosphorescent wood which I picked up on the 4th have glowed each evening since, but required wetting to get the most light out of them.

<sup>1</sup> And for some time after.

This evening only one, about two inches long, shows any light. This was wet last evening, but is now apparently quite dry. If I should wet it again, it would, no doubt, glow again considerably.

Oct. 10. Sunday. P. M. — To Annursnack.

November has already come to the river with the fall of the black willow and the button-bush, and the fall and blackening of the pontederia. The leaves of the two former are the greater part fallen, letting in the autumn light to the water, and the ducks have less shelter and concealment.

As I go along the Groton road, I see afar, in the middle of E. Wood's field, what looks like a stone jug or post, but my glass reveals it a woodchuck, a great, plump gray fellow, and when I am nearly half a mile off, I can still see him nibbling the grass there, and from time to time, when he hears, perchance, a wagon on the road, sitting erect and looking warily around for approaching foes. I am glad to see the woodchuck so fat in the orchard. It proves that is the same nature that was of yore.

The autumnal brightness of the foliage generally is less, or faded, since the fading of the maples and hickories, which began about the 5th.<sup>1</sup> Oak leaves generally (perhaps except scarlet?) begin to wither soon after they begin to turn, and large trees (except the scarlet) do not generally attain to brilliancy.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently *Fringilla pusilla* yet.

<sup>1</sup> But the oaks became brighter. *Vide* 15th.

<sup>2</sup> [Queried in pencil.]



The *Salix humilis* leaves are falling fast in Wood Turtle Path (A. Hosmer's), a dry wood-path, looking curled and slaty-colored about the half-bare stems. Thus each humble shrub is contributing its mite to the fertility of the globe. I find the under sides of the election-cake fungi there covered with pink-colored fleas, apparently poduras, skipping about when it is turned up to the light.

The simplest and most lumpish fungus has a peculiar interest to us, compared with a mere mass of earth, because it is so obviously organic and related to ourselves, however mute. It is the expression of an idea; growth according to a law; matter not dormant, not raw, but inspired, appropriated by spirit. If I take up a handful of earth, however separately interesting the particles may be, their relation to one another appears to be that of mere juxtaposition generally. I might have thrown them together thus. But the humblest fungus betrays a life akin to my own. It is a successful poem in its kind. There is suggested something superior to any particle of matter, in the idea or mind which uses and arranges the particles.

Genius is inspired by its own works; it is hermaphroditic.

I find the fringed gentian abundantly open at 3 and at 4 P. M., — in fact, it must be all the afternoon, — open to catch the cool October sun and air in its low position. Such a dark blue! surpassing that of the male bluebird's back, who must be encouraged by its presence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inclosing it in a mass of the sphagnum near or in which it often grows, I carry it home, and it opens for several days in succession.

The indigo-weed, now partly turned black and broken off, blows about the pastures like the flyaway grass.

I find some of those little rooty tubers (?), now woody, in the turtle field of A. Hosmer's by Eddy Bridge.

Pulling up some *Diplopappus linariifolius*, now done, I find many *bright-purple* shoots, a half to three quarters of an inch long, freshly put forth underground and ready to turn upward and form new plants in the spring.

Oct. 11. P. M. — To Conantum.

The autumnal tints have not been so bright as usual this year,<sup>1</sup> but why it is hard to say. The summer has been peculiarly cool, as well as wet, and it may be that the leaves have been the more inclined to decay before coming to maturity. Also, apparently, many leaves are killed by the mere frosts before ripening, the locust for instance, — and the frost came early this year, — just as melons and squashes before they have turned yellow; *i. e.*, the leaves fall while they are still green.

I observe the small cornel or bunch-berry conspicuously green now, like wintergreen and evergreen in the woods, amid the changed or withered foliage of the forest floor. Yet I have seen it purple (?) in the winter, methinks.

See a small flock of cowbirds (?), with at any rate conspicuously *drab* head and shoulders, — the rest black. What were those slender sparrow-like birds which went off singly from the sides of Conantum hills, with a sharp *chit chit*, a peculiar note, flying *somewhat* like a goldfinch but not quite so ricochet? They are quite shy.

<sup>1</sup> ?? Perhaps they were later (?).

Witch-hazel, grape, smooth sumach, and common hazel are partly fallen,—some of the first-named wholly,—yet full of bloom. It is a cool seat under the witch-hazel in full bloom, which has lost its leaves! The leaves are greenish and brownish yellow. White pines are apparently ready to fall. Some are much paler brown than others. The small botrychium has shed pollen apparently within ten days. The *Viburnum Lentago* is generally a dull red on a green ground, but its leaves are yet quite fresh.

See a white-throat sparrow? <sup>1</sup>

Oct. 12. P. M. — Up Assabet.

Most exposed button-bushes and black willows are two thirds bare, and the leaves which remain on the former are for the most part brown and shrivelled. The balls stand out bare, ruddy or brown. The coarse grass of the riverside (*Phalaris*?) is bleached as white as corn. The *Cornus sericea* begins to fall, though some of it is green; and the *C. florida* at Island shows some scarlet tints, but it is not much exposed. I believe that this was quite showy at Perth Amboy.

There are many maple, birch, etc., leaves on the Assabet, in stiller places along the shore, but not yet a leaf harvest. Many swamp white oaks look crisp and brown.

I land at Pinxter Swamp. The leaves of the azaleas are falling, mostly fallen, and revealing the large blossom-buds, so prepared are they for another year. With man all is uncertainty. He does not confidently look forward to another spring. But examine the root of the

<sup>1</sup> Yes.

savory-leaved aster, and you will find the new shoots, fair purple shoots, which are to curve upward and bear the next year's flowers, already grown half an inch or more in earth. Nature is confident.

The river is lower than before this year, or at least since spring, yet not remarkably low, and meadows and pools generally are drier.

The oak leaves generally are duller than usual this year.<sup>1</sup> I think it must be that they are killed by frost before they are ripe. Some small sugar maples are still as fair as ever. You will often see one, large or small, a brilliant and almost uniform scarlet, while another close to it will be perfectly green.

The *Osmunda regalis* and some of the small or middle-sized ferns, not evergreens, in and about the swamps, are generally brown and withered, though with green ones intermixed. They are still, however, interesting, with their pale brown or cinnamon-color and decaying scent. Hickories are for the most part being rapidly browned and crisp. Of the oaks, the white is apparently the most generally red at present. I see a scarlet oak still quite green.

Brakes are fallen in the pastures. They lie flat, still attached to the ground by their stems, and in sandy places they blow about these and describe distinct and perfect circles there. The now fallen dark-brown brake lies on or across the old brake, which fell last year and is quite gray but remarkably conspicuous still. They have fallen in their ranks, as they stood, and lie as it were with a winding-sheet about them.

<sup>1</sup> Vide 15th.

Young sweet-fern, where it had been burned in the spring, is quite green. Exposed clethra is crisp and brown. Some bass trees are quite bare, others but partly. The hop hornbeam is in color and falling like the elm. Acorns, red and white (especially the first), appear to be fallen or falling. They are so fair and plump and glossy that I love to handle them, and am loath to throw away what I have in my hand.

I see a squirrel-nest of leaves, made now before the leaves are fallen.

I have heard of judges, accidentally met at an evening party, discussing the efficacy of the laws and courts, and deciding that, with the aid of the jury system, "substantial justice was done." But taking those cases in which honest men refrain from going to law, together with those in which men, honest and dishonest, do go to law, I think that the law is really a "humbug," and a benefit principally to the lawyers. This town has made a law recently against cattle going at large, and assigned a penalty of five dollars. I am troubled by an Irish neighbor's cow and horse, and have threatened to have them put in the pound. But a lawyer tells me that these town laws are hard to put through, there are so many quibbles. He never knew the complainant to get his case if the defendant were a-mind to contend. However, the cattle were kept out several days, till a Sunday came, and then they were all in my grounds again, as I heard, but all my neighbors tell me that I cannot have them impounded on that day. Indeed, I observe that very many of my neighbors do *for this reason* regularly turn their cattle loose on Sundays. The judges may discuss the question

of the courts and law over their nuts and raisins, and mumble forth the decision that "substantial justice is done," but I must believe they mean that they do really get paid a "substantial" salary.

Oct. 13. Rain, all day, more or less, which the cloudy and rather still yesterday threatened. Elm leaves thickly strew the street now and rattle underfoot, — the dark-brown pavement. The elms are at least half bare.

Oct. 14. P. M. — Sail to Ball's Hill.

The white maples are now apparently in their autumnal dress. The leaves are much curled and of a pale hoary or silvery yellow, with often a rosaceous cheek, though not so high-colored as two months ago. They are beginning to lose their leaves. Though they still hold on, they have lost much of their vitality.

On the top of Ball's Hill, nearly half-way its length, the red pine-sap, quite fresh, apparently not long in bloom, the flower recurved. As last year, I suspect that this variety is later than the yellowish one, of which I have seen none for a long time. The last, in E. Hubbard's wood, is all brown and withered. This is a clear and distinct deep-red from the ground upward, all but the edges and tips of the petals, and is very handsome amid the withered lower leaves, as it were the latest flower of the year. The roots have not only a sweet earthy, but decidedly checkerberry, scent. At length this fungus-like plant bursts red-ripe, stem and all, from the ground. Its deep redness reminds me of the deeper colors of the western sky after the sun has set, — a sort

of afterglow in the flowery year. I suspect that it is eminently an autumnal flower.

The tufts of *Andropogon scoparius*, which is common on the sandy shore under Ball's Hill and yet more on the hill just behind Reuben Brown's place, are now in their autumnal state, — recurved [?] culms adorned with white fuzzy spikes. The culms still are of a dull-red color, quite agreeable in the sun.

Paddling slowly back, we enjoy at length very perfect reflections in the still water. The blue of the sky, and indeed all tints, are deepened in the reflection.

Oct. 15. The balm-of-Gileads are half bare. I see a few red maples still bright, but they are commonly yellow ones.<sup>1</sup> White pines are in the midst of their fall. The Lombardy poplars are still quite green and cool. Large rock maples are now perhaps in their prime, — later than I supposed, — though some small ones have begun to fall. Some that were green a week ago are now changed. The large white oak by path north of Sleepy Hollow is now all red and at height. Perhaps half the white ash trees are yellow, and if the mulberry ones were dulled (?) a week ago, the yellow ones, methinks, are fresher or brighter than ever, but fast falling. White birches, though they have lost many leaves, are still, perhaps, as soft a yellow as ever, a fine yellow imbrication seen against the greener forest. They change gradually and last long.

P. M. — To Walden.

White oaks are rapidly withering, — the outer leaves.

<sup>1</sup> No.

<sup>2</sup> Rather the 18th, *q. v.*

The small black oaks, too, are beginning to wither and turn brown. *Small* red oaks, at least, and small scarlet ones, are apparently in their prime in sprout-lands and young woods. The large leaves of the red oaks are still fresh, of mingled reddish or scarlet, yellow, and green, striking for the size of the leaf, but not so uniformly dark and brilliant as the scarlet. The black oak is yellowish, a half-decayed or brownish yellow, and already becoming brown and crisp, though not so much so as the white. The scarlet is the most brilliant of the oaks, finely fingered, especially noticeable in sprout-lands and young woods. The larger ones are still altogether green, or show a deep cool green in their recesses.

If you stand fronting a hillside covered with a variety of young oaks, the brightest scarlet ones, uniformly deep, dark scarlet, will be the scarlet oaks; the next most uniformly reddish, a peculiar dull crimson (or salmon?) red, are the white oaks; then the large-leaved and variously tinted red oaks, scarlet, yellow, and green; and finally the yellowish and half-decayed brown leaves of the black oak.

The colors of the oaks are far more distinct now than they were before. See that white and that black oak, side by side, young trees, the first that peculiar dull crimson (or salmon) red, with crisped edges, the second a brownish and greenish yellow, much sun still in its leaves. Looking at a young white oak, you see two distinct colors, the brighter or glossier red of the upper surfaces of the inner leaves, as yet not much affected by frost and wind, contrasting with the paler but still crimson-

tinged under sides of the outmost leaves, blown up by the wind and perhaps partly crisped.<sup>1</sup>

I notice thorn bushes in sprout-lands quite bare. The lower leaves of huckleberry bushes and young wild black cherries fall first, but for the most part the upper leaves of apple trees. The high blueberries are still a bright or red scarlet. Goldenrods now pretty generally show their dirty-white pappus together with the still yellow scales, the last preserving some semblance of the flowers. Small hickories are the clearest and most delicate yellow in the shade of the woods. Cinnamon ferns in Clintonia Swamp are fast losing their leaflets. Some large dicksonias on the moist hillside there are quite green yet, though nearly prostrate in a large close patch slanting down the hill, and with some faded nearly white.

The yellow lily in the brook by the Turnpike is still expanding fresh leaves with wrinkled edges, as in the spring.

The *Salix humilis* falls, exposing its great cones like a fruit.

On the sandy slope of the cut, close by the pond, I notice the chips which some Indian fletcher has made. Yet our poets and philosophers regret that we have no antiquities in America, no ruins to remind us of the past. Hardly can the wind blow away the surface anywhere, exposing the spotless sand, even though the thickest woods have recently stood there, but these little stone chips made by some aboriginal fletcher are revealed. With them, too, this time, as often, I find the white man's arm, a conical bullet, still marked by the groove

<sup>1</sup> For shrub oak color *vide* Oct. 2d, 1857.

of the rifle, which has been roughened or rucked up like a thimble on the side by which it struck the sand. As if, by some [un]explained sympathy and attraction, the Indian's and the white man's arrowheads sought the same grave at last.

Oct. 16. P. M. — Sail up river.

There is less wind these days than a week or fortnight ago; calmer and more Indian-summer-like days. I now fairly begin to see the brown balls of the button-bush (which is about bare) reflected in smooth water, looking black against the sky, also the now withered straw-colored coarse grass (*Phalaris*); and the musquash-houses rapidly rising of late are revealed by the fall of the button-bush, willows, pontederia, etc.

In the reflection the button-bushes and their balls appear against the sky, though the substance is seen against the meadow or distant woods and hills; *i. e.*, they appear in the reflection as they would if viewed from that point on the surface from which they are reflected to my eye, so that it is as if I had another eye placed there to see for me. Hence, too, we are struck by the prevalence of sky or light in the reflection, and at twilight dream that the light has gone down into the bosom of the waters; for in the reflection the sky comes up to the very shore or edge and appears to extend under it, while, the substance being seen from a more elevated point, the actual horizon is perhaps many miles distant over the fields and hills. In the reflection you have an infinite number of eyes to see for you and report the aspect of things each from its point of view. The statue

in the meadow which actually is seen obscurely against the meadow, in the reflection appears dark and distinct against the sky.



The mikania, goldenrods, and *Andropogon scoparius* have now their November aspect, the former showing their dirty-white pappus, the last its white plumose hairs. The year is thus acquiring a grizzly look before the snows of winter. I see some *Polygonum amphibium*, front-rank, and *hydropiperoides* still.

At Clamshell the large black oaks are brownish and greenish yellow; the swamp white, at a distance, a yellowish green; though many of the last (which are small) are already withered pale-brown with light under sides.

Willows generally turn yellow, even to the little sage willow, the smallest of all our species, but a foot or two high, though the *Salix alba* hardly attains to more than a sheeny polish.<sup>1</sup> But one willow, at least, the *S. cordata*, varies from yellow to a light scarlet in wet places, which would be deeper yet were it not for its lighter under sides. This is seen afar in considerable low patches in the meadow. It is remarkable among our willows for turning scarlet, and I can distinguish this species now by this, *i. e.* part of it, in perhaps the wettest places; the rest is yellow. It is as distinctly scarlet as the gooseberry, though it may be lighter.

<sup>1</sup> Vide 18th.

The oak sprout-land on the hillside north of Puffer's is now quite brilliant red. There is a pretty dense row of white birches along the base of the hill near the meadow, and their light-yellow spires are seen against the red and set it off remarkably, the red being also seen a little below them, between their bare stems. The green white pines seen here and there amid the red are equally important.

The tupelo by Staples's meadow is completely bare. Some high blueberry is a deep dark crimson. In sprout-lands you see great mellow yellowish leaves of aspen sprouts here and there.

See a large flock of grackles steering for a bare elm-top near the meadows. As they fly athwart my view, they appear successively rising half a foot or a foot above one another, though the flock is moving straight forward. I have not seen red-wings [for] a long while, but these birds, which went so much further north to breed, are still arriving from those distant regions, fetching the year about.

Oct. 17. P. M. — Up Assabet.

There are many crisped but colored leaves resting on the smooth surface of the Assabet, which for the most part is not stirred by a breath; but in some places, where the middle is rippled by a slight breeze, no leaves are seen, while the broad and perfectly smooth portions next the shore will be covered with them, as if by a current they were prevented from falling on the other parts. These leaves are chiefly of the red maple, with some white maple, etc. To be sure, they hardly begin to con-

ceal the river, unless in some quiet coves, yet they remind me of ditches in swamps, whose surfaces are often quite concealed by leaves now. The waves made by my boat cause them to rustle, and both by sounds and sights I am reminded that I am in the very midst of the fall.

Methinks the reflections are never purer and more distinct than now at the season of the fall of the leaf, just before the cool twilight has come, when the air has a finer grain. Just as our mental reflections are more distinct at this season of the year, when the evenings grow cool and lengthen and our winter evenings with their brighter fires may be said to begin. And painted ducks, too, often come and sail or float amid the painted leaves.

Cattle are seen these days turned into the river meadows and straying far and wide. They have at length reached those "pastures new" they dreamed of.

I see one or two large white maples quite bare. Some late red maples are unexpectedly as fair and bright as ever, both scarlet and yellow, and still distance all competitors. There is no brighter and purer scarlet (often running into crimson) and no softer and clearer yellow than theirs now, though the greater part have quite lost their leaves. The fires I thought dulled, if not put out, a week ago seem to have burst forth again. This accounts for those red maples which were seen to be green while all around them were scarlet. They but bided their time. They were not so easily affected.

I distinguish one large red oak — the most advanced one — from black ones, by its *red* brown, though some

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 268; Riv. 328.]

others are yellow-brown and greenish. The *large* red oaks are about in their prime. Some are a handsome light scarlet, with yellow and green.<sup>1</sup>

The *Cornus sericea* is a very dark crimson, though it has lost some leaves. The *Salix lucida* lower leaves are all fallen (the rest are yellow). So, too, it is the lower leaves of the willows generally which have fallen first.

Saw a small hawk come flying over the Assabet, which at first I mistook for a dove, though it was smaller. It was blunt or round-shouldered like a dove. It alighted on a small elm and did not mind a wagon passing near by. Seen through my glass twenty rods off, it had a very distinct black head, with apparently a yellowish-brown breast and beneath and a brown back, — both, however, quite light, — and a yellowish tail with a distinct broad black band at the tip. This I saw when, in pruning itself, it was tilted or flirled up. Could it have been a sparrow hawk?

One reason why I associate perfect reflections from still water with this and a later season may be that now, by the fall of the leaves, so much more light is let in to the water. The river reflects more light, therefore, in this twilight of the year, as it were an afterglow.

Oct. 18. P. M. — To Smith's chestnut grove and Saw Mill Brook.

The large sugar maples on the Common are now at the height of their beauty. One, the earliest to change, is partly bare. This turned so early and so deep a scarlet that some thought that it was surely going to die.

<sup>1</sup> Vide 28th.

Also that one at the head of the Turnpike reveals its character now as far as you can see it. Yet about ten days ago all but one of these was quite green, and I thought they would not acquire any bright tints. A delicate but warmer than golden yellow is the prevailing color, with scarlet cheeks.<sup>1</sup> They are great regular oval masses of yellow and scarlet. All the sunny warmth of the season seems to be absorbed in their leaves. There is an auction on the Common, but its red flag is hard to be discerned amid this blaze of color. The lowest and inmost leaves next the bole are of the most delicate yellow and green, as usual, like the complexion of young men brought up in the house.

Little did the fathers of the town anticipate this brilliant success when they caused to be imported from further in the country some straight poles with the tops cut off, which they called sugar maple trees, — and a neighboring merchant's clerk, as I remember, by way of jest planted beans about them. Yet these which were then jestingly called bean-poles are these days far the most beautiful objects noticeable in our streets. They are worth all and more than they have cost, — though one of the selectmen did take the cold which occasioned his death in setting them out, — if only because they have filled the open eyes of children with their rich color so unstintedly so many autumns. We will not ask them to yield us sugar in the spring, while they yield us so fair a prospect in the autumn. Wealth may be the inheritance of few in the houses, but it is equally distributed on the Common. All children alike can

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* [pp. 226, 227].

revel in this golden harvest. These trees, throughout the street, are at least equal to an annual festival and holiday, or a week of such, — not requiring any special police to keep the peace, — and poor indeed must be that New England village's October which has not the maple in its streets. This October festival costs no powder nor ringing of bells, but every tree is a liberty-pole on which a thousand bright flags are run up. Hundreds of children's eyes are steadily drinking in this color, and by these teachers even the truants are caught and educated the moment they step abroad. It is as if some cheap and innocent gala-day were celebrated in our town every autumn, — a week or two of such days.

What meant the fathers by establishing this *living* institution before the church, — this institution which needs no repairing nor repainting, which is continually "enlarged and repaired" by its growth? Surely trees should be set in our streets with a view to their October splendor. Do you not think it will make some odds to these children that they were brought up under the maples? Indeed, neither the truant nor the studious are at present taught colors in the schools. These are instead of the bright colors in apothecary shops and city windows. It is a pity we have not more red maples and some hickories in the streets as well. Our paint-box is very imperfectly filled. Instead of, or besides, supplying paint-boxes, I would supply these natural colors to the young.<sup>1</sup>

I know of one man at least, called an excellent and peculiarly successful farmer, who has thoroughly re-

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 271-274, 277; Riv. 333-337, 340.]



paired his house and built a new barn with a barn cellar, such as every farmer seems fated to have, who has not a single tree or shrub of any kind about his house or within a considerable distance of it.

No annual training or muster of soldiery, no celebration with its scarfs and banners, could import into the town a hundredth part of the annual splendor of our October. We have only to set the trees, or let them stand, and Nature will find the colored drapery, — flags of all her nations, some of whose private signals hardly the botanist can read. Let us have a good many maples and hickories and scarlet oaks, then, I say. Blaze away! Shall that dirty roll of bunting in the gun-house be all the colors a village can display? A village is not complete unless it has these trees to mark the season in it. They are as important as a town clock. Such a village will not be found to work well. It has a screw loose; an essential part is wanting. Let us have willows for spring, elms for summer, maples and walnuts and tupelos for autumn, evergreens for winter, and oaks for all seasons. What is a gallery in a house to a gallery in the streets! I think that there is not a picture-gallery in the country which would be worth so much to us as is the western view under the elms of our main street. They are the frame to a picture, and we are not in the dilemma of the Irishman who, having bought a costly gilt picture-frame at an auction, found himself obliged to buy a picture at private sale to put into it, for our picture is already painted with each sunset behind it. An avenue of elms as large as our largest, and three miles long, would seem to lead to some admirable place,

though only Concord were at the end of it. Such a street as I have described would be to the traveller, especially in October, an ever-changing panorama.

A village needs these innocent stimulants of bright and cheery prospects to keep off melancholy and superstition. Show me two villages, one embowered in trees and blazing with all the glories of October, the other a merely trivial and treeless waste, and I shall be sure that in the latter will be found the most desperate and hardest drinkers. What if we were to take half as much pains in protecting them as we do in setting them out, — not stupidly tie our horses to our dahlia stems? They are cheap preachers, permanently settled, which preach their half-century, and century, aye, and century and a half sermons, with continually increasing influence and unction, ministering to many generations of men, and the least we can do is to supply them with suitable colleagues as they grow infirm.<sup>1</sup>

Children are now everywhere playing with the brown and withered leaves of elms and buttonwoods, which strew the streets and are collected into heaps in the sluiceways. In the woods even the little pea-vine turns a delicate yellow and is more conspicuous than ever, and in the now neglected gardens the asparagus-beds, greenish without, glow yellow within, as if a fire were bursting out there.

As I go down the Turnpike past Clintonia Swamp, I am struck by the magical change which has taken place in the red maple swamps, which just a fortnight ago were splendid masses of scarlet and yellow and crimson,


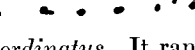
<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 275-278; Riv. 338-341.]

rising amid the yet green trees, — pines and oaks, etc., — like immense flower-beds on one side of the town, visible for miles, attracting the eyes of all travellers; now, — though a few late ones are bright as ever in some places, — all their splendor gone, wafted away, as it were, by a puff of wind, and they are the mere ghosts of trees, unnoticed by any, or, if noticed at all, like the smoke that is seen where a blaze is extinguished, or as the red clouds at evening change suddenly to gray and black, — so suddenly their glory departs, — desolate gray twigs.

The *Salix alba* is a light and silvery green. Since the red maples generally fell, the chestnuts have been yellowing, and the oaks reddening and yellowing. The chestnuts are now in their prime, though many leaves are fallen. The forest, which showed but little ripeness ten days ago, except about its edges and here and there as you looked down on it from a height, is now seen to be generally of a mellow brownish yellow, like perfectly ripe fruit, which we know to be more perfectly ripe for being a little specked. By the brook, witch-hazel, as an underwood, is in the height of its change, but elsewhere exposed large bushes are bare. *Rhus Toxicodendron* is fallen. The hornbeam is a greenish yellow, or yellow as it were dusted with green. The maple-leaved viburnum, now at its height, varies, with more or less of shade, from dark crimson through a delicate pale crimson to whitish. The sage willow, a light yellow, in prime, though hardly noticed amid the more conspicuous oaks. Larches have begun to change in water.

As I come through Hubbard's Woods I see the winter-

green, conspicuous now above the freshly fallen white pine needles. Their shining green is suddenly revealed above the pale-brown ground. I hail its cool unwithering green, one of the humbler allies by whose aid we are to face the winter.

Saw, October 14th, a snake at Ball's Hill, like a striped snake, but apparently yellow-spotted above and with a flatter head? Noticed a little snake, eight or nine inches long, in the rut in the road in the Lincoln woods. It was brown above with a paler-brown dorsal stripe, which was bounded on each side by a row of dark-brown or blackish dots one eighth inch apart, the opposite rows alternating thus:  beneath, light cream-color or yellow-ish white. Evidently Storer's *Coluber ordinatus*. It ran along in the deep sandy rut and would probably be run over there.

See larks, with their white tail-feathers, fluttering low over the meadows these days.

Minott was sitting outside, as usual, and inquired if I saw any game in my walks these days; since, now that he cannot go abroad himself, he likes to hear from the woods. He tried to detain me to listen to some of his hunting-stories, especially about a slut that belonged to a neighbor by the name of Billings, which was excellent for squirrels, rabbits, and partridges, and would always follow him when he went out, though Billings was "plaguy mad about it;" however, he had only to go by Billings's to have the dog accompany him. B. afterward carried her up country and gave her away, the news of which almost broke Minott's heart. He said he

could have cried when he heard of it, for he had dreamed of her several nights. She was a plaguy good dog for squirrels, etc., but her pups were none of them equal to herself. It was not time for squirrels now, because the leaves were not off enough. He used sometimes to take his old king's-arm on these excursions. It was heavy, but it was sure. His present gun has a flint lock and has often been repaired, and he said he did n't suppose it would fetch more than a dollar if put up at auction now. But he would n't take twenty dollars for it. He did n't want to part with it. He liked to look at it.

As leaves fall along the river and in the woods, the squirrels and musquash make haste to shelter and conceal themselves by constructing nests and cabins.

Oct. 19. A remarkably warm day. I have not been more troubled by the heat this year, being a *little* more thickly clad than in summer. I walk in the middle of the street for air. The thermometer says 74° at 1 P. M. This must be Indian summer.

P. M. — Ride to Sam Barrett's mill.

Am pleased again to see the cobweb drapery of the mill. Each fine line hanging in festoons from the timbers overhead and on the sides, and on the discarded machinery lying about, is covered and greatly enlarged by a coating of meal, by which its curve is revealed, like the twigs under their ridges of snow in winter. It is like the tassels and tapestry of counterpane and dimity in a lady's bedchamber, and I pray that the cobwebs may not have been brushed away from the mills which I visit. It is as if I were aboard a man-of-war, and this

were the fine "rigging" of the mill, the sails being taken in. All things in the mill wear the same livery or drapery, down to the miller's hat and coat. I knew Barrett forty rods off in the cranberry meadow by the meal on his hat.

Barrett's apprentice, it seems, makes trays of black birch and of red maple, in a dark room under the mill. I was pleased to see this work done here, a wooden tray is so handsome. You could count the circles of growth on the end of the tray, and the dark heart of the tree was seen at each end above, producing a semicircular ornament. It was a satisfaction to be reminded that we may so easily make our own trenchers as well as fill them. To see the tree reappear on the table, instead of going to the fire or some equally coarse use, is some compensation for having it cut down. The wooden tray is still in demand to chop meat in, at least. If taken from the bench to the kitchen, they are pretty sure to crack, being made green. They should be placed to season for three months on the beams in a barn, said the miller.

Hosmer says that the rill between him and Simon Brown generally runs all night and in the fore part of the day, but then dries up, or stops, and runs again at night, or it will run all day in cloudy weather. This is perhaps because there is less evaporation then. It would be interesting to study the phenomena of this rill, so slight that it does not commonly run all day at this season, nor quite run across the road. In the scale of rivers it is at the opposite extreme to the Mississippi, which overflows so widely and makes "crevasses," and yet it interests out of proportion to its size, and I have

no doubt that I might learn some of the laws of the Mississippi more easily by attending to it.

Standing on Hunt's Bridge at 5 o'clock, the sun just ready to set, I notice that its light on my note-book is quite rosy or purple, though the sun itself and its halo are merely yellow, and there is no purple in the western sky. Perhaps I might have detected a purple tinge already in the eastern sky, had I looked, and I was exactly at that distance this side the sunset where the foremost of the rosy waves of light roll in the wake of the sun, and the white page was the most suitable surface to reflect it.<sup>1</sup>

The lit river, purling and eddying onward, was spotted with recently fallen leaves, some of which were being carried round by eddies. Leaves are now falling all the country over: some in the swamps, concealing the water; some in woods and on hillsides, where perhaps Vulcan may find them in the spring; some by the wayside, gathered into heaps, where children are playing with them; and some are being conveyed silently seaward on rivers; concealing the water in swamps, where at length they flat out and sink to the bottom, and we never hear of them again, unless we shall see their impressions on the coal of a future geological period. Some add them to their manure-heaps; others consume them with fire. The trees repay the earth with interest for what they have taken from it. The trees are discounting.<sup>2</sup>

Standing on the east of the maples on the Common

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Sept. 24, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 268, 269; Riv. 329.]

I see that their yellow, compared with the pale lemon-yellow of the elms close by, amounts to a scarlet, without noticing the bright-scarlet cheeks.<sup>1</sup>

Some *Chenopodium album* are purple-stemmed now, like poke long ago; some handsomely striped, purple and green.

There is no handsomer shingling and paint than the woodbine at present, covering a whole side of some houses, viz. the house near the almshouse and the brick house.<sup>2</sup>

I was the more pleased with the sight of the trays because the tools used were so simple, and they were made by hand, not by machinery. They may make equally good pails, and cheaper as well as faster, at the pail-factory with the home-made ones, but that interests me less, because the man is turned partly into a machine there himself. In this case, the workman's relation to his work is more poetic, he also shows more dexterity and is more of a man. You come away from the great factory saddened, as if the chief end of man were to make pails; but, in the case of the countryman who makes a few by hand, rainy days, the relative importance of human life and of pails is preserved, and you come away thinking of the simple and helpful life of the man, — you do not turn pale at the thought, — and would fain go to making pails yourself. We admire more the man who can use an axe or adze skillfully than him who can merely tend a machine. When labor is reduced to turning a crank it is no longer amusing nor truly profit-

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 271; Riv. 333.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 276; Riv. 338.]

able; but let this business become very profitable in a pecuniary sense, and so be "driven," as the phrase is, and carried on on a large scale, and the man is sunk in it, while only the pail or tray floats; we are interested in it only in the same way as the proprietor or company is.

Walked along the dam and the broad bank of the canal with Hosmer. He thought this bank proved that there were strong men here a hundred years ago or more, and that probably they used wooden shovels edged with iron, and perchance home-made, to make that bank with, for he remembered and had used them. Thus rapidly we skip back to the implements of the savage. Some call them "shod shovels."

Oct. 20. Indian summer this and the 19th. I hear of apple trees in bloom again in Waltham or Cambridge.

P. M. — To White Pond.

Another remarkably warm and pleasant day, if not too hot for walking; 74° at 2 P. M. Thought I would like to see the glassy gleaming surface of White Pond. I think that this is the acme of the fall generally,<sup>1</sup> — not quite of sugar maples perhaps, — and it is this remarkable heat which this time, more than anything, methinks, has caused the leaves to fall.<sup>2</sup> It has suddenly perfectly ripened and wilted them, and now, with a puff of wind, they come showering down on land and water, making a sound like rain. They are thickly strewn under their respective trees in the Corner road, and wagons roll over

<sup>1</sup> Or say the 21st.

<sup>2</sup> There has been no frost for some days.

them as a shadow. Rain and frost and unusual heat, succeeded by wind, all have to do with the fall of the leaf. No doubt the leaves suddenly ripen to their fall in intense heat, such as this, just as peaches, etc., over softened and ripened, fall.<sup>1</sup> As I go through Hubbard's fields, I see that the cows have got into the shade of trees as in July. The black birch in this grove is in the midst of its fall, perfectly yellow.<sup>2</sup> But these delicately tinted leaves will wilt and fade even in your hat on your way home. Their colors are very fugacious. They must be seen on the tree or under it. You cannot easily carry this splendor home.

The tupelos appear to fall early. I have not seen one with leaves since the 16th.

It is so warm that even the tipulidæ appear to prefer the shade. There they continue their dance, balancing to partners, as it seems, and by a fine hum remind me of summer still, when now the air generally is rather empty of insect sounds. Also I see yellow butterflies chasing one another, taking no thought for the morrow, but confiding in the sunny day as if it were to be perpetual. There is a haze between me and the nearest woods, as thick as the thickest in summer. My black clothes are white with the gossamer they have caught in coming through the fields, for it streams from every stubble, though it is not remarkably abundant. Flocks of this gossamer, like tangled skeins, float gently through

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 265, 266; Riv. 325, 326.]

<sup>2</sup> 22d, 1855. As I pass this grove, I see the open ground strewn and colored with the yellow leaves which have been wafted from a large black birch.

the quiet air as high as my head, like white parachutes to unseen balloons.

From the higher ground west of the stump-fence field. The stagnant river gleams like liquid gossamer in the sun, and I can hardly distinguish the sparkle occasioned by an insect from the white breast of a duck. Methinks the jay, panting with heat, is silenced for a time.

Green leaves are doubtless handsome in their season, but now that we behold these ripe ones, we are inclined to think that the former are handsome somewhat as green fruits are, as green apples and melons. It would give our eyes the dysentery to look only on green leaves always. At this season each leaf becomes a laboratory in which the fairest and brightest colors are compounded.

There is one advantage in walking eastward these afternoons, at least, that in returning you may have the western sky before you.

Hickories, and some oaks even, are now overdone. They remind me of a loaf of brown bread perfectly baked in the oven, in whose cracks I see the yellowish inside contrasting with the brown crust. Some small red maples still stand yellow within the woods.

As I look over the smooth gleaming surface of White Pond, I am attracted by the sun-sparkles on it, as if fiery serpents were crossing to and fro. Yet if you were there you would find only insignificant insects.

As I come up from the pond, I am grateful for the fresh easterly breeze at last thickening the haze on that side and driving it in on us, for Nature must preserve her equilibrium. However, it is not much cooler.

As I approached the pond, I saw a hind in a potato-

field (digging potatoes), who stood stock-still for ten minutes to gaze at me in mute astonishment, till I had sunk into the woods amid the hills about the pond, and when I emerged again, there he was, motionless still, on the same spot, with his eye on me, resting on his idle hoe, as one might watch at the mouth of a fox's hole to see him come out. Perchance he may have thought *nihil humanum*, etc., or else he was transfixed with thought, — which is worth a bushel or two of potatoes, whatever his employer may say, — contrasting his condition with my own, and though he stood so still, civilization made some progress. But I must hasten away or he'll lose his day. I was as indifferent to his eyeshot as a tree walking, for I am used to such things. Perchance he will relate his adventure when he gets home at night, and what he has seen, though he did not have to light a candle this time. I am in a fair way to become a valuable citizen to him, as he is to me. He raises potatoes in the field for me; I raise curiosity in him. He stirs the earth; I stir him. What a power am I! I cause the potatoes to rot in the ground. I affect distant markets surely. But he shall not spoil my day; I will get in my harvest nevertheless. This will be nuts to him when the winter evenings come; he will tell his dream then. Talk of reaping-machines! I did not go into that field at all. I did not meddle with the potatoes. He was the only crop I gathered at a glance. Perchance he thought, "I harvest potatoes; he harvests me!"

W. W. introduced me to his brother in the road. The latter was not only a better-dressed but a higher-cultured man than the other, yet looking remarkably like him, —

his brother! In all cases we esteem rather the suggested ideal than the actual man, and it is remarkable that so many men have an actual brother, an improved edition of themselves, to whom we are introduced at last. Is he his brother, or his other self? I expect to be introduced to the ideal Mr. W. one of these days and then cut the acquaintance of the actual one.

It is remarkable that yellow and bright scarlet in the autumnal tints are generally interchangeable. I see it now even in the case of the scarlet oak, for here is a yellow one. Shade turns scarlet to yellow. So you would say that scarlet was intense yellow, more cooked, nearer the sun, like Mars. Red maple is either scarlet or yellow,<sup>1</sup> *Rhus Toxicodendron*, etc., etc. So with black scrub oaks, etc., etc.<sup>2</sup> Many plants which in the summer show a few red or scarlet leaves at length are all yellow only, as horehound now.<sup>3</sup> Others begin with yellow and end with a brilliant scarlet.<sup>4</sup>

The large crickets now swarm in dry paths, each at the mouth of its burrow, as I notice when crossing to Martial Miles's.

The broad hairy leaves or blades of the *Panicum clandestinum* are turned to a very dark purple in cultivated potato-fields.

A white-throated sparrow.

<sup>1</sup> Vide 15th, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> As meadow-sweet, tupelo even, high blueberry in shade, the 31st, red oak; and the russet leaves, as barberry, apple, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Diplopappus linariifolius* in shade yellow, in sun purple, last of October.

<sup>4</sup> Vide 24th. Some blue-stemmed goldenrod yellow, some purple, Nov. 10th.

On Money-Diggers' Hill-side, the *Andropogon scoparius* now stands in tufts two feet high by one wide, with little whitish plumes along the upper half of its reddish fawn-colored (?) culms. Now in low grounds the different species of bidens or beggar's-ticks adhere to your clothes. These bidens, tridens, quadridentis are shot into you by myriads of unnoticed focs.

Oct. 21. Cooler to-day, yet pleasant.

6 A. M. — Up Assabet.

Most leaves now on the water. They fell yesterday, — white and red maple, swamp white oak, white birch, black and red oak, hemlock (which has begun to fall), hop-hornbeam, etc., etc. They cover the water thickly, concealing all along the south side for half a rod to a rod in width, and at the rocks, where they are met and stopped by the easterly breeze, form a broad and dense crescent quite across the river.

On the hilltop, the sun having just risen, I see on my note-book that same rosy or purple light, when contrasted with the shade of another leaf, which I saw on the evening of the 19th, though perhaps I can detect a little purple in the eastern horizon.

The *Populus grandidentata* is quite yellow and leafy yet,<sup>1</sup> — the most showy tree thereabouts.

P. M. — Up Assabet, for a new mast, the old being broken in passing under a bridge.

Talked with the lame Haynes, the fisherman. He feels sure that they were not "suckers" which I saw rise to

<sup>1</sup> Vide 16th, 1857.

the shad-flies, but chivin, and that suckers do not rise to a fly nor leap out. He has seen a great many little lamprey eels come down the rivers, about as long as his finger, attached to shad. But never knew the old to come down. Thinks they die attached to roots. Has seen them half dead thus. Says the spawn is quite at the bottom of the heap. Like Witherell, he wonders how the eels increase, since he could never find any spawn in them.

The large sugar maples on the Common are in the midst of their fall to-day.

Oct. 22. P. M. — To Cliffs and Walden.

A thickly overcast yet thick and hazy day.

I see a Lombardy poplar or two yellowing at last; many leaves clear and handsome yellow. They thus, like the balm-of-Gilead and aspens, show their relation to the willows. Horse-chestnuts are yellow and apparently in prime. I see locusts are generally yellow but thinly leaved, and those at extremities.

Going by Farrar's field bought of John Reynolds, I examined those singular barren spots produced by putting on too much meadow mud of a certain quality. In some places the sod was entirely gone; there was no grass and only a small sandy desert with the yellowish *Fimbristylis capillaris* and sorrel on it. In most places this sand was quite thickly covered with sarothra, now withered and making a dark show at a distance, and sorrel, which had not risen from the surface. These are both sour-juiced plants. It was surprising how completely the grass had been killed.

I see the small narrow leaves of the *Aster dumosus* and also the yet finer ones of the *Diplopappus linariifolius* in wood-paths, turned a clear light-yellow. The sagittate leaves of the *Viola ovata*, too, now flat in the path, and the prettily divided leaves or fingers of the *V. pedata*, with purple petioles (also fallen flatter than usual?), are both turned a clear handsome light-yellow. Also the *V. cucullata* is turned yellow. These are far more conspicuous now than ever before, contrasted with the green grass; so that you do not recognize them at first on account of their very conspicuousness or brightness of color.

Many other small plants have changed now, whose color we do not notice in the midst of the general changing. Even the *Lycopodium complanatum* (evergreen) is turned a light yellow (a part of it) in its season, like the pines (or evergreen trees).

• I go up the hill from the spring. Oaks (except the scarlet), especially the small oaks, are generally withered or withering, yet most would not suspect it at a little distance, they have so much color yet. Yet, this year at least, they must have been withered more by heat than frost, for we have had very hot weather and little if any frost since the oaks generally changed. Many of the small scarlet ones are withered too, but the larger scarlet appear to be in their prime now. Some large white, black, and red are still pretty fresh.

It is very agreeable to observe now from an eminence the different tints of red and brown in an oak sprout-land or young woodland, the brownish predominating. The chocolate is one. Some will tell you that they prefer these more sober colors which the landscape wears



at present to the bright ones it exhibited a few days ago, as some prefer the sweet brown crust to the yellow inside. It is interesting to observe how gradually but steadily the woods advance through deeper and deeper shades of brown to their fall. You can tell the young white oak in the midst of the sprout-land by its light-brown color, almost like that of the russet fields seen beyond, also the scarlet by its brighter red,<sup>1</sup> but the pines are now the brightest of them all.

Apple orchards throughout the village, or on lower and rich ground, are quite green, but on this drier Fair Haven Hill all the apple trees are yellow, with a sprinkling of green and occasionally a tinge of scarlet, *i. e.* are russet.

I can see the red of young oaks as far as the horizon on some sides.

I think that the yellows, as birches, etc., are the most distinct this very thick and cloudy day in which there is no sun, but when the sun shines the reds are lit up more and glow.

The oaks stand browned and crisped (amid the pines), their bright colors for the most part burnt out, like a loaf that is baked, and suggest an equal wholesomeness. The whole tree is now not only ripe but, as it were, a fruit perfectly cooked by the sun. That same sun which called forth its leaves in the spring has now, aided by the frost, scaled up their fountains for the year and withered them. The order has gone forth for them to rest. As each tree casts its leaves it stands careless and free, like a horse freed from his harness, or like one who

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* 25th.

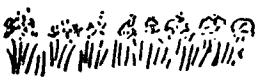
has done his year's work and now stands unnoticed, but with concentrated strength and contentment, ready to brave the blasts of winter without a murmur.

You get very near wood ducks with a boat nowadays.

I see, from the Cliffs, that color has run through the shrub oak plain like a fire or a wave, not omitting a single tree, though I had not expected it, — large oaks do not turn so completely, — and now is for the most part burnt out for want of fuel, *i. e.* excepting the scarlet ones. The brown and chocolate colors prevail there. That birch swamp under the Cliff is very interesting. The birches are now but thinly clad and that at top, its flame-shaped top more like flames than ever now. At this distance their bare slender stems are very distinct, dense, and parallel, apparently on a somewhat smoky ground (caused by the bare twigs), and this pretty thicket of dense parallel stems is crowned or surmounted by little cones or crescents of golden spangles.

Hear a cuckoo and grackles.

The birches have been steadily changing and falling for a long, long time. The lowermost leaves turn golden and fall first; so their autumn change is like a fire which has steadily burned up higher and higher, consuming the fuel below, till now it has nearly reached their tops.

These are quite distinct from the reddish misty maze below, if they are young trees (*vide* ) or the fine and close parallel white stems if they are larger. Nevertheless the topmost leaves at the extremities of the leaves [*sic*] are still green.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Nov. 3d.

I am surprised to find on the top of the Cliff, near the dead white pine, some small staghorn sumachs. (Mother says she found them on the hill behind Charles Davis's!) These are now at the height (?) of their change,<sup>1</sup> as is ours in the yard, turned an *orange* scarlet, not so dark as the smooth, which is now apparently fallen.<sup>2</sup> But ours, being in a shady and cool place, is probably later than the average, for I see that one at Flood's cottage has fallen. I *guess* that they may have been at height generally some ten days ago.

Near by, the *Aralia hispida*, turned a very clear dark red.

I see Heavy Haynes fishing in his old gray boat, sinking the stern deep. It is remarkable that, of the four fishermen who most frequent this river, — Melvin, Goodwin, and the two Hayneses, — the last three have all been fishermen of the sea, have visited the Grand Banks, and are well acquainted with Cape Cod. These fishermen who sit thus alone from morning till night must be greater philosophers than the shoemakers.

You can still pluck a variegated and handsome nose-gay on the top of the Cliff. I see a mullein freshly out, very handsome *Aster undulatus*, and an abundance of the little blue snapdragon, and some *Polygonum Persicaria*, etc., etc.

The black shrub oak on the hillside below the bear-berry fast falling and some quite bare. Some chinquapin there not fallen. Notice a chestnut quite bare. The leaves of the hickory are a very rich yellow, though they

<sup>1</sup> Vide the 5th, and the 15th, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> It is generally, but I see some (one or two) the 24th.

may be quite withered and fallen, but they become brown. Looking to Conantum, the huckleberries are apparently fallen.

The fields are now perhaps truly and most generally russet, especially where the blackberry and other small reddish plants are seen through the fine bleached grass and stubble, — like a golden russet apple. This occurs to me, going along the side of the Well Meadow Field.

Apparently the scarlet oak, large and small (not shrubby), is in prime now, after other oaks are generally withered or withering. The clumps of *Salix tristis*, half yellow, spotted with dark-brown or blackish and half withered and turned dark ash-colored, are rather interesting. The *S. humilis* has similar dark spots.

Hornets' nests are now being exposed, deserted by the hornets; and little wasp (?) nests, one and a half inches wide, on huckleberry (?) and sweet-fern (?). White pines have for the most part fallen. All the underwood is hung with their brown fallen needles, giving to the woods an untidy appearance.

C. tells of hearing after dark the other night frequent raucous notes which were new to him, on the ammannia meadow, in the grass. Were they not meadow-hens? Rice says he saw one within a week. Have they not lingered to feed in our meadows the late warm and pleasant nights?

The haze is still very thick, though it is comparatively cool weather, and if there were no moon to-night, I think it would be very dark. Do not the darkest nights occur about this time, when there is a haze produced by the Indian-summer days, succeeded by a moonless night?

These bright leaves are not the exception but the rule, for I believe that *all* leaves, even grasses, etc., etc., — *Panicum clandestinum*, — and mosses, as sphagnum, under favorable circumstances acquire brighter colors just before their fall. When you come to observe faithfully the changes of each humblest plant, you find, it may be unexpectedly, that each has sooner or later its peculiar autumnal tint or tints, though it may be rare and unobserved, as many a plant is at all seasons. And if you undertake to make a complete list of the bright tints, your list will be as long as a catalogue of the plants in your vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

Think how much the eyes of painters, both artisans and artists, and of the manufacturers of cloth and paper, and the paper-stainers, etc., are to be educated by these autumnal colors. The stationer's envelopes may be of very various tints, yet not so various as those of the leaves of a single tree sometimes. If you want a different shade or tint of a particular color, you have only to look further within or without the tree, or the wood.<sup>2</sup> The eye might thus be taught to distinguish color and appreciate a difference of tint or shade.

Oct. 23. P. M. — To Ledum Swamp.

One tells me that he saw geese go over Wayland the 17th.

Large wild cherries are half fallen or more, the few remaining leaves yellowish. Choke-cherries are bare; how long? Amelanchier bare. *Viburnum nudum* half

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 288, 289; Riv. 354, 355.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 273; Riv. 335.]

fallen or more; when wet and in shade, a light crimson. Hardhack, in low ground, where it has not withered too soon, inclines to a very light scarlet. Sweet-gale is not fallen, but a *very dull* yellowish and scarlet. You see in woods many black (?) oak sprouts, forming low bushes or clumps of green and dark crimson. (C. says they are handsome, like a mahonia.) The meadow-sweet is yellowish and yellow-scarlet. In Ledum Swamp the white azalea is a *dirty brown scarlet*, half fallen, or more. Panicle andromeda reddish-brown and half fallen. Some young high blueberry, or sprouts, never are a deeper or brighter crimson-scarlet than now. Wild holly fallen. Even the sphagnum has turned brownish-red on the exposed surfaces, in the swamp, looking like the at length blushing pellicle of the ripe globe there. The ledum is in (the midst of?) its change, rather conspicuous, yellow and light-scarlet and falling. I detect but few *Andromeda Polifolia* and *Kalmia glauca* leaves turned a light red or scarlet. The spruce is changed and falling, but is brown and inconspicuous.

A man at work on the Ledum Pool, draining it, says that, when they had ditched about six feet deep, or to the bottom, near the edge of this swamp, they came to old flags, and he thought that the whole swamp was once a pond and the flags grew by the edge of it. Thought the mud was twenty feet deep near the pool, and that he had found three growths of spruce, one above another, there. He had dug up a hard-pan with iron in it (as he thought) under a part of this swamp, and in what he cast out sorrel came up and grew, very rankly indeed.

I notice some late rue turned a very clear light yellow. I see some rose leaves (the early smooth) turned a handsome clear yellow, — and some (the *R. Carolina*) equally clear and handsome scarlet or dark red. This is the rule with it. Elder is a dirty greenish yellow and apparently mostly fallen. Beach plum is still green with some dull-red leaves, but apparently hardly any fallen. Butternuts are bare. Mountain-ash of both kinds either withered or bare.

Oct. 24. A northeast storm, though not much rain falls to-day, but a fine driving mizzle or "drisk." This, as usual, brings the geese, and at 2.30 P. M. I see two flocks go over. I hear that some were seen two or three weeks ago (?), faintly honking. A great many must go over to-day and also alight in this neighborhood. This weather warns them of the approach of winter, and this wind speeds them on their way. Surely, then, while geese fly overhead we can live here as contentedly as they do at York Factory on Hudson's Bay. We shall perchance be as well provisioned and have as good society as they. Let us be of good cheer, then, and expect the annual vessel which brings the spring to us without fail.<sup>1</sup>

P. M. — To Woodis Park over Hill.

The celtis has just fallen. Its leaves were apparently a yellow green. The sassafras trees are bare, — how long? — and the white ash apparently just bared. The locusts are bare except the tops, and in this respect those on the hills, at least, are as peculiar as birches. Some trees

<sup>1</sup> [Channing, p. 106.]

lose their lower leaves first, as birches and locusts; some the upper, as apples (though a few green leaves may remain on the very tips of the twigs) and generally maples, though the last fall fast. Hickories are two thirds fallen, at least.<sup>1</sup>

This rain and wind too bring down the leaves very fast. The yard is strewn with the yellow leaves of the peach and the orange and scarlet ones of the cherry. You could not spread a cloth but it would soon be strewn with them.

Thorns and balm-of-Gilead and red mulberries bare.

The brilliant autumnal colors are red and yellow and the various tints, hues, and shades of these. Blue is reserved to be the color of the sky, but yellow and red are the colors of the earth flower. Every fruit, on ripening, and just before its fall, acquires a bright tint. So do the leaves; so the sky before the end of the day, and the year near its setting. October is the red sunset sky, November the later twilight. Color stands for all ripeness and success. We have dreamed that the hero should carry his color aloft, as a symbol of the ripeness of his virtue. The noblest feature, the eye, is the fairest-colored, the jewel of the body. The warrior's flag is the flower which precedes his fruit. He unfurls his flag to the breeze with such confidence and brag as the flower its petals. Now we shall see what kind of fruit will succeed.

The very forest and herbage, the pellicle of the earth as it were, must acquire a bright color, an evidence of

<sup>1</sup> Apparently mocker-nut later.

its ripeness, as if the globe itself were a fruit on its stem, with ever one cheek toward the sun.

Our appetites have commonly confined our views of ripeness and its phenomena — color and mellowness and perfectness — to the fruits which we eat, and we are wont to forget that an immense harvest which we do not eat, hardly use at all, is annually ripened by nature. At our annual cattle-shows and horticultural exhibitions we make, as we think, a great show of fair fruits, destined, however, to a rather ignoble fate, fruits not worshipped for this chiefly; but round about and within our towns there is annually another show of fruits, on an infinitely grander scale, fruits which address our taste for beauty alone.

The scarlet oak, which was quite green the 12th, is now completely scarlet and apparently has been so a few days. This alone of our indigenous deciduous trees (the pitch pine is with it) is now in its glory. (I have not seen the beech, but suppose it past.<sup>1</sup> The *Populus grandidentata*<sup>2</sup> and sugar maple come nearest to it, but they have lost the greater part of their leaves.) Look at one, completely changed from green to bright dark-scarlet, every leaf, as if it had been dipped into a scarlet dye, between you and the sun. Was not this worth waiting for? Little did you think ten days ago that that cold green tree could assume such color as this. Its leaves still firmly attached while those of other trees are falling around it. I am the last to blush, but I blush deeper than any of ye. I bring up the rear in my red coat. The

<sup>1</sup> It is. *Vide* 25th.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* 16th, 1857. And *P. tremuloides* (*vide* Nov. 2d).

scarlet oaks, alone of oaks, have not given up the fight. Perchance their leaves, so finely cut, are longer preserved partly because they present less surface to the elements, and for a long time, if I remember rightly, some scarlet oak leaves will "hold out to burn."

Now in huckleberry pastures you see only here and there a few bright scarlet or crimson (for they vary) leaves amid or above the bare reddish stems, burning as if with condensed brightness, — as if the few that remained burned with the condensed brightness of all that have fallen. In sheltered woods you [see] some dicksonia still straw-color or pale-yellow. Some thoroughwort the same color. In the shade generally you find paler and more delicate tints, fading to straw-color and white. The deep reds and scarlets and purples show exposure to the sun. I see an intensely scarlet high blueberry — but where one leaf has overlapped another it is yellow — with a regular outline.

That large hornets' nest which I saw on the 4th is now deserted, and I bring it home. But in the evening, warmed by my fire, two or three come forth and crawl over it, and I make haste to throw it out the window.

Oct. 25. P. M. — To the Beeches.

I look at the willows by the causeway, east side, as I go, — *Salix discolor*, *Torreyana*, *rostrata*, and *lucida* are all almost quite bare, and the remaining leaves are yellow or yellowish. Those of the last the clearest and most conspicuous yellow. *S. pedicellaris* is merely yellowish, being rather green and not fallen. The *S. alba* at a distance looks very silvery in the light.

Now that the leaves are fallen (for a few days), the long yellow buds (often red-pointed) which sleep along the twigs of the *S. discolor* are very conspicuous and quite interesting, already even carrying our thoughts forward to spring. I noticed them first on the 22d. They may be put with the azalea buds already noticed. Even bleak and barren November wears these *gems*<sup>1</sup> on her breast in sign of the coming year. How many thoughts lie undeveloped, and as it were dormant, like these buds, in the minds of men!

This is the coolest day thus far, reminding me that I have only a half-thick coat on. The easterly wind comes cold into my ear, as yet unused to it. Yet this first decided coolness — not to say wintriness — is not only bracing but exhilarating and concentrating [to] our forces. So much the more I have a hearth and heart *within* me. We step more briskly, and brace ourselves against the winter.

I see some alders about bare. Aspens (*tremuliformis*) generally bare.

Near the end of the causeway, milkweed is copiously discounting. This is much fairer than the thistle-down. It apparently bursts its pods after rain especially (as yesterday's), opening on the under side, away from succeeding rains. Half a dozen seeds or more, attached by the tips of their silks to the core of the pod, will be blown about there a long time before a strong puff launches



<sup>1</sup> [Thoreau underscored this word doubtless to emphasize its etymology, — from the Latin *gemma*, a bud.]

them away, and in the meanwhile they are expanding and drying their silk.

In the cut the *F. hyemalis*, which has been here for a month, flits away with its sharp twitter amid the falling leaves. This is a fall sound.

At the pond the black birches are bare; how long?

Now, as you walk in woods, the leaves rustle under your feet as much as ever. In some places you walk pushing a mass before you. In others they half cover pools that are three rods long. They make it slippery climbing hills.

Now, too, for the different shades of brown, especially in sprout-lands. I see [three] kinds of oaks now, — the whitish brown of the white oak, the yellowish brown of the black oak, and the red or purplish brown [of the scarlet oak]<sup>1</sup> (if it can be called brown at all, for it is not faded to brown yet and looks full of life though really withered (*i. e.* the shrubs) for the most part, excepting here and there leading shoots or spring twigs, which glow as bright a scarlet as ever). There is no red here, but perhaps that may be called a lighter, yellowish brown,<sup>2</sup> and so distinguished from the black in color. It has more life in it now than the white and black, not withered so much. These browns are very pure and wholesome colors, far from spot and decay, and their rustling leaves call the roll for a winter campaign. How different now the rustling of these sere leaves from the soft, fluttering murmur of the same when alive! This

<sup>1</sup> [A loose sheet of Thoreau's manuscript, apparently of one of his lectures, in reproducing this passage supplies these missing words.]

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Oct. 31st.

sharp rustle warns all to go home now who are not prepared for a winter campaign.<sup>1</sup>

The scarlet oak shrubs are as distinct amid the other species as before they had withered, and it is remarkable how evenly they are distributed over the hills, by some law not quite understood. Nature ever plots against Baker and Stow, Moore and Hosmer.

The black scrub oak, seen side by side with the *white*, is yet lighter than that.

How should we do without this variety of oak leaves, — the forms and colors? On many sides, the eye requires such variety (seemingly infinite) to rest on.

Chestnut trees are generally bare, showing only a thin crescent of burs, for they are very small this year. I climb one on Pine Hill, looking over Flint's Pond, which, indeed, I see from the ground. These young chestnuts growing in clumps from a stump are hard to climb, having few limbs below, far apart, and they dead and rotten.

The brightest tint of the black oaks that I remember was some yellow gleams from half green and brownish leaves; *i. e.*, the tops of the large trees have this yellowish and green look. It is a mellow yellow enough, without any red. The brightest of the red oaks were a pretty delicate scarlet, inclining to a brownish yellow, the effect enhanced by the great size of the leaf.

When, on the 22d, I was looking from the Cliffs on

<sup>1</sup> The fields are russet now when the oaks are brown, especially where the red blackberry vine tinges [?], and continue so to be for a week or two, as Nov. 3d.

the shrub oak plain, etc., calling some of the brightest tints flame-like, I saw the flames of a burning — for we see their smokes of late—two or three miles distant in Lincoln rise above the red shrubbery, and saw how in intensity and brilliancy the real flame distanced all colors, even by day.

Now, especially, we notice not only the silvery leaves of the *Salix alba* but the silvery sheen of pine-needles; *i. e.*, when its old leaves have fallen and trees generally are mostly bare, in the cool Novemberish air and light we observe and enjoy the trembling shimmer and gleam of the pine-needles. I do not know why we perceive this more at this season, unless because the air is so clear and all surfaces reflect more light; and, besides, all the needles now left are fresh ones, or the growth of this year. Also I notice, when the sun is low, the light reflected from the parallel twigs of birches recently bare, etc., like the gleam from gossamer lines. This is another Novemberish phenomenon. Call these November Lights. Hers is a cool, silvery light.

In November consider the sharp, dry rustle of withered leaves; the cool, silvery, and shimmering gleams of light, as above; the fresh bright buds formed and exposed along the twigs; walnuts.

The leaves of the *Populus grandidentata*, though half fallen and turned a pure and handsome yellow, are still wagging as fast as ever. These do not lose their color and wither on the tree like oaks and beeches and some of their allies, and hickories, too, and buttonwood, neither do maples, nor birches quite, nor willows (except the *Salix tristis* and perhaps some of the next

allied),<sup>1</sup> — but they are fresh and unwilted, full of sap and fair as ever when they are first strewn on the ground. I do not think of any tree whose leaves are so fresh and fair when they fall.

The beech has just fairly turned brown of different shades, but not yet crisped or quite withered. Only the young in the shade of the woods are yet green and yellow. Half the leaves of the last are a light yellow with a green midrib, and are quite light and bright seen through the woods. The lower parts, too, of the large tree are yellow yet. I should put this tree, then, either with the main body of the oaks or between them and the scarlet oak. I have not seen enough to judge of their beauty.

Returning in an old wood-path from top of Pine Hill to Goose Pond, I see many goldenrods turned purple — all the leaves. Some of them are *Solidago caxia* and some (I think) *S. puberula*. Many goldenrods, as *S. odorata*, turn yellow or paler. The *Aster undulatus* is now a dark purple (its leaves), with brighter purple or crimson under sides. The *Viburnum dentatum* leaves, which are rather thin now, are drooping like the *Cornus sericea* (although fresh), and are mixed purplish and light green.

Oct. 26. The sugar maples are about bare, except a few small ones.

Minott remembers how he used to chop beech wood. He says that when frozen it is hard and brittle just like glass, and you must look out for the chips, for, if they strike you in the face, they will cut like a knife.

<sup>1</sup> Vide 27th inst.

He says that some call the stake-driver "belcher-squelcher," and some, "wollerkertoot." I used to call them "pump-cr-gor'." Some say "slug-toot."

The largest scarlet oak that I remember hereabouts stands by the penthorum pool in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery, and is now in its prime. I found the sap was flowing fast in it.<sup>1</sup> White birches, elms, chestnuts, *Salix alba* (small willows), and white maple are a long time falling. The scarlet oak generally is not in prime till now, or even later.

I wear a thicker coat, my single thick fall coat, at last, and begin to feel my fingers cool early and late.

One shopkeeper has hung out woollen gloves and even thick buckskin mittens by his door, foreseeing what his customers will want as soon as it is finger-cold, and determined to get the start of his fellows.

Oct. 27. P. M. — Sail to Fair Haven Pond.

A moderate northerly wind and pleasant, clear day. There is a slight rustle from the withered pontederia. The *Scirpus lacustris*, which was all conspicuously green on the 16th, has changed to a dull or brownish yellow. The bayonet rush also has partly changed, and now, the river being perhaps lower than before this season, shows its rainbow colors, though dull. It depends, then, on the river being low at an earlier period, say a month ago at least, when this juncus is in its full vigor, — though then, of course, you would not get the yellow! — that the colors may be bright. I distinguish four colors now, perfectly horizontal and parallel bars, as it were, six or

<sup>1</sup> Also in another Nov. 2d. It had a pleasant acorn-like taste.



eight inches wide as you look at the side of a dense patch along the shallow shore. The lowest is a dull red, the next clear green, then dull yellowish, and then dark brown. These colors, though never brilliant, are yet noticeable, and, when you look at a long and dense patch, have a rainbow-like effect. The red (or pinkish) is that part which has been recently submerged; the green, that which has not withered; the yellowish, what has changed; and the brown, the withered extremity, since it dies downward gradually from the tip to the bottom. The amount of it is that it decays gradually, beginning at the top, and throughout a large patch one keeps pace with another, and different parts of the plant being in different stages or states at the same time and, moreover, the whole being of a uniform height, a particular color in one plant corresponds exactly to the same in another, and so, though a single stalk would not attract attention, when seen in the mass they have this singular effect. I call it, therefore, the rainbow rush. When, moreover, you see it reflected in the water, the effect is very much increased.

The leaves of the *Salix cordata* are now generally withered and many more fallen. They are light-brown, and many remain on the twigs, so many that this willow and the *tristis* I think must be peculiar in this respect <sup>1</sup> as well as its [*sic*] turning scarlet. Some others, as the *sericea*, are still yellow and greenish and have not been touched by frost. They must be tougher.

At the east shore of Fair Haven Pond I see that clams have been moving close to the water's edge. They have

<sup>1</sup> Yes.

just moved a few feet toward the deeper water, but they came round a little, like a single wheel on its edge.

Alders are fallen without any noticeable change of color. The leaves of young oaks are now generally withered, but many leaves of large oaks are greenish or alive yet. Many of them fall before withering. I see some now three quarters bare, with many living leaves left. Is it not because on larger trees they are raised above the effect of frost?

We have a cool, white sunset, Novemberish, and no redness to warm our thoughts.

Not only the leaves of trees and shrubs and flowers have been changing and withering, but almost countless sedges and grasses. They become pale-brown and bleached after the frost has killed them, and give that peculiar light, almost silvery, sheen to the fields in November. The colors of the fields make haste to harmonize with the snowy mantle which is soon to invest them and with the cool, white twilights of that season which is itself the twilight of the year. They become more and more the color of the frost which rests on them. Think of the interminable forest of grasses which dies down to the ground every autumn! What a more than Xerxean army of wool-grasses and sedges without fame lie down to an ignominious death, as the mowers esteem it, in our river meadows each year, and become "old fog" to trouble the mowers, lodging as they fall, that might have been the straw beds of horses and cattle, tucked under them every night!

The fine-culmed purple grass, which lately we admired so much, is now bleached as light as any of them.

Culms and leaves robbed of their color and withered by cold. This is what makes November — and the light reflected from the bleached culms of grasses and the bare twigs of trees! When many hard frosts have formed and melted on the fields and stiffened grass, they leave them almost as silvery as themselves. There is hardly a surface to absorb the light.

It is remarkable that the autumnal change of our woods has left no deeper impression on our literature yet.<sup>1</sup> There is no record of it in English poetry, apparently because, according to all accounts, the trees acquire but few bright colors there. Neither do I know any adequate notice of it in our own youthful literature, nor in the traditions of the Indians. One would say it was the very phenomenon to have caught a savage eye, so devoted to bright colors. In our poetry and science there are many references to this phenomenon, but it has received no such particular attention as it deserves. High-colored as are most political speeches, I do not detect any reflection, even, from the autumnal tints in them. They are as colorless and lifeless as the herbage in November.

The year, with these dazzling colors on its margin, lies spread open like an illustrated volume. The preacher does not utter the essence of its teaching.

A great many, indeed, have never seen this, the flower, or rather ripe fruit, of the year, — many who have spent their lives in towns and never chanced to come into the country at this season. I remember riding with one such citizen, who, though a fortnight too late for the most

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 249; Riv. 305.]

brilliant tints, was taken by surprise, and would not believe that the tints had been any brighter. He had never heard of this phenomenon before.

October has not *colored* our poetry yet.

Not only many have never witnessed this phenomenon, but it is scarcely remembered by the majority from year to year.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to describe the infinite variety of hues, tints, and shades, for the language affords no names for them, and we must apply the same term monotonously to twenty different things. If I could exhibit so many different trees, or only leaves, the effect would be different. When the tints are the same they differ so much in purity and delicacy that language, to describe them truly, would have not only to be greatly enriched, but as it were dyed to the same colors herself, and speak to the eye as well as to the ear. And it is these subtle differences which especially attract and charm our eyes. Where else will you study color under such advantages? What other school of design can vie with this?<sup>2</sup> To describe these colored leaves you must use colored words. How tame and ineffectual must be the words with which we attempt to describe that subtle difference of tint, which so charms the eye? Who will undertake to describe in words the difference in tint between two neighboring leaves on the same tree? or of two thousand? — for by so many the eye is addressed in a glance. In describing the richly spotted leaves, for instance, how often we find ourselves using ineffectually words which

<sup>1</sup> [Excursions, p. 249; Riv. 305, 306.]

<sup>2</sup> [Excursions, p. 273; Riv. 335.]

merely indicate faintly our good intentions, giving them in our despair a terminal twist toward our mark, — such as *reddish*, *yellowish*, *purplish*, etc. We cannot make a hue of words, for they are not to be compounded like colors, and hence we are obliged to use such ineffectual expressions as reddish brown, etc. They need to be ground together.

Oct. 28. Cattle coming down from up country.

P. M. — Up Assabet to Cedar Swamp.

Here is an Indian-summer day. Not so warm, indeed, as the 19th and 20th, but warm enough for pleasure.

The majority of the white maples are bare, but others are still thickly leaved, the leaves being a greenish yellow. It appears, then, that they hold their leaves longer than our other maples, or most trees. The majority of them do not acquire a bright tint at all, and, though interesting for their early summer blush, their autumnal colors are not remarkable.

The dogwood on the island is perhaps in its prime,<sup>1</sup> — a distinct scarlet, with half of the leaves green in this case. Apparently none have fallen. I see yet also some *Cornus sericea* bushes with leaves turned a clear dark but dull red, rather handsome. Some large red oaks are still as bright as ever, and that is here a brownish yellow, with leaves partly withered; and some are already quite bare.<sup>2</sup> Swamp white oak withers apparently with the white. Some of both are still partly greenish, while others of both are bare.

<sup>1</sup> Vide Nov. 5th.

<sup>2</sup> Vide 31st.

How handsome the great red oak acorns now! I stand under the tree on Emerson's lot. They are still falling. I heard one fall into the water as I approached, and thought that a musquash had plunged. They strew the ground and the bottom of the river thickly, and while I stand here I hear one strike the boughs with force as it comes down, and drop into the water. The part that was covered by the cup is whitish-woolly. How munificent is Nature to create this profusion of wild fruit, as it were merely to gratify our eyes! Though incredible they are more wholesome to my immortal part, and stand by me longer, than the fruits which I eat. If they had been plums or chestnuts I should have eaten them on the spot and probably forgotten them. They would have afforded only a momentary gratification, but being acorns, I remember, and as it were *feed* on, them still. They are untasted fruits forever in store for me. I know not of their flavor as yet. That is postponed to some still unimagined winter evening. These which we admire but do not eat are nuts of the gods. When time is no more we shall crack them. I cannot help liking them better than horse-chestnuts, which are of a similar color, not only because they are of a much handsomer form, but because they are indigenous. What hale, plump fellows they are! They can afford not to be useful to me, nor to know me or be known by me. They go their way, I go mine, and it turns out that sometimes I go *after* them.

The hemlock is in the midst of its fall, and the leaves strew the ground like grain. They are inconspicuous on the tree.

The *Populus grandidentata* leaves are not all fallen yet. This, then, is late to lose its leaves, later, rather, than the sugar maple. Its leaves are large and conspicuous on the ground, and from their freshness make a great show there. It is later to fall than the *tremuliformis*,<sup>1</sup> as it was later to bloom.

I now begin to notice the evergreen ferns, when the others are all withered or fallen. The black willows have been bare some time. Panicked andromeda and winterberry are about bare. Pitch pines are falling; and white cedars are apparently in the midst of their fall, turning a pale brown and strewing the ground.

There are now but few bright leaves to be seen,<sup>2</sup> viz.:—

3. Pitch pine (though most is faded on the trees).
2. Larch.
1. Scarlet oak.
4. *Populus grandidentata*<sup>3</sup> (thin-leaved).<sup>4</sup>
6. A few yellow leaves on young willows, coniferous ones and *S. sericea* especially, still holding on to the extremity of the twigs.
8. Some crimson *Viburnum nudum* (thin-leaved).
9. Meadow-sweet.
10. Some *Viburnum dentatum*, greenish purple (thin-leaved, not conspicuous).
5. Some small white birch tops.
5. High blueberry (more common than last).

<sup>1</sup> No. Vide [p. 261].

<sup>2</sup> Vide the 9th and onward.

<sup>3</sup> Some on the 5th.

<sup>4</sup> (‡) *P. tremuloides*, thicker-leaved, but rather duller than last.

7. Some silky cornel.
14. Flowering dogwood.<sup>1</sup>
11. Gooseberry.
12. Common wild rose, yellow inclining to scarlet.
12. *Rosa Carolina* (clear dark red) and sweet-briar.
13. Staghorn sumach, in cool places and shaded.

Numbered in the order of their importance, most being either very thin-leaved now, or rare.

Oct. 29. 6.30 A. M. — Very hard frost these mornings; the grasses, to their finest branches, clothed with it.

The cat comes stealthily creeping towards some prey amid the withered flowers in the garden, which being disturbed by my approach, she runs low toward it with an unusual glare or superficial light in her eye, ignoring her oldest acquaintance, as wild as her remotest ancestor; and presently I see the first tree sparrow hopping there. I hear them also amid the alders by the river, singing sweetly, — but a few notes.

Notwithstanding the few handsome scarlet oaks that may yet be found, and the larches and pitch pines and the few thin-leaved *Populus grandidentata*, the brightness of the foliage, generally speaking, is past.

P. M. — To Baker Farm, on foot.

The *Salix Torreyana* on the right has but few leaves near the extremities (like the *S. sericea* of the river), and is later to fall than the *S. rostrata* near by. Its leaves turn merely a brownish yellow, and not scarlet like the *cordata*, so that it is not allied to that in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> Not yet at height. Vide Nov. 5.

(In *S. tristis* path about Well Meadow Field the *S. tristis* is mostly fallen or withered on the twigs, and the curled leaves lie thickly like ashes about the bases of the shrubs.)

Notice the fuzzy black and reddish caterpillars on ground.

I look north from the causeway at Heywood's meadow. How rich some scarlet oaks imbosomed in pines, their branches (still bright) intimately intermingled with the pine! They have their full effect there. The pine boughs are the green calyx to its [*sic*] petals. Without these pines for contrast the autumnal tints would lose a considerable part of their effect.

The white birches being now generally bare, they stand along the east side of Heywood's meadow slender, parallel white stems, revealed in a pretty reddish maze produced by their fine branches. It is a lesser and denser smoke (?) than the maple one. The branches must be thick, like those of maples and birches, to give the effect of smoke, and most trees have fewer and coarser branches, or do not grow in such dense masses.

Nature now, like an athlete, begins to strip herself in earnest for her contest with her great antagonist Winter. In the bare trees and twigs what a display of muscle!

Looking toward Spanish Brook, I see the white pines, a clear green, rising amid and above the pitch pines, which are parti-colored, glowing internally with the warm yellow of the old leaves. Of our Concord evergreens, only the white and pitch pines are interesting in their change, for only their leaves are bright and conspicuous enough.

I notice a barberry bush in the woods<sup>1</sup> still thickly clothed, but merely yellowish-green, not showy. Is not this commonly the case with the introduced European plants? Have they not European habits? And are they not also late to fall, killed before they are ripe?—*e. g.* the quince, apple, pear(?), barberry, silvery abele, privet, plum(?), white willow, weeping willow, lilac, hawthorn (the horse-chestnut and European mountain-ash are distincter yellow, and the Scotch larch is at least as bright as ours at same time; the Lombardy poplar is a handsome yellow (some branches early), and the cultivated cherry is quite handsome orange, often yellowish), which, with exceptions in parenthesis, are inglorious in their decay.

As the perfect winged and usually bright-colored insect is but short-lived, so the leaves ripen but to fall.

I go along the wooded hillside southwest of Spanish Brook. With the fall of the white pine, etc., the *Pyrola umbellata* and the lycopodiums, and even evergreen ferns, suddenly emerge as from obscurity. If these plants are to be evergreen, how much they require this brown and withered carpet to be spread under them for effect. Now, too, the light is let in to show them. Cold(?)-blooded wood frogs hop<sup>2</sup> about amid the cool ferns and lycopodiums.

Am surprised to see, by the path to Baker Farm, a very tall and slender large *Populus tremuliformis* still thickly clothed with leaves which are merely yellowish-green, later than any *P. grandidentata* I know. It must

<sup>1</sup> And elsewhere the same.

<sup>2</sup> Or earlier?

be owing to its height above frosts, for the leaves of sprouts are fallen and withered some time, and of young trees commonly. Afterwards, when on the Cliff, I perceive that, birches being bare (or as good as bare), one or two poplars — I am not sure which species — take<sup>1</sup> their places on the Shrub Oak Plain, and are brighter than they were, for they hold out to burn longer than the birch. The birch has now generally dropped its golden spangles, and those oak sprout-lands where they glowed are now an almost uniform brown red. Or, strictly speaking, they are pale-brown, mottled with dull red where the small scarlet oak stands.<sup>2</sup>

I find the white pine cones, which have long since opened, hard to come off.

The thickly fallen leaves make it slippery in the woods, especially climbing hills, as the Cliffs. The late wood tortoise and squirrel betrayed.

Apple trees, though many are thick-leaved, are in the midst of their fall. Our English cherry has fallen. The silvery abele is still densely leaved, and green, or at most a yellowish green. The lilac still thickly leaved; a yellowish green or greenish yellow as the case may be. Privet thickly leaved, yellowish-green.

If these plants acquire brighter tints in Europe, then one would say that they did not fully ripen their leaves here before they were killed. The orchard trees are not for beauty, but use. English plants have English habits here: they are not yet acclimated; they are early or late as if ours were an English spring or autumn; and no

<sup>1</sup> *Tremuloides*, bright at distance. *Vide* Nov. 2d.

<sup>2</sup> Shrub oaks withered. *Vide* Nov. 2d.

doubt in course of time a change will be produced in their constitutions similar to that which is observed in the English man here.

Oct. 30. Rain and wind, bringing down the leaves and destroying the little remaining brilliancy. The buttonwoods are in the midst of their fall. Some are bare. They are late among the trees of the street.

I see that Prichard's mountain-ash (European) has lately put forth new leaves when all the old have fallen, and they are four or five inches long! But the American has not started. It knows better.

Beware how you meddle with a buttonwood stump. I remember when one undertook to dig a large one up that he might set a front-yard post on the spot, but I forget how much it cost, or how many weeks one man was about it before it was all cut up and removed. It would have been better to set the post *in* it. One man who has just cut down a buttonwood had it disposed of, all but eight feet of the butt, when a neighbor offered him five cents for it, and though it contained a cord of wood, he, as he says, "took him up mighty quick," for if a man's time were of value he could not afford to be splitting it.

In Rees's Cyclopædia, under the head of the Fall of the Leaf, mention is made of the leaves at this season "changing their healthy green color to more or less of a yellow, sometimes a reddish hue." And after speaking of the remarkable brilliancy of the American forests, he says that some European plants allied to the brilliant American ones assume bright hues in the fall.

What is commonly described as the autumnal tints of the oaks generally, is for the most part those tints or hues which they have when partially withered, corresponding to those which those of more truly deciduous trees have when freshly fallen, and not merely the tints of their maturity, as in the maple, etc. It may account for this to say that the scarlet oak especially withers very slowly and gradually, and retains some brightness to the middle of November, and large red and black and swamp white oaks, especially the two last (or excepting some of the first), are not commonly so interesting in the maturity of their leaves as before or after.

Oct. 31. P. M. — To Conantum.

Our currants bare; how long?

The Italian poplars are now a dull greenish yellow, not nearly so fair as the few leaves that had turned some time ago. Some silvery abeles are the same color.<sup>1</sup> I go over the Hubbard Bridge causeway. The young *Salix alba* osiers are just bare, or nearly so, and the yellow twigs accordingly begin to show.

It is a fine day, Indian-summer-like, and there is considerable gossamer on the causeway and blowing from all trees. That warm weather of the 19th and 20th was, methinks, the same sort of weather with the most pleasant in November (which last alone some allow to be Indian summer), only more to be expected.

I see many red oaks, thickly leaved, fresh and at the height of their tint. These are pretty clear yellow. It is much clearer yellow than any black oak, but some others

<sup>1</sup> But both turn more yellow.

are about bare. These and scarlet oaks, which are yet more numerous, are the only oaks not withered that I notice to-day, except one middle-sized white oak probably protected from frost under Lee's Cliff.

Between the absolutely deciduous plants and the evergreens are all degrees, not only those which retain their withered leaves all winter, but those, commonly called evergreen, which, though slow to change, yet acquire at last a ruddy color while they keep their leaves, as the lambkill and water andromeda (?).

Get a good sight on Conantum of a sparrow (such as I have seen in flocks some time), which utters a sharp *te-te-te* quickly repeated as it flies, sitting on a wall three or four rods off. I see that it is rather long and slender, is perhaps dusky-ash above with some black backward; has a pretty long black bill, a white ring about eye, white chin and line under cheek, a black (or dark) spotted breast and dirty cream-color beneath; legs long and slender and perhaps reddish-brown, two faint light bars on wings; but, what distinguishes it more, it keeps gently jerking or tossing its tail as it sits, and when a flock flies over you see the tails distinctly black beneath. Though I detected no yellow, yet I think from the note that it must be the shore lark (such as I saw March 24th) in their fall plumage. They are a common bird at this season, I think.<sup>1</sup>

I see a middle-sized red oak side by side with a black one under Lee's Cliff. The first is still pretty fresh, the latter completely withered. The withered leaves of the first are flat, apparently thin, and a yellowish brown;

<sup>1</sup> [Titlarks?]

those of the black are much curled and a very different and dark brown, and look thicker.

Barberry generally is thickly leaved and only somewhat yellowish or scarlet, say russet.

I tasted some of the very small grapes on Blackberry Steep, such as I had a jelly made of. Though shrivelled, and therefore ripe, they are very acid and inedible.

The slippery elm has a few scattered leaves on it, while the common close by is bare. So I think the former is later to fall. You may well call it bare.

The cedar at Lee's Cliff has apparently just fallen, — almost.

As I sit on the Cliff there, the sun is now getting low, and the woods in Lincoln south and east of me are lit up by its more level rays, and there is brought out a more brilliant redness in the scarlet oaks, scattered so equally over the forest, than you would have believed was in them. Every tree of this species which is visible in these directions, even to the horizon, now stands out distinctly red. Some great ones lift their red backs high above the woods near the Codman place, like huge roses with a myriad fine petals, and some more slender ones, in a small grove of white pines on Pine Hill in the east, in the very horizon, alternating with the pines on the edge of the grove and shouldering them with their red coats, — an intense, burning red which would lose some of its strength, methinks, with every step you might take toward them, — look like soldiers in red amid hunters in green. This time it is *Lincoln* green, too. Until the sun thus lit them up you would not have believed that there were so many redecoats in the forest army. Looking

westward, their colors are lost in a blaze of light, but in other directions the whole forest is a flower-garden, in which these late roses burn, alternating with green, while the so-called "gardeners," working here and there, perchance, beneath, with spade and water-pot, see only a few little asters amid withered leaves, for the shade that lurks amid their foliage does not report itself at this distance. They are unanimously red. The focus of their reflected [color] is in the atmosphere far on this side. Every such tree, especially in the horizon, becomes a nucleus of red, as it were, where, with the declining sun, the redness grows and glows like a cloud. It only has some comparatively dull-red leaves for a nucleus and to start it, and it becomes an intense scarlet or red mist, or fire which finds fuel for itself in the very atmosphere. I have no doubt that you would be disappointed in the brilliancy of those trees if you were to walk to them. You see a redder tree than exists. It is a strong red, which gathers strength from the air on its way to your eye. It is partly borrowed fire, borrowed of the sun. The scarlet oak asks the clear sky and the brightness of the Indian summer. These bring out its color. If the sun goes into a cloud they become indistinct.

These are my China asters, my late garden flowers. It costs me nothing for a gardener. The falling leaves, all over the forest, are protecting the roots of my plants. Only look at what is to be seen, and you will have garden enough, without deepening the soil of your yard. We have only to elevate our view a little to see the whole forest as a garden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, pp. 282-284; Riv. 346-349.]



To my surprise, the only yellow that I see amid the universal red and green and chocolate is one large tree-top in the forest, a mile off in the east, across the pond, which by its form and color I know to be my late acquaintance the tall aspen (*tremuliformis*) of the 29th. It, too, is far more yellow at this distance than it was close at hand, and so are the Lombardy poplars in our streets. The *Salix alba*, too, looks yellower at a distance now. Their dull-brown and green colors do not report themselves so far, while the yellow *crescit eundo*, and we see the sun reflected in it. After walking for a couple of hours the other day through the woods, I came to the base of a tall aspen, which I do not remember to have seen before, standing in the midst of the woods in the next town, still thickly leaved and turned to greenish yellow. It is perhaps the largest of its species that I know. It was by merest accident that I stumbled on it, and if I had been sent to find it, I should have thought it to be, as we say, like looking for a needle in a haymow. All summer, and it chances for so many years, it has been concealed to me; but now, walking in a different direction, to the same hilltop from which I saw the scarlet oaks, and looking off just before sunset, when all other trees visible for miles around are reddish or green, I distinguish my new acquaintance by its yellow color. Such is its fame, at last, and reward for living in that solitude and obscurity. It is the most distinct tree in all the landscape, and would be the cynosure of all eyes here. Thus it plays its part in the choir. I made a minute of its locality, glad to know where so large an aspen grew. Then it seemed peculiar in its solitude and

obscurity. It seemed the obscurest of trees. Now it was seen to be equally peculiar for its distinctness and prominence. Each tree (in October) runs up its flag and we know [what] colors it sails under. The sailor sails, and the soldier marches, under a color which will report his virtue farthest, and the ship's "private signals" must be such as can be distinguished at the greatest distance. The eye, which distinguishes and appreciates color, is itself the seat of color in the human body.

It is as if it recognized me too, and gladly, coming half-way to meet me, and now the acquaintance thus propitiously formed will, I trust, be permanent.

Of the three (?) mocker-nuts on Conantum top only the southernmost is bare, the rest are thickly leaved yet. The *Viburnum Lentago* is about bare.

That hour-glass apple shrub near the old Conantum house is full of small yellow fruit. Thus it is with them. By the end of some October, when their leaves have fallen, you see them glowing with an abundance of wild fruit, which the cows cannot get at over the bushy and thorny hedge which surrounds them.<sup>1</sup> Such is their pursuit of knowledge through difficulties.<sup>2</sup> Though they may have taken the hour-glass form, think not that their sands are run out. So is it with the rude, neglected genius from amid the country hills; he suffers many a check at first, browsed on by fate, springing in but a rocky pasture, the nursery of other creatures there, and he grows broad and strong, and scraggy and thorny, hopelessly stunted, you would say, and not like a sleek orchard tree

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 306; Riv. 376.]

<sup>2</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 307; Riv. 377.]

all whose forces are husbanded and the precious early years not lost, and when at first, within this rind and hedge, the man shoots up, you see the thorny scrub of his youth about him, and he walks like an hour-glass, aspiring above, it is true, but held down and impeded by the rubbish of old difficulties overcome, and you seem to see his sands running out. But at length, thanks to his rude culture, he attains to his full stature, and every vestige of the thorny hedge which clung to his youth disappears, and he bears golden crops of Porters or Baldwins, whose fame will spread through all orchards for generations to come, while that thrifty orchard tree which was his competitor will, perchance, have long since ceased to bear its engrafted fruit and decayed.<sup>1</sup>

The beach plum is withering green, say with the apple trees, which are half of them bare. Larches fairly begun to fall; so they are at height.

<sup>1</sup> [See *Excursions*, p. 307; Riv. 377.]