V

NOVEMBER, 1858

(ÆT. 41)

Nov. 1. P. M. — To Poplar Hill.

Many black oaks are bare in Sleepy Hollow. Now you easily detect where larches grow, *viz.* in the swamp north of Sleepy Hollow. They are far more distinct than at any other season. They are very regular soft yellow pyramids, as I see them from the Poplar Hill. Unlike the pines there is no greenness left to alternate with their yellow, but they are a uniform yellow, and they differ from other yellow trees in the generally regular pyramidal outline, *i. e.* these middling-sized trees. These trees now cannot easily be mistaken for any other, because they are the only conspicuously yellow trees now left in the woods, except a very few aspens of both kinds, not one in a square mile, and these are of a very different hue as well as form, the birches, etc., having fallen. The larch, apparently, will soon be the only yellow tree left in the woods. It is almost quite alone now. But in the summer it is not easy to distinguish them either by their color or form at a distance.

If you wish to count the scarlet oaks, do it now. Stand on a hilltop in the woods, when the sun is an hour high and the sky is clear, and every one within range of your vision will be revealed. You might live

to the age of Methusaleh and never find a tithe of them otherwise.[1]

We are not wont to see our dooryard as a part of the earth's surface. The gardener does not perceive that some ridge or mound in his garden or lawn is related to yonder hill or the still more distant mountain in the horizon, is, perchance, a humble spur of the last. We are wont to look on the earth still as a sort of chaos, formless and lumpish. I notice from this height that the curving moraine forming the west side of Sleepy Hollow is one of several arms or fingers which stretch away from the hill range that runs down the north side of the Boston road, turning northward at the Court-House; that this finger-like moraine is continued northward by itself almost to the river, and points plainly enough to Ponkawtasset Hill on the other side, even if the Poplar Hill range itself did not indicate this connection; and so the sloping cemetery lots on the west of Sleepy Hollow are related to the distant Ponkawtasset. The smooth-shaven knoll in the lawn, on which the children swing, is, perchance, only a spur of some mountains of the moon, which no traveller has ever reached, heaved up by the same impulse.

The hawthorn is but three-quarters fallen and is a greenish yellow or yellowish green.

I hear in the fields just before sundown a shriller chirping of a few crickets, reminding me that their song is getting thin and will soon be quenched.

As I stood on the south bank of the river a hundred rods southwest of John Flint's, the sun being just about to enter a long and broad dark-blue or slate-colored

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 283; Riv. 348.]

cloud in the horizon, a cold, dark bank, I saw that the reflection of Flint's white house in the river, prolonged by a slight ripple so as to reach the reflected cloud, was a very distinct and luminous light blue.

As the afternoons grow shorter, and the early evening drives us home to complete our chores, we are reminded of the shortness of life, and become more pensive, at least in this twilight of the year. We are prompted to make haste and finish our work before the night comes. I leaned over a rail in the twilight on the Walden road, waiting for the evening mail to be distributed, when such thoughts visited me. I seemed to recognize the November evening as a familiar thing come round again, and yet I could hardly tell whether I had ever known it or only divined it. The November twilights just begun! It appeared like a part of a panorama at which I sat spectator, a part with which I was perfectly familiar just coming into view, and I foresaw how it would look and roll along, and prepared to be pleased. Just such a piece of art merely, though infinitely sweet and grand, did it appear to me, and just as little were any active duties required of me. We are independent on all that we see. The hangman whom I have *seen* cannot hang me. The earth which I have *seen* cannot bury me. Such doubleness and distance does sight prove. Only the rich and such as are troubled with ennui are implicated in the maze of phenomena. You cannot see anything until you are clear of it. The long railroad causeway through the meadows west of me, the still twilight in which hardly a cricket was heard,[1] the dark bank of

[1] Probably too cool for any these evenings; only in the afternoon.

clouds in the horizon long after sunset, the villagers crowding to the post-office, and the hastening home to supper by candle-light, had I not seen all this before! What new sweet was I to extract from it? Truly they mean that we shall learn our lesson well. Nature gets thumbed like an old spelling-book. The almshouse and Frederick were still as last November. I was no nearer, methinks, nor further off from my friends. Yet I sat the bench with perfect contentment, unwilling to exchange the familiar vision that was to be unrolled for any treasure or heaven that could be imagined. Sure to keep just so far apart in our orbits still, in obedience to the laws of attraction and repulsion, affording each other only steady but indispensable starlight. It was as if I was promised the greatest novelty the world has ever seen or shall see, though the utmost possible novelty would be the difference between me and myself a year ago. This alone encouraged me, and was my fuel for the approaching winter. That we may behold the panorama with this slight improvement or change, this is what we sustain life for with so much effort from year to year.

And yet there is no more tempting novelty than this new November. No going to Europe or another world is to be named with it. Give me the old familiar walk, post-office and all, with this ever new self, with this infinite expectation and faith, which does not know when it is beaten. We 'll go nutting once more. We 'll pluck the nut of the world, and crack it in the winter evenings. Theatres and all other sightseeing are puppet-shows in comparison. I will take another walk to the Cliff, another row on the river, another skate on the meadow, be out in the first snow, and associate with the winter birds. Here I am at home. In the bare and bleached crust of the earth I recognize my friend.

One actual Frederick that you know is worth a million only read of. Pray, am I altogether a bachelor, or am I a widower, that I should go away and leave my bride? This Morrow that is ever knocking with irresistible force at our door, there is no such guest as that. I will stay at home and receive company.

I want nothing new, if I can have but a tithe of the old secured to me. I will spurn all wealth beside. Think of the consummate folly of attempting to go away from *here!* When the constant endeavor should be to get nearer and nearer *here.* Here are all the friends I ever had or shall have, and as friendly as ever. Why, I never had any quarrel with a friend but it was just as sweet as unanimity could be. I do not think we budge an inch forward or backward in relation to our friends. How many things can you go away from? They see the comet from the northwest coast just as plainly as we do, and the same stars through its tail. Take the shortest way round and stay at home. A man dwells in his native valley like a corolla in its calyx, like an acorn in its cup. *Here,* of course, is all that you love, all that you expect, all that you are. Here is your bride elect, as close to you as she can be got. Here is all the best and all the worst you can imagine. What more do you want? Bear hereaway then! Foolish people imagine that what they imagine is somewhere else. That stuff is not made in any factory but their own.

Nov. 2. P. M. — To Cliff.

A cool gray November afternoon; sky overcast.

Looking back from the causeway, the large willow by Mrs. Bigelow's and a silvery abele are the only leafy trees to be seen in and over the village, the first a yellowish mass, also some Lombardy poplars on the outskirts. It is remarkable that these (and the weeping willow, *yet green*) and a few of our *Populus tremuloides* (lately the *grandidentata* also[1]), all closely allied, are the only trees now (except the larch and perhaps a very few small white birches) which are conspicuously yellow, almost the only deciduous ones whose leaves are not withered, *i. e.* except scarlet oaks, red oaks, and some of the others, etc.

I see here and there yet some middle-sized coniferous willows, between *humilis* and *discolor*, whose upper leaves, left on, are quite bright lemon-yellow in dry places. These single leaves brighter than their predecessors which have fallen. The pitch pine is apparently a little past the midst of its fall. In sprout-lands some young birches are still rather leafy and bright-colored. Going over the newly cleared pasture on the northeast of Fair Haven Hill, I see that the scarlet oaks are more generally bright than on the 22d *ult.* Even the little sprouts in the russet pasture and the high tree-tops in the yew wood burn now, when the middle-sized bushes in the sprout-lands have mostly gone out. The large scarlet oak trees and tree-tops in woods, perhaps especially on hills, apparently are late because raised above the influence of the early frosts. Methinks they are as bright, even this dark day, as I ever saw them. The blossoming of the

[1] Still one.

scarlet oak! the forest flower, surpassing all in splendor (at least since the maple)! I do not know but they interest me more than the maples, they are so widely and equally dispersed throughout the forest; they are so hardy, a nobler tree on the whole, lasting into November; our chief November flower, abiding the approach of winter with us, imparting warmth to November prospects. It is remarkable that the latest bright color that is general should be this deep, dark scarlet and red, the intensest of colors, the ripest fruit of the year, like the cheek of a glossy red ripe apple from the cold Isle of Orleans, which will not be mellow for eating till next spring! When I rise to a hilltop, a thousand of these great oak roses, distributed on every side as far as the horizon! This my unfailing prospect for a fortnight past as surely as I rose to a hilltop! This late forest-flower surpasses all that spring or summer could do. Their colors were but rare and dainty specks, which made no impression on a distant eye. Now it is an extended forest or a mountain-side that bursts into bloom, through or along which we may journey from day to day. I admire these roses three or four miles off in the horizon. Comparatively, our gardening is on a petty scale, the gardener still nursing a few asters amid dead weeds, ignorant of the gigantic asters and roses which, as it were, overshadow him and ask for none of his care. Comparatively, it is like a little red paint ground on a teacup and held up against the sunset sky. Why not take more elevated and broader views, walk in the greater garden, not skulk in a little "debauched" nook of it? Consider the beauty of the earth, and not merely of a few impounded

herbs? However, you will not see these splendors, whether you stand on the hilltop or in the hollow, unless you are prepared to see them. The gardener can see only the gardener's garden, wherever he goes. The beauty of the earth answers exactly to your demand and appreciation.[1]

Apples in the village and lower ground are now generally killed brown and crisp, without having turned yellow, especially the upper parts, while those on hills and [in] warm places turned yellowish or russet, and so ripened to their fall. Of quince bushes the same, only they are a little later and are greener yet.

The sap is now frequently flowing fast in the scarlet oaks (as I have not observed it in the others), and has a pleasant acorn-like taste. Their bright tints, now that most other oaks are withered, are connected with this phenomenon. They are full of sap and life. They flow like a sugar maple in the spring. It has a pleasantly astringent taste, this strong oak wine.[2]

That small poplar seen from Cliffs on the 29th is a *P. tremuloides*. It makes the impression of a bright and clear yellow at a distance, though it is rather dingy and spotted.

It is later, then (this and the Baker Farm one), than any *P. grandidentata* that I know.

Looking down on the oak wood southeast of Yew Wood, I see some large black oak tops a brown yellow still; so generally it shows life a little longer than the white and swamp white apparently. One just beyond the smallpox burying-ground is generally greenish inclining to scarlet, looking very much like a scarlet oak not yet completely changed, for the leaf would not be distinguished. However, the nuts, with yellow meat, and the strong bitter yellow bark betrayed it. Yet it did not amount to scarlet.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 284–286; Riv. 349–351.]

[2] [*Excursions*, pp. 281, 282; Riv. 346.]

I see a few shrub oak leaves still fresh where sheltered. The little chinquapin has fallen.

I go past the Well Meadow Field. There is a sympathy between this cold, gray, overcast November afternoon and the grayish-brown oak leaves and russet fields.

The Scotch larch is changed at least as bright as ours.

Nov. 3. Colder weather, true November weather, comes again to-night, and I must rekindle my fire, which I had done without of late. I must walk briskly in order to keep warm in my thin coat.

P. M. — To Annursnack.

I am inclined to think that pignuts fall earlier than mocker-nuts, *i. e.* the leaves, and that the first are now about fallen (?). Those on Nawshawtuct are bare, but I see a great many hickories of some kind not nearly bare.

Monroe's arbor-vitæ hedge has fallen. Put it with the white pine. The jay is the bird of October. I have seen it repeatedly flitting amid the bright leaves, of a different color from them all and equally bright, and taking its flight from grove to grove. It, too, with its bright color, stands for some ripeness in the bird harvest. And its scream! it is as if it blowed on the edge of an October leaf. It is never more in its element and at home than when flitting amid these brilliant colors. No doubt it delights in bright color, and so has begged for itself a bril-

liant coat. It is not gathering seeds from the sod, too busy to look around, while fleeing the country. It is wide awake to what is going on, on the *qui vive*. It flies to some bright tree and bruits its splendors abroad.

By fall I mean literally the falling of the leaves, though some mean by it the changing or the acquisition of a brighter color. This I call the autumnal tint, the ripening to the fall.

The only white birch leaves now seen are those lingering green terminal leaves of the 23d, now at last turned yellow,[1] for they are now burnt upward to the last spark and glimmering. Methinks the birch ripens its leaves very perfectly though gradually.

I should say that that tree which ripened its leaves well, like this, was better suited to the climate than one like the locust and most apples, — which was mostly killed by frost first annually. Perhaps this tells at last on the constitution of the tree, and that variety would be safest to cultivate which matured its leaves best.

The pitch pine fallen and falling leaves now and for some time have not been bright or yellow, but brown.

At base of Annursnack I find one or two fringed gentians yet open, but even the stems are generally killed. I notice that the cows lately admitted to the meadows and orchards have browsed the grass, etc., closely, on that strip between the dry hillside and the wet meadow, where it is undoubtedly sweetest and freshest yet, and where it chances that this late flower the gentian grows. There, too, grows the herbage which is now the most grateful to the cattle. Also *Aster undulatus* is still

[1] And at least seven days later.

freshly in bloom; yarrow, etc., etc. Much *Lycopodium complanatum* not open yet.

Returning, I see at the very northwest end of the White Cedar Swamp a little elder, still quite leafy and green, near the path on the edge of the swamp. Its leafets are commonly nine, and the lower two or more are commonly divided. This seemed peculiarly downy beneath, even "sub-pubescent," as Bigelow describes the *Sambucus pubens* to be. Compare it with the common.[1] Also by it is *Viburnum nudum*, still quite fresh and green, the slender shoots from starting plants very erect and straight.

The lower leaves of the water andromeda are now red,[2] and the lambkill leaves are drooping (is it more than before?) and purplish from the effect of frost in low swamps like this.

Though I listen for them, I do not hear a cricket this afternoon. I think that I heard a few in the afternoon of November 1st. They then sounded peculiarly distinct, being but few here and there on a dry and warm hill, bird-like. Yet these seemed to be singing a little louder and in a little loftier strain, now that the chirp of the cricket generally was quenched.

How long we will follow an illusion! On meeting that one whom I call my friend, I find that I had imagined something that was not there. I am sure to depart sadder than I came. Nothing makes me so dejected as to

[1] It is apparently only a more downy common one, and this may have preserved it from frost.

[2] So at Potter's Swamp, — pretty commonly a dark scarlet, — Nov. 5, 1855.

have met my friends, for they make me doubt if it is possible to have any friends. I feel what a fool I am. I cannot conceive of persons more strange to me than they actually are; not thinking, not believing, not doing as I do; interrupted by me. My only distinction must be that I am the greatest bore they ever had. Not in a single thought agreed; regularly balking one another. But when I get far away, my thoughts return to them. That is the way I *can* visit them. Perhaps it is unaccountable to me why I care for them. Thus I am taught that my friend is not an actual person. When I have withdrawn and am alone, I forget the actual person and remember only my ideal. Then I have a friend again. I am not so ready to perceive the illusion that is in Nature. I certainly come nearer, to say the least, to an actual and joyful intercourse with her. Every day I have more or less communion with her, *as I think*. At least, I do not feel as if I must withdraw out of nature. I feel like a welcome guest. Yet, strictly speaking, the same must be true of nature and of man; our ideal is the only real. It is not the finite and temporal that satisfies or concerns us in either case.

I associate the idea of friendship, methinks, with the person the most foreign to me. This illusion is perpetuated, like superstition in a country long after civilization has been attained to. We are attracted toward a particular person, but no one has discovered the laws of this attraction. When I come nearest to that other *actually*, I am wont to be surprised at my selection. It may be enough that we have met *some time*, and now can never forget it. Some time or other we paid each other

this wonderful compliment, looked largely, humanly, divinely on one another, and now are fated to be acquaintances forever. In the case of nature I am not so conscious of this unsatisfied yearning.

Some oak woods begin to look bare, and even smoky, after their fashion.

Nov. 4. A rainy day.

Called to C. from the outside of his house the other afternoon in the rain. At length he put his head out the attic window, and I inquired if he did n't want to take a walk, but he excused himself, saying that he had a cold. "But," added he, "you can take so much the longer walk. Double it."

On the 1st, when I stood on Poplar Hill, I saw a man, far off by the edge of the river, splitting billets off a stump. Suspecting who it was, I took out my glass, and beheld Goodwin, the one-eyed Ajax, in his short blue frock, short and square-bodied, as broad as for his height he can afford to be, getting his winter's wood; for this is one of the phenomena of the season. As surely as the ants which he disturbs go into winter quarters in the stump when the weather becomes cool, so does G. revisit the stumpy shores with his axe. As usual, his powder-flask peeped out from a pocket on his breast, his gun was slanted over a stump near by, and his boat lay a little further along. He had been at work laying wall still further off, and now, near the end of the day, betook himself to those pursuits which he loved better still. It would be no amusement to me to see a gentleman buy his winter wood. It is to see G. get his. I

helped him tip over a stump or two. He said that the owner of the land had given him leave to get them out, but it seemed to me a condescension for him to ask any man's leave to grub up these stumps. The stumps to those who can use them, I say, — to those who will split them. He might as well ask leave of the farmer to shoot the musquash and the meadow-hen, or I might as well ask leave to look at the landscape. Near by were large hollows in the ground, now grassed over, where he had got out white oak stumps in previous years. But, strange to say, the town does not like to have him get his fuel in this way. They would rather the stumps would rot in the ground, or be floated down-stream to the sea. They have almost without dissent agreed on a different mode of living, with their division of labor. They would have him stick to laying wall, and buy corded wood for his fuel, as they do. He has drawn up an old bridge sleeper and cut his name in it for security, and now he gets into his boat and pushes off in the twilight, saying he will go and see what Mr. Musquash is about.

When the Haverhill fishermen told me that they could distinguish the Concord River stuff (*i. e.* driftwood) I see they were right, for much of it is chestnut rails, and of these they have but few, and those in the southern part of New Hampshire.

If, about the last of October, you ascend any hill in the outskirts of the town and look over the forest, you will see, amid the brown of other oaks, which are now withered, and the green of the pines, the bright-red tops or crescents of the scarlet oaks, very equally and thickly distributed on all sides, even to the horizon. Complete

trees standing exposed on the edges of the forest, where you have never suspected them, or their tops only in the recesses of the forest surface, or perhaps towering above the surrounding trees, or reflecting a warm rose red from the very edge of the horizon in favorable lights. All this you will see, and much more, if you are prepared to see it, — if you *look* for it. Otherwise, regular and universal as this phenomenon is, you will think for threescore years and ten that all the wood is at this season sere and brown. Objects are concealed from our view not so much because they are out of the course of our visual ray (continued) as because there is no intention of the mind and eye toward them. We do not realize how far and widely, or how near and narrowly, we are to look. The greater part of the phenomena of nature are for this reason concealed to us all our lives. Here, too, as in political economy, the supply answers to the demand. Nature does not cast pearls before swine. There is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate, — not a grain more. The actual objects which one person will see from a particular hilltop are just as different from those which another will see as the persons are different. The scarlet oak must, in a sense, be in your eye when you go forth. We cannot see anything until we are possessed with the idea of it, and then we can hardly see anything else. In my botanical rambles I find that first the idea, or image, of a plant occupies my thoughts, though it may at first seem very foreign to this locality, and for some weeks or months I go thinking of it and expecting it unconsciously, and at length I surely see it, and it is henceforth an actual

neighbor of mine. This is the history of my finding a score or more of rare plants which I could name.

Take one of our selectmen and put him on the highest hill in the township, and tell him to look! What, probably, would he see? What would he *select* to look at? Sharpening his sight to the utmost, and putting on the glasses that suited him best, aye, using a spy-glass if he liked, straining his optic nerve to its utmost, and making a full report. Of course, he would see a Brocken spectre of himself. Now take Julius Cæsar, or Emanuel Swedenborg, or a Fiji-Islander, and set him up there! Let them compare notes afterward. Would it appear that they had enjoyed the same prospect? For aught we know, as strange a man as any of these is always at our elbows. It does not appear that anybody saw Shakespeare when he was about in England looking off, but only some of his raiment.

Why, it takes a sharpshooter to bring down even such trivial game as snipes and woodcocks; he must take very particular aim, and know what he is aiming at. He would stand a very small chance if he fired at random into the sky, being told that snipes were flying there. And so it is with him that shoots at beauty. Not till the sky falls will he catch larks, unless he is a trained sportsman. He will not bag any if he does not already know its seasons and haunts and the color of its wing, — if he has not dreamed of it, so that he can *anticipate* it; then, indeed, he flushes it at every step, shoots double and on the wing, with both barrels, even in corn-fields. The sportsman trains himself, dresses, and watches unweariedly, and loads and primes for his particular game.

He prays for it, and so he gets it. After due and long preparation, schooling his eye and hand, dreaming awake and asleep, with gun and paddle and boat, he goes out after meadow-hens, — which most of his townsmen never saw nor dreamed of, — paddles for miles against a head wind, and therefore he gets them. He had them half-way into his bag when he started, and has only to shove them down. The fisherman, too, dreams of fish, till he can almost catch them in his sink-spout. The hen scratches, and finds her food right under where she stands; but such is not the way with the hawk.

The true sportsman can shoot you almost any of his game from his windows. It comes and perches at last on the barrel of his gun; but the rest of the world never see it, with the feathers on. He will keep himself supplied by firing up his chimney. The geese fly exactly under his zenith, and honk when they get there. Twenty musquash have the refusal of each one of his traps before it is empty.[1]

Nov. 5. Humphrey Buttrick says that he finds old and young of both kinds of small rails, and that they breed here, though he never saw their nests.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

The river has risen somewhat, on account of rain yesterday and the 30th. So it was lowest the 30th.

That great fleet of leaves of the 21st October is now sunk to the bottom, near the shore, and are [*sic*] flatted out there, paving it thickly, and but few recently fallen are to be seen on the water; and in the woods the leaves do not lie up so crisp since the rain.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 285–288; Riv. 350–354.]

Saw Stewart shoot a Carolina rail, which was standing on the side of a musquash-cabin off Prichard's, within two rods of him. This has no black throat and is probably the female.

The large shallow cups of the red oak acorns look like some buttons I have seen which had lost their core.

The *Cornus florida* on the Island is still full-leafed, and is now completely scarlet, though it was partly green on the 28th. It is apparently in the height of its color there now, or, if more exposed, perhaps it would have been on the 1st of November. This makes it the latest tree to change. The leaves are drooping, like the *C. sericea*, while those of some sprouts at its base are horizontal. Some incline to crimson.

A few white maples are not yet bare, but thinly clothed with dull-yellow leaves which still have life in them. Judging from the two aspens, this tree, and the willows, one would say that the earliest trees to leaf were, perhaps, the last to lose their leaves.

Little dippers were seen yesterday.

The few remaining topmost leaves of the *Salix sericea*, which were the last to change, are now yellow like those of the birch.

Water milkweed has been discounting some days, with its small upright pods.

I hear one cricket this louring day. Since but one is heard, it is the more distinct and therefore seems louder and more musical. It is a clearer note, less creaking than before.

A few *Populus grandidentata* leaves are still left on. The common smooth rose leaves are pretty conspicuously yellow yet along the river, and some dull-reddish high blackberry is seen by the roads. Also meadow-sweet is observed yet with the rose. It is quite still; no wind, no insect hum, and no note of birds, but one hairy woodpecker. That lake grass, *Glyceria fluitans*, is, methinks, more noticeable now than in summer on the surface of the fuller stream, green and purple. Meadow-sweet is a prominent yellow yet.

Nov. 6. Yesterday was a still and cloudy day. This is another rainy day. On the whole, we have had a good deal of fair weather the last three months. Mr. Buttrick, the marketman, says he has been to Boston twenty-seven times since the first of August, and has not got wet till to-day, though he rides in an open wagon.

I guessed at Goodwin's age on the 1st. He is hale and stout and looks younger than he is, and I took care to set him high enough. I guessed he was fifty-five, and he said that if he lived two or three months longer he would be fifty-six. He then guessed at my age, thought I was forty. He thought that Emerson was a very young-looking man for his age, "But," said he, "he has not been out o' nights as much as you have."

Some horse-chestnuts are still thickly leaved and yellow, not withered.

Nov. 7. P. M. — To Bateman's Pond.

It cleared up this forenoon. I leave my boat opposite the Hemlocks. I see the cold sunlight from some glade between the clouds falling on distant oak woods, now nearly bare, and as I glance up the hill between them,

seeing the bare but bright hillside beyond, I think, Now we are left to the hemlocks and pines with their silvery light, to the bare trees and withered grass. The very rocks and stones in the rocky roads (that beyond Farmer's) look white in the clear November light, especially after the rain. We are left to the chickadee's familiar notes, and the jay for trumpeter. What struck me was a certain emptiness beyond, between the hemlocks and the hill, in the cool, washed air, as if I appreciated even here the absence of insects from it. It suggested agreeably to me a mere space in which to walk briskly. The fields are bleak, and they are, as it were, vacated. The very earth is like a house shut up for the winter, and I go knocking about it in vain. But just then I heard a chickadee on a hemlock, and was inexpressibly cheered to find that an old acquaintance was yet stirring about the premises, and was, I was assured, to be there all winter. All that is evergreen in me revived at once.

The very moss, the little pine-tree moss, in Hosmer's meadow is revealed by its greenness amid the withered grass and stubble.

Hard frosts have turned the cranberry vines to a dark purple.

I hear one faint cricket's chirp this afternoon.

Going up the lane beyond Farmer's, I was surprised to see fly up from the white, stony road, two snow buntings, which alighted again close by, one on a large rock, the other on the stony ground. They had pale-brown or tawny touches on the white breast, on each side of the head, and on the top of the head, in the last place with some darker color. Had light-yellowish bills. They sat

quite motionless within two rods, and allowed me to approach within a rod, as if conscious that the white rocks, etc., concealed them. It seemed as if they were attracted to surfaces of the same color with themselves, — white and black (or quite dark) and tawny. One squatted *flat*, if not both. Their soft rippling notes as they went off reminded me [of] the northeast snow-storms to which ere long they are to be an accompaniment.

I find in a swamp witch-hazel buds still opening, for here they are sheltered, but I can find no fringed gentian, blue, near Bateman's Pond. But *Aster undulatus* and several golden rods, at least, may be found yet. I see *Lycopodium dendroideum*[1] which has not yet shed pollen. In and about Fox Castle Swamp, lambkill is reddened about as much as ever. Round-leaved cornel is bare.

The nuthatch is another bird of the fall which I hear these days and for a long time, — apparently ever since the young birds grew up.

The *Cornus florida* by the pond is quite bare; how long? (That at Island still thickly leaved.) So that I can only say that the sheltered *C. florida* change much later than the scarlet oak *generally*, and perhaps the former is to be considered later on the whole.

Methinks those scarlet oaks, those burning bushes, begin to be rare in the landscape. They are about Bateman's Pond, at any rate.

My apple harvest! It is to glean after the husbandman and the cows, or to gather the crop of those wild trees far away on the edges of swamps which have escaped their notice. Now, when it is generally all fallen,

[1] Var. *obscurum*.

if indeed any is left, though you would not suppose there were any on the first survey, nevertheless with experienced eyes I explore amid the clumps of alder (now bare) and in the crevices of the rocks full of leaves, and prying under the fallen and decaying ferns which, with apple and alder leaves, thickly strew the ground. From amid the leaves anywhere within the circumference of the tree, I draw forth the fruit, all wet and glossy, nibbled by rabbits and hollowed out by crickets, but still with the bloom on it and at least as ripe and well kept, if not better than those in barrels, while those which lay exposed are quite brown and rotten. Showing only a blooming cheek here and there between the wet leaves, or fallen into hollows long since and covered up with the leaves of the tree, — a proper kind of packing. I fill my pockets on each side, and as I retrace my steps, I eat one first from this side, and then from that, in order to preserve my balance. And here and there is one lodged as it fell between the bases of the suckers which spring thickly from a horizontal limb. In the midst of an alder clump, covered by leaves, there it lies, safe from cows which might smell it out and unobserved by the husbandman; reserved for me.[1]

It is too late, generally, to look for the handsome ones now. The exposed are decayed or decaying.

Looking southwest toward the pond just before sunset, I saw against the light what I took to be a shad-bush in full bloom, but without a leafet. I was prepared for this sight after this very warm autumn, because this tree frequently puts forth new leaves in October. Or it

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 317, 318; Riv. 390, 391.]

might be a young wild apple. Hastening to it, I found it was only the feathery seeds of the virgin's-bower, whose vine, so close to the branches, was not noticeable. They looked just like dense umbels of white flowers, and in this light, three or four rods off, were fully as white as white apple blossoms. It is singular how one thing thus puts on the semblance of another. I thought at first I had made a discovery more interesting than the blossoming of apple trees in the fall. This, I thought, which I never saw nor heard of before, must be the result of that wonderfully warm weather about the 19th and 20th of October. It carried me round to spring again, when the shad-bush, almost leafless, is seen waving its white blossoms amid the yet bare trees. The feathery masses at intervals along the twigs, just like umbels of apple bloom, so caught and reflected the western light.

The *small* beeches are still covered with withered leaves, but the larger are three-quarters bare.

The *Diplopappus linariifolius*, which was yellow in the shade, in open and sunny places is purple.

I see the small botrychium leaf in Hosmer's meadow still firm, but a reddish brown or leather-color.

Rounding the Island just after sunset, I see not only the houses nearest the river but our own reflected in the river by the Island. From what various points of view and in what unsuspected lights and relations we sooner or later see the most familiar objects! I see houses reflected in the river which stand a mile from it, and whose inhabitants do not consider themselves near the shore.

I pass a musquash-house, apparently begun last night. The first mouthfuls of weeds were placed between some

small button-bush stems which stood amid the pads and pontederia, for a support and to prevent their being washed away. Opposite, I see some half concealed amid the bleached phalaris grass (a tall coarse grass), or, in some places, the blue-joint.

Nov. 8. P. M. — To Boulder Field.

Goodwin, laying wall at Miss Ripley's, observed to me going by, "Well, it seems that —— thought that he had lived long enough." He committed suicide within a week, at his sister's house in Sudbury. A boy slept in the chamber with him, and, hearing a noise, got [up] and found —— on the floor with both his jugular veins cut, but his windpipe whole. He said to the boy, "Take the razor and cut deeper," but the boy ran, and ——died, and Garfield said it was about time, for ——, in revenge for being sent to the house of correction, had set fire to a pile of wood of his, that long pile by the roadside beyond William Wheeler's, that I stood under in a rain once. —— probably burned Witherell's house too, and perhaps Boynton's stable.

The red osier at Mrs. Simmons's is quite bare; how long? Her hawthorn is still quite leafy and pretty, yellow-brown, dotted. A thorn at Hall's fence is dark scarlet and pretty. There are many leaves on the buckthorn still.

Common thorn bushes, long since bare, when many grow together in clumps, make another such a smoke, though smaller, as the maples, — the same color. I can often distinguish the bush by this. Alders are a very dark gray, sort of iron gray, and, if near enough, you see

dark lines (the stems) and specks (the fruit) like cinders, like a very dense, dark, and unconsumed uliginous smoke, in which many cinders rise.

Those trees and bushes which grow in dense masses and have many fine twigs, being bare, make an agreeable misty impression where there are a myriad retreating points to receive the eye, not a hard, abrupt wall; just as, in the sky, the visual ray is cushioned on clouds, unless it is launched into the illimitable ether. The eye is less worn and wearied, not to say wounded, by looking at these mazes where the seer is not often conscious of seeing anything. It is well that the eye is so rarely caught and detained by any object in one whole hemisphere of its range, *i. e.* the sky. It enjoys everlasting holiday on this side. Only the formless clouds and the objectless ether are presented to it. For they are nervous who see many faces in the clouds. Corresponding to the clouds in the sky are those mazes now on the earth. Nature disposes of her naked stems so softly as not to put our eyes out. She makes them a smoke, or stationary cloud, on this side or that, of whose objective existence we rarely take cognizance. She does not expect us to notice them. She calls our attention to the maple swamp more especially in October.

There is also the coarse maze produced by an oak wood (when nearly all the leaves are fallen), in which, however, the large boughs reflecting the light have considerable distinctness, and that of the forest in general. I thought, from a small specimen, that the brushy yellow birch tops were of the same hue with the alders.[1]

[1] *Vide* Nov. 11th.

Nature has many scenes to exhibit, and constantly draws a curtain over this part or that. She is constantly repainting the landscape and all surfaces, dressing up some scene for our entertainment. Lately we had a leafy wilderness, now bare twigs begin to prevail, and soon she will surprise us with a mantle of snow.[1] Some green she thinks so good for our eyes, like blue, that she never banishes it entirely, but has created evergreens.

It is remarkable how little any but a lichenist will observe on the bark of trees. The mass of men have but the vaguest and most indefinite notion of mosses, as a sort of shreds and fringes, and the world in which the lichenist dwells is much further from theirs than one side of this earth from the other. They see bark as if they saw it not. These objects which, though constantly visible, are rarely looked at are a sort of eye-brush.

Each phase of nature, while not invisible, is yet not too distinct and obtrusive. It is there to be found when we look for it, but not demanding our attention. It is like a silent but sympathizing companion in whose company we retain most of the advantages of solitude, with whom we can walk and talk, or be silent, naturally, without the necessity of talking in a strain foreign to the place.

I know of but one or two persons with whom I can afford to walk. With most the walk degenerates into a mere vigorous use of your legs, ludicrously purposeless, while you are discussing some mighty argument, each one having his say, spoiling each other's day, worrying one another with conversation, hustling one another

[1] I read that snow fell two or three inches deep in Bangor yesterday morning.

with our conversation. I know of no use in the walking part in this case, except that we may seem to be getting on together toward some goal; but of course we keep our original distance all the way. Jumping every wall and ditch with vigor in the vain hope of shaking your companion off. Trying to kill two birds with one stone, though they sit at opposite points of [the] compass, to see nature and do the honors to one who does not.

Animals generally see things in the vacant way I have described. They rarely see anything but their food, or some real or imaginary foe. I never saw but one cow looking into the sky.

Lichens as they affect the scenery, as picturesque objects described by Gilpin or others, are one thing; as they concern the lichenist, quite another.

These are the various grays and browns which give November its character. There are also some red mazes, like the twigs of the white maple and our *Cornus sericea*, etc. (the red osier, too, further north), and some distinct yellow ones, as willow twigs, which are most interesting in spring. The silvery abeles are steadily falling nowadays. The chalky white under side of these leaves is remarkable. None of our leaves is so white.

I think I admire again about this time the still bright-red or crimson fruit of the sumach, now when not only its own but most other leaves have fallen and there are few bright tints, it is now so distinct on its twigs. Your attention is not distracted by its brilliant leaves now.

I go across N. Barrett's land and over the road beyond his house. The aspect of the Great Meadows is now nearly uniform, the new and exposed grass being

nearly as brown and sere as that which was not cut. Thus Nature has been blending and harmonizing the colors here where man had interfered.

I wandered over bare fields where the cattle, lately turned out, roamed restless and unsatisfied with the feed; I dived into a rustling young oak wood where not a green leaf was to be seen; I climbed to the geological axis of elevation and clambered over curly-pated rocks whose strata are on their edges, amid the rising woods; and again I thought, They are all gone surely, and left me alone. Not even a man Friday remains. What nutriment can I extract from these bare twigs? Starvation stares me in the face. "*Nay, nay!*" said a nuthatch, making its way, head downward, about a bare hickory close by. "The nearer the bone the sweeter the meat. Only the superfluous has been swept away. Now we behold the naked truth. If at any time the weather is too bleak and cold for you, keep the sunny side of the trunk, for there is a wholesome and inspiring warmth such as the summer never afforded. There are the winter mornings, with the sun on the oak wood tops. While buds sleep, thoughts wake." ("Hear! hear!" screamed the jay from a neighboring copse, where I had heard a tittering for some time.) "Winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel if you know where to look for it." And then the speaker shifted to another tree, further off, and reiterated his assertions, and his mate at a distance confirmed them; and I heard a suppressed chuckle from a red squirrel that heard the last remark, but had kept silent and invisible all the while. Is that you? "Yes-sir-ee," said he. Then, running down a slanting

bough, he called out rather impudently, "Look here! just get a snug-fitting fur coat and a pair of fur gloves like mine, and you may laugh at a northeast storm," and then he wound up with a slang phrase, in his own lingo, accompanied by a flourish of his tail, just as a newsboy twirls his fingers with his thumb on his nose and inquires, "Does your mother know you are out?"

The wild pear tree on Ponkawtasset has some yellow leaves still. The now more noticeable green radical leaves of the buttercup in the russet pastures remind me of the early spring to come, of which they will offer the first evidence. Now, too, I can *see* (for the same reason) where grows our only patch of broom, a quarter of a mile off, it [is] such a distinct, somewhat yellowish, green. Already the creeping juniper is a ripe glaucous green, with a distinct ruddy tinge to the upper surface, — the whole bush a ripe tint like a fruit.

I stand in Ebby Hubbard's yellow birch swamp, admiring some gnarled and shaggy picturesque old birches there, which send out large knee-like limbs near the ground, while the brook, raised by the late rain, winds fuller than usual through the rocky swamp. I thought with regret how soon these trees, like the black birches that grew on the hill near by, would be all cut off, and there would be almost nothing of the old Concord left, and we should be reduced to read old deeds in order to be reminded of such things, — deeds, at least, in which some old and revered bound trees are mentioned. These will be the only proof at last that they ever existed. Pray, farmers, keep some old woods to match the old deeds. Keep them for history's sake, as specimens of

what the township was. Let us not be reduced to a mere paper evidence, to deeds kept in a chest or secretary, when not so much as the bark of the paper birch will be left for evidence, about its decayed stump.

The sides of the old Carlisle road where it is low and moist are (and have for a long time been), for many rods together and a rod in width, brown or cinnamon-colored with the withered dicksonia fern, not like the brown of trees (their withered leaves), but a peculiar cinnamon-brown. The bare huckleberry bushes and the sweet-ferns are draped with them as a kind of mourning.

Solidago puberula still out, for you see a few bright-yellow solidago flowers long after they are generally turned to a dirty-white fuzzy top. Pratt says he saw a few florets on a *Polygala sanguinea* within a week. He shows me samphire, plucked three weeks ago in Brighton, when it was a very brilliant crimson still.

Looking from Pratt's window at sunset, I saw that purple or rosy light reflected from some old chestnut rails on the hilltop before his house. Methinks it is pinkish, even like the old cow-droppings in the pastures. So universally does Nature blush at last. The very herbage which has gone through the stomachs and intestines of the cow acquires at last a faint pinkish tinge.

The button-bush balls are now blackish (really dark-brown) and withered, looking much blacker against the light than a month ago.

Nov. 9. It is remarkable that the only deciduous *trees* in the town which now make any show with their living leaves are: (1) scarlet oaks, perhaps only

one (2) *Populus tremuliformis*, one (3) dogwood, (the *small* white birch (*i. e.* young trees) spangles hardly deserved to be named), weeping willows, *Salix alba*, silvery abele, poplars (Italian), some apples, some horse-chestnuts, rarely wild pear trees, some English cherries (orange or yellow), — the first three alone being indigenous, to eight foreign.

And of shrubs, there are Jersey tea, gooseberry, two kinds of rose, *perhaps* sweet-fern, meadow-sweet, and high blackberry; also the lilac, quince, buckthorn, broom, privet, hawthorn, and barberry, well leaved. The very few leaves on sallows, *Viburnum nudum*, high blueberry, and perhaps *Cornus sericea*, do not deserve to be named, and hardly the five [*sic*] above. I have not seen the bayberry or beach plums. And add, *perhaps*, a few other shrubs. Sweet-briar pretty (?) well leaved. (Is it foreign?) Or of shrubs, seven foreign to about six native, and the last much the least noticeable and much the thinnest-leaved.

There are a very few living yellow leaves on young wild cherries yet, but these are not nearly so much to be named as the birch spangles.[1]

The newspaper tells me that Uncannunuc was white with snow for a short time on the morning of the 7th. Thus steadily but unobserved the winter steals down from the north, till from our highest hills we can discern its vanguard. Next week, perchance, our own hills will be white. Little did we think how near the winter was. It is as if a scout had brought in word that an enemy were approaching in force only a day's march

[1] Also leaves on green-briar, according to Nov. 11, 1855.

distant. Manchester was the spy this time, which has a camp at the base of that hill. We had not thought seriously of winter; we dwelt in fancied security yet.

P. M. — To Great Fields and Walden.

The scarlet oak by Agricultural Ground (and no doubt generally) is falling fast, and has been for some days, and they have now generally grown dull — before the leaves have lost their color. Other oaks may be said [to] have assumed their true November aspect; *i. e.*, the larger ones are about bare. Only the latest black oaks are leafy, and they just withered. The trees on the hill just north of Alcott's land, which I saw yesterday so distinctly from Ponkawtasset, and thought were either larches or aspens, prove to be larches. On a hill like this it seems they are later to change and brighter now than those in the Abel Heywood swamp, which are brownish-yellow. The first-named larches were quite as distinct amid the pines seen a mile off as near at hand.

Oak sprouts — white and black, at least — are a deeper and darker red than the trees. Here is a white oak sprout, for example, far brighter red than any tree of the kind I ever saw. I do not find that black oaks get to be quite scarlet or red at all, yet the very young and sprouts often are, and are hard to distinguish from the scarlet oak.

Garfield shot a hen-hawk just as I came up on the hillside in front of his house. He has killed three within two years about his house, and they have killed two hens for him. They will fly off with a hen. In this case the hen was merely knocked over. I was surprised to find that this bird had not a red tail, and guessed it must be

a young one. I brought it home and found that it was so, the same which Wilson called "*Falco leverianus*, American Buzzard or White-breasted Hawk," it differed so much from the old. There [was] little if any rufous brown about this bird. It had a white breast and prettily barred (with blackish or dark-brown) white tail-coverts;[1] was generally *dark*-brown with white spots above. He says that he killed the others also at this season, and that they were marked like this. They were all young birds, then, and hence so bold or inexperienced, perhaps. They take his hens from between the house and the barn. When the hawk comes, all the hens and roosters run for the barn.

I see catnep turned at top to a crimson purple.

As I stood upon Heywood's Peak, I observed in the very middle of the pond, which was smooth and reflected the sky there, what at first I took to be a sheet of very thin, dark ice two yards wide drifting there, the first ice of the season, which had formed by the shore in the morning, but immediately I considered that it was too early and warm for that. Then I wondered for a moment what dark film could be floating out there on the pure and unruffled lake. To be sure, it was not a very conspicuous object, and most would not have noticed it! But, suspecting what it was, I looked through my glass and could plainly see the dimples made by a school of little fishes continually coming to the surface there together. It was exactly analogous to the dark rippled patches on the sea made by the menhaden as seen from Cape Cod. Why have I never observed the

[1] *Vide* the 11th.

like in the river? In this respect, also, Walden is a small ocean.

We had a true November sunset after a dark, cloudy afternoon. The sun reached a clear stratum just before setting, beneath the dark cloud, though ready to enter another on the horizon's edge, and a cold, yellow sunlight suddenly illumined the withered grass of the fields around, near and far, eastward. Such a phenomenon as, when it occurs later, I call the afterglow of the year.

It is of no use to plow deeper than the soil is, unless you mean to follow up that mode of cultivation persistently, manuring highly and carting on muck at each plowing, — making a soil, in short. Yet many a man likes to tackle mighty themes, like immortality, but in his discourse he turns up nothing but yellow sand, under which what little fertile and available surface soil he may have is quite buried and lost. He should teach frugality rather, — how to postpone the fatal hour, — should plant a crop of beans. He might have raised enough of these to make a deacon of him, though never a preacher. Many a man runs his plow so deep in heavy or stony soil that it sticks fast in the furrow. It is a great art in the writer to improve from day to day just that soil and fertility which he has, to harvest that crop which his life yields, whatever it may be, not be straining as if to reach apples or oranges when he yields only ground-nuts. He should be digging, not soaring. Just as earnest as your life is, so deep is your soil. If strong and deep, you will sow wheat and raise bread of life in it.

Now the young hen-hawks, full-grown but inexperienced, still white-breasted and brown (not red)-tailed, swoop down after the farmer's hens, between the barn and the house, often carrying one off in their clutches, and all the rest of the pack half fly, half run, to the barn. Unwarrantably bold, one ventures to stoop before the farmer's eyes. He clutches in haste his trusty gun, which hangs, ready loaded, on its pegs; he pursues warily to where the marauder sits teetering on a lofty pine, and when he is sailing scornfully away he meets his fate and comes fluttering head forward to earth. The exulting farmer hastes to secure his trophy. He treats the proud bird's body with indignity. He carries it home to show to his wife and children, for the hens were his wife's special care. He thinks it one of his best shots, full thirteen rods. This gun is "an *all-fired* good piece" — nothing but robin-shot. The body of the victim is delivered up to the children and the dog and, like the body of Hector, is dragged so many times round Troy.

But alas for the youthful hawk, the proud bird of prey, the tenant of the skies! We shall no more see his wave-like outline against a cloud, nor hear his scream from behind one. He saw but a pheasant in the field, the food which nature has provided for him, and stooped to seize it. This was his offense. He, the native of these skies, must make way for those bog-trotters from another land, which never soar. The eye that was conversant with sublimity, that looked down on earth from under its sharp projecting brow, is closed; the head that was never made dizzy by any height is brought low; the feet that were not made to walk on earth now lie useless along it. With those trailing claws for grapnels it

dragged the lower sky. Those wings which swept the sky must now dust the chimney-corner, perchance. So weaponed, with strong beak and talons, and wings, like a war-steamer, to carry them about. In vain were the brown-spotted eggs laid, in vain were ye cradled in the loftiest pine of the swamp. Where are your father and mother? Will they hear of your early death? before ye had acquired your full plumage, they who nursed and defended ye so faithfully?

Nov. 10. A pleasant day, especially the forenoon. Thermometer 46° at noon. Some would call it Indian summer, but it does not deserve to be called summer; grows cool in afternoon when I go —

To Baker Farm aspen *via* Cliffs.

Some very handsome *Solidago nemoralis* in bloom on Fair Haven Hill. (Look for these late flowers — November flowers — on hills, above frost.)

I think I may say that about the 5th the white, swamp white, and black, and perhaps red, oaks (the last *may* be later) were in their November condition, *i. e.* for the most part fallen. The few *large* black oak tops, still covered with leaves above the forest (*i. e.* just withered), are brownish-yellow.

The brilliancy of the scarlet oak being generally dulled, the season of brilliant leaves may be considered over, — say about the 10th; and now a new season begins, the pure November season of the russet earth and withered leaf and bare twigs and hoary withered goldenrods, etc.

From Fair Haven Hill, using my glass, I think that I

can see some of the snow of the 7th still left on the brow of Uncannunuc. It is a light line, lying close along under the edge of a wood which covers the summit, which has protected it. I can understand how much nearer they must feel to winter who live in plain sight of that than we do. I think that I could not have detected the edge of the forest if it had not been for the snow.

In the path below the Cliff, I see some blue-stemmed goldenrod turned yellow as well as purple. The Jersey tea is fallen, all but the terminal leaves. These, however, are the greenest and apparently least changed of any indigenous plant, unless it be the sweet-fern. Withered leaves generally, though they remain on the trees, are drooping. As I go through the hazel bushes toward the sun, I notice the silvery light reflected from the fine down on their tender twigs, this year's growth. This apparently protects them against the winter. The very armor that Nature puts on reminds you of the foe she would resist. This a November phenomenon, — the silvery light reflected from a myriad of downy surfaces.

A true November seat is amid the pretty white-plumed *Andropogon scoparius*, the withered culms of the purple wood grass which covers so many dry knolls. There is a large patch at the entrance to Pleasant Meadow. It springs from pink-brown clumps of radical leaves, which make good seats. Looking toward the sun, as I sit in the midst of it rising as high as my head, its countless silvery plumes are a very cheerful sight. At a distance they look like frost on the plant.

I look out westward across Fair Haven Pond. The warmer colors are now rare. A cool and silvery light is

the prevailing one; dark-blue or slate-colored clouds in the west, and the sun going down in them. All the light of November may be called an afterglow.

Hornbeam bare; how long? Perhaps with the ostrya and just after elms? There are still a few leaves on the large *Populus tremuliformis*, but they will be all gone in a day or two. They have turned quite yellow.

Hearing in the oak and near by a sound as if some one had broken a twig, I looked up and saw a jay pecking at an acorn. There were several jays busily gathering acorns on a scarlet oak. I could hear them break them off. They then flew to a suitable limb and, placing the acorn under one foot, hammered away at it busily, looking round from time to time to see if any foe was approaching, and soon reached the meat and nibbled at it, holding up their heads to swallow, while they held it very firmly with their claws. (Their hammering made a sound like the woodpecker's.) Nevertheless it sometimes dropped to the ground before they had done with it.

Aphides on alder.

Sap still flows in scarlet oak.

Returned by Spanish Brook Path. Notice the glaucous white bloom on the thimble-berry of late, as there are fewer things to notice. So many objects are white or light, preparing us for winter.

By the 10th of November we conclude with the scarlet oak dulled (and the colors of October generally faded), with a few golden spangles on the white birches and on a lingering *Populus tremuliformis* and a few sallows, a few green leaves on the Jersey tea, and a few

lingering scarlet or yellow or crimson ones on the flowering dogwood in a sheltered place, the gooseberry, the high blueberry, *Cornus sericea*, the late rose and the common smooth one, and the sweet-briar,[1] meadow-sweet, sweet-fern, and *Viburnum nudum*.[2] But they are very rare or uninteresting. To these may be added the introduced plants of November 9th, which are more leafy. Of them the silvery abele, English cherry, and broom have been of the most interesting colors.

Nov. 11. Goodwin brings me this forenoon a this year's loon, which he just killed on the river, — great northern diver, but a smaller specimen than Wilson describes and somewhat differently marked. It is twenty-seven inches long to end of feet by forty-four, and bill three and three-quarters to angle of mouth; above blackish-gray with small white spots (two at end of each feather).[3] Beneath, pure white, throat and all, except a dusky bar across the vent. Bill chiefly pale-bluish and dusky. You are struck by its broad, flat, sharp-edged legs, made to cut through the water rather than to walk with, set far back and naturally stretched out backward, its long and powerful bill, conspicuous white throat and breast. Dislodged by winter in the north, it is slowly travelling toward a warmer clime, diving in the cool river this morning, which is now full of light, the trees and bushes on the brink having long

[1] English?

[2] And green-briar, according to Nov. 7th and 11th, 1855; and perhaps a *few* other shrubs.

[3] [It must have been a red-throated loon.]

since lost their leaves, and the neighboring fields are white with frost. Yet this hardy bird is comfortable and contented there if the sportsman would let it alone.

P. M. — To Island and J. P. Brown's cold pond.

A cold day. Now seek sunny and sheltered places as in early spring, the south side the island, for example. Certain localities are thus distinguished. And they retain this peculiarity permanently, unless it depends on a wood which may be cut. Thousands of years hence this may still be the warmest and sunniest spot in the spring and fall.

I hear here a faint creaking of two or three crickets or locustæ, but it is a steady sound, — not the common cricket's, — long-continued, and when one pauses, generally another continues the strain, so that it seems absolutely continuous. They are either in the grass or on the bushes by the edge of the water, under this sunny wood-side. I afterward hear a few of the common cricket on the side of Clamshell. Thus they are confined now to the sun on the south sides of hills and woods. They are quite silent long before sunset.

Snow-fleas are skipping on the surface of the water at the edge, and spiders running about. These become prominent now.

The waters look cold and empty of fish and most other inhabitants now. Here, in the sun in the shelter of the wood, the smooth shallow water, with the stubble standing in it, is waiting for ice. Indeed, ice that formed last night must have recently melted in it. The sight of such water now reminds me of ice as much as of

water. No doubt many fishes have gone into winter quarters.[1]

The flowering dogwood, though still leafy, is uninteresting and partly withered.

Gossamer reflecting the light is another November phenomenon (as well as October). I see here, looking toward the sun, a very distinct silvery sheen from the cranberry vines, as from a thousand other November surfaces, though, looking down on them, they are dark-purple.

Speaking of twiggy mazes, the very stubble and fine pasture grasses unshorn are others reflecting the light, too, like twigs; but these are of a peculiar bleached brownish color, a principal ingredient in the russet of the earth's surface.[2]

Going by the willow-row above railroad, scare up a small duck, — perhaps teal, — and, in the withered grass at Nut Meadow Brook, two black ducks, which rise black between me and the sun, but, when they have circled round to the east, show some silvery sheen on the under side of their wings. Am surprised to see a little ice in this brook in the shade, as I push far up it through a dense field of withered blue-joint, — a spot white with frost, a few inches over. Saw a small pool in the woods also skimmed over, and many ice-crystals heaved up in low ground. Scare up a bird which at first ran in the grass, then flew, — a snipe. See only a very few small water-bugs in the brook, but no large ones nor skaters.

[1] *Vide* account of eels in *Tribune* for Nov. 9th.

[2] *Vide* Nov. 8th.

As a general rule, the leaves hold on longest on our indigenous trees and shrubs which were the first to leaf out, *e. g.* aspen, white birch, meadow-sweet, gooseberry, roses, sallows.

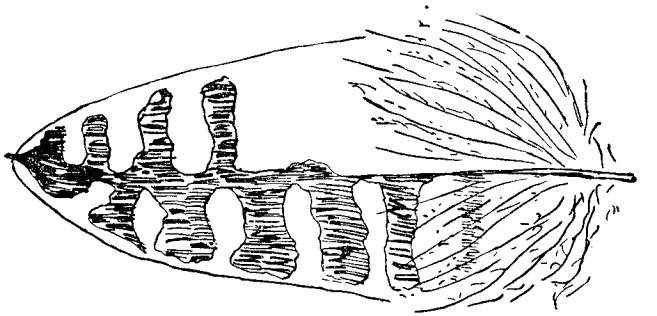
In the shade of the wood, on the hillside just west of the cold pond, am surprised to see the frost about the cistus not in the least melted. This, at least, is an evidence that cold weather is come. Looking closely at it, it reminds me by its form and position of the decodon bark half cracked open. It consists of four or five thin curled shavings of frost, so to speak horizontally grained, placed vertically and based on the stem, one within another, and curling toward the same side, forming a sort of fool's cap of different thicknesses, or cockles, or sugar-plums. It seems it is so cool that the frost about the cistus does not melt all day, in the shade. Coming home I have cold fingers, and must row to get warm.

In the meadows the pitcher-plants are bright-red.

This is the month of nuts and nutty thoughts, — that November whose name sounds so bleak and cheerless. Perhaps its harvest of thought is worth more than all the other crops of the year. Men are more serious now.

I find, in the wood-path this side that pond, thirteen kernels of corn close together, and five of them have the germ uncovered, the thin husk that was over them torn off. This might have been done accidentally by the

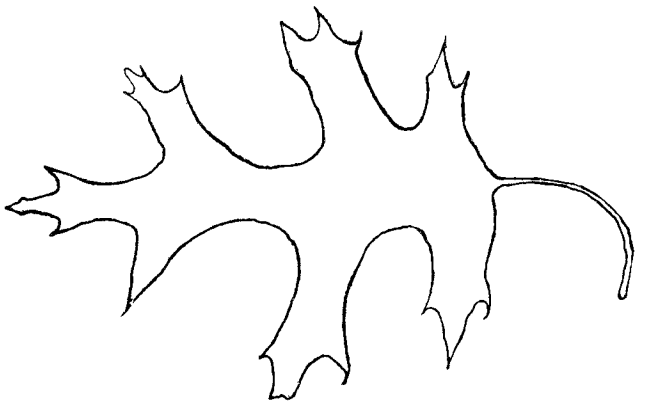
squirrel (?) in separating it from the ear or in transporting it. And this may be the origin of some accounts of their eating out the germ to prevent its sprouting. If they do eat it, perhaps it is because it is the softest (as it is) and perhaps the most savory part. These were at least a third of a mile from a corn-field.[1]



The tail-coverts of the young hen-hawk, *i. e.* this year's bird, at present are white, very handsomely barred or watered with dark brown in an irregular manner, somewhat as above, the bars on opposite sides of the midrib alternating in an agreeable manner. Such natural objects have suggested the "watered" figures or colors in the arts. Few mortals ever look down on the tail-coverts of a young hen-hawk, yet these are not only beautiful, but of a peculiar beauty, being differently marked and colored (to judge from Wilson's account of the old) from those of the old bird. Thus she finishes her works above men's sight.

[1] *Vide* fall of '59.

The scarlet oak leaf! What a graceful and pleasing outline! a combination of graceful curves and angles.



These deep bays in the leaf are agreeable to us as the thought of deep and smooth and secure havens to the mariner. But both your love of repose and your spirit of adventure are addressed, for both bays and headlands are represented, — sharp-pointed rocky capes and rounded bays with smooth strands. To the sailor's eye it is a much indented shore, and in his casual glance he thinks that if he doubles its sharp capes he will find a haven in its deep rounded bays. If I were a drawing-master, I would set my pupils to copying these leaves, that they might learn to draw firmly and gracefully. It is a shore to the aerial ocean, on which the windy surf beats. How different from the white oak leaf with its rounded headlands, on which no lighthouse need be placed![1]

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 280; Riv. 344.]

Some white oak leaves retain a smothered inward crimson fire long after they have fallen very pure and complete, more interesting to me than their fresher glow, because more indestructible, — an evening glow.

Nov. 12. I hear from Ricketson to-day that on the 10th the following trees, *which I had not seen lately*, were leafy and, as I infer, more or less unwithered. His words are, "Horse-chestnut quite full of yellow and green foliage. English walnut ditto.[1] Beech, linden (1), hawthorn (nearly perfect in green foliage, only a little decayed at the top, but in a sheltered place), silver linden, copper beech (2), elm (3), weeping ash,[2] *Euonymus Europæus* (4)."[3] Also "the guelder-rose"[4] and "*Bignonia radicans*[5] and *acuminata*" and "numerous shrubs in full leaf." Of those not European, "Osage orange (*Maclura*), *Cornus florida* (handsome), tulip, three-thorned acacia,[6] Mexican cypress."

He sent me specimens of those numbered above which were fresh, especially the fourth, and the third next, the second least so; but then what he sends for the American linden is greener than the European!! I find that E. Hoar observed the English elms with leaves or leafy still November 2d, near Salisbury.

It is much the coldest day yet, and the ground is a little frozen and resounds under my tread. All people move the brisker for the cold, yet are braced and a little

[1] Persian, according to Loudon.
[2] Variety of English *Fraxinus excelsior*, according to L.
[3] English, according to L.
[4] English.
[5] American.
[6] American.

elated by it. They love to say, "Cold day, sir." Though the days are shorter, you get more work out of a hired man than before, for he must work to keep warm.

P. M. — To Hill.

The riverside is skimmed over and presents a wintry aspect, — those great plaits, or folds, as it were, where the crystals have shot, wool-grass frozen in, and the thin white ice where the water has gone down.

Now for a brisk and energetic walk, with a will and a purpose. Have done with sauntering, in the idle sense. You must rush to the assault of winter. Make haste into the outskirts, climb the ramparts of the town, be on the alert and let nothing escape your observation. The army is all van.

The cold alone has brought down a good part of the remaining leaves of abeles and white willows. I see the handsome leaves of the last thickly strewn over the ice and reminding of grain even, half upside down. Pitch pine leaves are about all fallen.

The very common redness of the recent shoots, as white maples, huckleberries, etc., now that the twigs are bare, and on many sides masses of them are run together in a maze, adds to the general russet of nature. The black willow shoots are a very pale brownish yellow.

We are now reduced to browsing on buds and twigs, and methinks, with this diet and this cold, we shall look to the stall-fed thinkers like those unkempt cattle in meadows now, grazing the withered grass.

Examining closely the base of some frost-weed, I find in each case a little frost firmly attached to the naked woody stem just under the bark, having burst the last

for about an inch along the stem and elevated it. Perhaps this weed dies down slowly, since it blossoms a second time, and there is more sap now in the stem near its base than usual, which escapes in a vapor from the stem, and, being frozen, forms this kind of icicle.

I think that the change to some higher color in a leaf is an evidence that it has arrived at a late and more perfect and final maturity, answering to the maturity of fruits, and not to that of green leaves, etc., etc., which merely serve a purpose.[1] The word "ripe" is thought by some to be derived from the verb "to reap," according to which that is ripe which is ready to be reaped. The fall of the leaf is preceded by a ripe old age.

Nov. 13. 8.30 A. M. — To Hill.

I notice of late the darker green (livid?) of the arbor-vitæ and other evergreens, the effect of cold. So they are never so purely bright a green as immediately after their fall. They are not perfectly *ever*-green.

I hear go over, not far from the house, goldfinches, as I think, — their mewing note and ricochet flight, — I think not redpolls, for I hear no rattling notes. Also hear a robin's note.

Last night was quite cold, and the ground is white with frost. Thus gradually, but steadily, winter approaches. First there is the bleached grass, then the frost, then snow, the fields growing more and more hoary. There is frost not only on all the withered grass and stubble, but it is particularly thick and white and handsome around the throat of every hole and chink in

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 250; Riv. 306.]

the earth's surface, the congealed breath of the earth as it were, so that you would think at first it was the entry to some woodchuck's, or squirrel's, or mouse's, retreat. But it is the great dormant earth gone into winter quarters here, the earth letting off steam after the summer's work is over.

As I stand on the hill at 9 A. M., it looks like snow; the sky is overcast; smokes go up thickly from the village, answering to the frost in the chinks; and there is a remarkable stillness, as if it were earlier, the effect of the colder weather merely, as it were stiffening things. Leaves, twigs, birds (except the chickadee, and its feeble note seems to enhance the stillness), and insects are hushed. The few tinkling sounds — the chopping, or the like — are heard far and distinctly. It is like the calm before a hurricane or an earthquake, this stillness which precedes the winter's setting in.

Larches now look dark or brownish yellow.

Now, on the advent of much colder weather, the last *Populus tremuliformis* has lost its leaves, the sheltered dogwood is withered, and even the scarlet oak may be considered as extinguished, and the larch looks brown and nearly bare, and the few leaves left here and there on the indigenous shrubs named on the 9th are being rapidly killed by the same cause, and are falling.

Now for twinkling light reflected from unseen windows in the horizon in the early twilight.

One hickory at least (on the hill) has not lost its leaves yet, *i. e.*, has a good many left. So they are a month falling.

I see some feathers of a blue jay scattered along a

wood-path, and at length come to the body of the bird. What a neat and delicately ornamented creature, finer than any work of art in a lady's boudoir, with its soft light purplish-blue crest and its dark-blue or purplish secondaries (the narrow half) finely barred with dusky. It is the more glorious to live in Concord because the jay is so splendidly painted.[1]

A large flock of geese go over just before night.

After expecting snow all day, — though we did not know but it would prove rain, — we looked out the window at 9 P. M. and saw the ground for the most part white with the first sugaring, which at first we could hardly tell from a mild moonlight, — only there was no moon. Thus it comes stealthily in the night and changes the whole aspect of the earth.

Of course frozen ground, ice, and snow have now banished the few remaining skaters (if there were any?), crickets, and water-bugs.

It is wonderful what gradation and harmony there is in nature. The light reflected from bare twigs at this season — *i. e.*, since they began to be bare, in the latter part of October — is not only like that from gossamer, but like that which will ere long be reflected from the ice that will incrust them. So the bleached herbage of the fields is like frost, and frost like snow, and one prepares for the other.

Nov. 14. It is very cold and windy; thermometer 26. I walk to Walden and Andromeda Ponds. It is all at once perfect winter. I walk on frozen ground two-

[1] [Channing, p. 300.]

thirds covered with a sugaring of dry snow, and this strong and cutting northwest wind makes the oak leaves rustle dryly enough to set your heart on edge. A great many have fallen, even since the snow last evening. Take a citizen out into an oak sprout-land when there is a sugaring of dry snow and a cold, cutting northwest wind rustles the leaves. A sympathetic shiver will seize him. He will know of no fire to warm his wits by. He has no pleasing pursuit to follow through these difficulties, no traps to inspect, no chopping to do. Every resounding step on the frozen earth is a vain knocking at the door of what was lately genial Nature, his bountiful mother, now turned a stepmother. He is left outside to starve. The rustling leaves sound like the fierce breathing of wolves, — an endless pack, half famished, from the north, impelled by hunger to seize him. Of birds only the chickadees seem really at home. Where they are is a hearth and a bright fire constantly burning. The tree sparrows must be very lively to keep warm. The rest keep close to-day.

You will see where a mouse (or mole?) has run under the thinnest snow, like this. Such humble paths they prefer, perhaps to escape nocturnal foes.

Now I begin to notice the silver downy twigs of the sweet-fern in the sun (lately bare), the red or crimson twigs and buds of the high blueberry. The different colors of the water andromeda in different lights.

If he looks into the water, he gets no comfort there, for that is cold and empty, expecting ice.

Now, while the frosty air begins to nip your fingers and your nose, the frozen ground rapidly wears away

the soles of your shoes, as sandpaper might; the old she wolf is nibbling at your very extremities. The frozen ground eating away the soles of your shoes is only typical of the vulture that gnaws your heart this month.

Now all that moves migrates, or has migrated. Ducks are gone by. The citizen has sought the town. Probably the witch-hazel and many other flowers lingered till the 11th, when it was colder. The last leaves and flowers (?) may be said to fall about the middle of November.

Snow and cold drive the doves to your door, and so your thoughts make new alliances.

Nov. 15. P. M. — To Grackle Swamp.

A very fine snow falling, just enough to whiten the bare spots a little. I go to look for evergreen ferns before they are covered up.[1] The end of last month and the first part of this is the time. I do not know that I find more than one kind now in that swamp, and of that the fertile fronds are mostly decayed. All lie flat, ready to be buried in snow.

Slight as the snow is, you are now reminded occasionally in your walks that you have contemporaries, and perchance predecessors. I see the track of a fox which was returning from his visit to a farmyard last night, and, in the wood-path, of a man and a dog. The dog must have been a large one. I see their shadows before me. In another place, where the snow is so slight and lifted up on the withered grass that no track is left, I see by the cakes or balls of snow that have dropped from

[1] For ferns *vide* 17th.

his shoes that a man has passed. This would be known for a man and a dog's track in any part of the world. Five toes in a bundle, somewhat diamond-shape, forming a sort of rosette, are the print of the dog, whether on the sands of Africa or the snow of New England. The track of his master is somewhat more variable, yet reducible within certain limits.

The *Lycopodium dendroideum* var. *obscurum* appears to be just in bloom in the swamp about the Hemlocks (the regular one (not variety) is apparently earlier), — later than the *Lycopodium complanatum*, which is done there.

Gossamer, methinks, belongs to the latter part of October and first part of November; also the frost-weed and evergreen ferns. Buds and twigs (like gossamer), and the mazes made by twigs, and the silvery light on this down, and the silver-haired andropogon grass to the first half of November.

The water andromeda leaves have fallen, and the persistent turned that red brown; how long?

Nov. 16. P. M. — To Hubbard's Close.

A cold and blustering afternoon; sky for the most part overcast.

The *Cornus Canadensis* is called by Loudon "a deciduous herbaceous plant," the pyrolas "ever-green herbaceous plants." The bunchberry leaves are now little if any withered,[1] but generally drooping, the four hanging together as is the habit of the *sericea* and *florida*, the lambkill, etc. The plant dies down to its perennial

[1] I see, next day, that in exposed places they are.

root each year, and a fresh one shoots up in the spring. You can see its pink bud already strongly formed. But this year's plant is very slow to die, and I suspect many of the leaves remain green all winter under the snow. They are now generally purplish-tinged. Let me observe in what respect the pyrolas are more evergreen. The new bud is formed between the present two leaves, the old leaves, lower on the stem or vine, being mostly decayed.

There are many large limbs strewn about the woods, which were broken off by that strong southeast wind in peach time. These are now thickly leaved, the dead wood not being able to cast off the withered leaves; but the leaves having died thus prematurely are of a different color from that their companions changed to, — a peculiar yellow-brown (*i. e.* chestnuts and oaks) with more or less green in it.

I see a gray squirrel, eight or ten rods off in Hubbard's large wood, scamper over the leaves and run up an oak. From the oak it crosses ascending into a tall white pine top, and there lies concealed, and I can see no more of him.

The earth half covered with this slight snow, merely grayed with [it], is the more like the bare gray limbs of oak woods now, and such woods and the earth make the more uniform impression.

Methinks the wintergreen, pipsissewa, is our handsomest evergreen, so liquid glossy green and dispersed almost all over the woods. The mountain laurel, the *Lycopodium dendroideum*, *complanatum*, and *lucidulum*, and the terminal shield fern are also very interesting.

Preaching? Lecturing? Who are ye that ask for these things? What do ye want to hear, ye puling infants? A trumpet-sound that would train you up to mankind, or a nurse's lullaby? The preachers and lecturers deal with men of straw, as they are men of straw themselves. Why, a free-spoken man, of sound lungs, cannot draw a long breath without causing your rotten institutions to come toppling down by the vacuum he makes. Your church is a baby-house made of blocks, and so of the state. It would be a relief to breathe one's self occasionally among men. If there were any magnanimity in us, any grandeur of soul, anything but sects and parties undertaking to patronize God and keep the mind within bounds, how often we might encourage and provoke one another by a free expression! I will not consent to walk with my mouth muzzled, not till I am rabid, until there is danger that I shall bite the unoffending and that my bite will produce hydrophobia.

Freedom of speech! It hath not entered into your hearts to conceive what those words mean. It is not leave given me by your sect to say this or that; it is when leave is given to your sect to withdraw. The church, the state, the school, the magazine, think they are liberal and free! It is the freedom of a prison-yard. I ask only that one fourth part of my honest thoughts be spoken aloud. What is it you tolerate, you church to-day? Not truth, but a lifelong hypocrisy. Let us have institutions framed not out of our rottenness, but out of our soundness. This factitious piety is like stale gingerbread. I would like to suggest what a pack of fools and cowards we mankind are. They want me to agree not to breathe

too hard in the neighborhood of their paper castles. If I should draw a long breath in the neighborhood of these institutions, their weak and flabby sides would fall out, for my own inspiration would exhaust the air about them. The church! it is eminently the timid institution, and the heads and pillars of it are constitutionally and by principle the greatest cowards in the community. The voice that goes up from the monthly concerts is not so brave and so cheering as that which rises from the frog-ponds of the land. The best "preachers," so called, are an effeminate class; their bravest thoughts wear petticoats. If they have any manhood they are sure to forsake the ministry, though they were to turn their attention to baseball. Look at your editors of popular magazines. I have dealt with two or three the most liberal of them. They are afraid to print a whole sentence, a *round* sentence, a free-spoken sentence. They want to get thirty thousand subscribers, and they will do anything to get them. They consult the D.D.'s and all the letters of the alphabet before printing a sentence.[1] I have been into many of these cowardly New England towns where they *profess* Christianity, — invited to speak, perchance, — where they were trembling in their shoes at the thought of the things you might say, as if they knew their weak side, — that they were weak on all sides. The devil they have covenanted with is a timid devil. If they would let their sores alone they might heal, and they could to the wars again like men; but instead of that they get together in meeting-house cellars, rip off the bandages and poultice them with sermons.

[1] [See *Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 469; *Misc.*, Riv. 271.]

One of our New England towns is sealed up hermetically like a molasses-hogshead, — such is its sweet Christianity, — only a little of the sweet trickling out at the cracks enough to daub you. The few more liberal-minded or indifferent inhabitants are the flies that buzz about it. It is Christianity bunged up. I see awful eyes looking out through a bull's-eye at the bunghole. It is doubtful if they can fellowship with me.

The further you go up country, I think the worse it is, the more benighted they are. On the one side you will find a barroom which holds the "Scoffers," so called, on the other a vestry where is a monthly concert of prayer. There is just as little to cheer you in one of these companies as the other. It may be often the truth and righteousness of the barroom that saves the town. There is nothing to redeem the bigotry and moral cowardice of New-Englanders in my eyes. You may find a cape which runs six miles into the sea that has not a man of moral courage upon it. What is called faith is an immense prejudice. Like the Hindoos and Russians [?] and Sandwich-Islanders (that were), they are the creatures of an institution. They do not think; they adhere like oysters to what their fathers and grandfathers adhered to. How often is it that the shoemaker, by thinking over his last, can think as valuable a thought as he makes a valuable shoe?

I have been into the town, being invited to speak to the inhabitants, not valuing, not having read even, the Assembly's Catechism, and I try to stimulate them by reporting the best of my experience. I see the craven priest looking round for a hole to escape at, alarmed

because it was he that invited me thither, and an awful silence pervades the audience. They think they will never get me there again. But the seed has not all fallen in stony and shallow ground.

The following are our shrubby evergreen plants (not including *Coniferæ*):[1] —

Mitchella repens
Linnæa
Andromeda Polifolia
Cassandra calyculata
Mayflower
Checkerberry
Mountain laurel
Lambkill
Kalmia glauca
Labrador tea
Common cranberry
European cranberry

To which I will add the herbaceous: —

Chimaphila umbellata
maculata

N. B. — *Rubus hispidus* leaves last through the winter, turning reddish.[2]

It is no compliment to be invited to lecture before the rich Institutes and Lyceums. The settled lecturers are as tame as the settled ministers. The audiences do not want to hear any prophets; they do not wish to be stimulated and instructed, but entertained. They, their wives and daughters, go to the Lyceum to suck a sugarplum. The little of medicine they get is disguised with

[1] Genista is *not* evergreen. *Vide Mar.* 6, 1859.
[2] Gold-thread. *Vide* 25th.

sugar. It is never the reformer they hear there, but a faint and timid echo of him only. They seek a pass-time merely. Their greatest guns and sons of thunder are only wooden guns and great-grandsons of thunder, who give them smooth words well pronounced from manuscripts well punctuated, — they who have stolen the little fire they have from prophets whom the audience would quake to hear. They ask for orators that will entertain them and leave them where they found them. The most successful lecturing on Washington, or what-not, is an awful scratching of backs to the tune, it may be, of fifty thousand dollars. Sluggards that want to have a lullaby sung to them! Such manikins as I have described are they, alas, who have made the greatest stir (and what a shallow stir) in the church and Lyceum, and in Congress. They want a medicine that will not interfere with their daily meals.

There is the Lowell Institute with its restrictions, requiring a certain faith in the lecturers. How can any free-thinking man accept its terms? It is as if you were to resolve that you would not eat oysters that were not of a particular faith, — that, for instance, did not believe the Thirty-Nine Articles, — for the faith that is in an oyster is just as valuable as the faith referred to in Mr. Lowell's will. These popular lecturers, our preachers, and magazines are for women and children *in the bad sense*.

The curators have on their lists the names of the men who came before the Philomathean Institute in the next large town and did no harm: left things *in statu quo*, so that all slept the better for it; only confirmed the audience in their previous badness; spoke a good word for

God; gave the clergy, that heavy set, a lift; told the youngsters to be good boys. A man may have a good deal to say who has not any desk to thump on, who does not thunder in bad air.

They want all of a man but his truth and independence and manhood.

One who spoke to their condition would of course make them wince, and they would retaliate, *i. e.* kick him out, or stop their ears.

The cold weather which began on the 12th, with the snow of the 13th and since, suddenly killed the few remaining living leaves, without any exceptions to speak of. Most foreign plants at once dropped their leaves, though pretty thick before, but there are many still on the privet. The sweet-fern in some places has still many green, more than any indigenous shrub or tree, though far the greater part of them (the sweet-ferns) are bare or withered. Probably the larch about fallen.

Nov. 17. The ground has remained frozen since the morning of the 12th.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

The polypody on the rock is much shrivelled by the late cold. The edges are curled up, and it is not nearly so fair as it was ten days ago. I see a small botrychium in the swampy wood west of river, opposite Emerson's field, quite fresh, not at all injured.

The musquash are more active since the cold weather. I see more of them about the river now, swimming back and forth across the river, and diving in the middle, where I lose them. They dive off the round-backed,

black mossy stones, which, when small and slightly exposed, look much like themselves. In swimming show commonly three parts with water between. One sitting in the sun, as if for warmth, on the opposite shore to me looks quite reddish brown. They avail themselves of the edge of the ice now found along the sides of the river to feed on.

Much *Lycopodium complanatum* did not shed pollen on the 3d, and the *Lycopodium dendroideum* var. *obscurum* sheds it only within a very few days[1] (was apparently in its prime yesterday). So it would seem that *these* lycopodiums, at least, which have their habitat on the forest floor and but lately attracted my attention there (since the withered leaves fell around them and revealed them by the contrast of their color and they emerged from obscurity), — it would seem that they at the same time attained to their prime, their flowering season. It was coincident with this prominence.[2]

Leaving my boat, I walk through the low wood west of Dove Rock, toward the scarlet oak. The very sunlight on the pale-brown bleached fields is an interesting object these cold days. I naturally look toward [it] as to a wood-fire. Not only different objects are presented to our attention at different seasons of the year, but we are in a frame of body and of mind to appreciate different objects at different seasons. I see one thing when it is cold and another when it is warm.

Looking toward the sun now when an hour high, there being many small alders and birches between me and it for half a dozen rods, the light reflected from their

[1] Nov. 2, 1853. [2] *Vide* 30th.

twigs has the appearance of an immense cobweb with closely concentric lines, of which I see about one fourth, on account of the upward curve of the twigs on each side, and the light not being reflected to me at all from one side of the trees directly in front of me. The light is thus very pleasantly diffused.

We are interested at this season by the manifold ways in which the light is reflected to us. Ascending a little knoll covered with sweet-fern, shortly after, the sun appearing but a point above the sweet-fern, its light was reflected from a dense mass of the bare downy twigs of this plant in a surprising manner which would not be believed if described. It was quite like the sunlight reflected from grass and weeds covered with hoar frost. Yet in an ordinary light these are but dark or dusky looking twigs with scarcely a noticeable downiness. Yet as I saw it, there was a perfect halo of light resting on the knoll as I moved to right or left. A myriad of surfaces are now prepared to reflect the light. This is one of the hundred silvery lights of November. The setting sun, too, is reflected from windows more brightly than at any other season. "November Lights" would be a theme for me.

I am surprised to see a stake-driver fly up from the weeds within a stone's throw of my boat's place. It drops its excrement from thirty feet in the air, and this falling, one part being heavier than another, takes the form of a snake, and suggests that this may be the origin of some of the stories of this bird swallowing a snake or eel which passed through it.

Nature is moderate and loves degrees. Winter is not all

white and sere. Some trees are evergreen to cheer us, and on the forest floor our eyes do not fall on sere brown leaves alone, but some evergreen shrubs are placed there to relieve the eye. Mountain laurel, lambkill, checkerberry, wintergreen, etc., etc., etc., and a few evergreen ferns scattered about keep up the semblance of summer still.

As for the evergreen ferns, I see now —

Common polypody (though shrivelled by cold where exposed).
Asplenium trichomanes.
A. ebeneum.
Aspidium spinulosum (?), large frond, small-fruited, in swamp southeast Brister's Spring, on 16th.
A. cristatum (?), Grackle Swamp on the 15th, with oftener what I take to be the narrower and more open sterile frond.
A. marginale (common).
A. achrostichoides (terminal shield).

The first one and the last two are particularly handsome, the last especially, it has so thick a frond.

Nov. 18. P. M. — To Conantum.

Notice the short bright-yellow willow twigs on Hubbard's Causeway. They are prominent now, first, because they are bare; second, because high-colored always and [because of] this rarity of bright colors at present; third, because of the clear air and November light. For the same reason I notice nowadays the red twigs of the silky cornel by the river. The black willow twigs are tawny in the mass, almost cinnamon.

The fruitless enterprise of some persons who rush helter-skelter, carrying out their crazy scheme, — merely "putting it through," as they phrase it, — reminds me

of those thistle-downs which, not being detained nor steadied by any seed at the base, are blown away at the first impulse and go rolling over all obstacles. They may indeed go fastest and farthest, but where they rest at last not even a thistle springs. I meet these useless barren thistle-downs driving over the fields. They remind me of busy merchants and brokers on 'change doing business on credit, gambling with fancy stocks, that have failed over and over again, assisted to get a-going again to no purpose, — a great ado about nothing, — all in my eye, — with nothing to deposit, not of the slightest use to the great thistle tribe, not even tempting a jackass. When you right or extricate one of these fellows and set him before the wind again, it is worth the while to look and see if he has any seed of success under him. Such a one you may know afar — he floats more slowly and steadily — and of his enterprise expect results.

Am surprised to see Fair Haven Pond completely frozen over during the last four days. It will probably open again. Thus, while all the channel elsewhere is open and a mere edging of ice amid the weeds is seen, this great expansion is completely bridged over, thus early.

Some mocker-nuts, and I think some hickories, on Conantum are not yet bare. Their withered leaves hold on almost like the oaks. Now is the time to gather the mocker-nuts.

I go along under the east side of Lee's Cliff, looking at the evergreen ferns. The marginal fern is the commonest. How pretty the smallest asplenium sometimes, in

a recess under a shelving rock, as it were pinned on rosettewise, as if it were the head of a breastpin.

I look south from the Cliff. The westering sun just out of sight behind the hill. Its rays from those bare twigs across the pond are bread and cheese to me. So many oak leaves have fallen that the white birch stems are more distinct amid the young oaks; I see to the bone. See those brave birches prepared to stand the winter through on the hillsides. They never sing, "What 's this dull town to me?" The maples skirting the meadows (in dense phalanxes) look like light infantry advanced for a swamp fight. Ah, dear *Novem*ber, ye must be sacred to the *Nine* surely.[1]

The early willow catkins already peep out a quarter of an inch. Early crowfoot is reddened at Lee's.

Nov. 19. P. M. — Mocker-nutting, to Conantum.

The lambkill and water andromeda are turned quite dark red where much exposed; in shelter are green yet.

Those long mocker-nuts appear not to have got well ripe this year. They do not shed their husks, and the meat is mostly skinny and soft and flabby. Perhaps the season has been too cold. I shook the trees. It is just the time to get them. How hard they rattle down, like stones! There is a harmony between this stony fruit and these hard, tough limbs which bear it. I was surprised to see how much the hickory-tops had been bent and split, apparently by ice, tough as they are. They seem to have suffered more than evergreens do. The husks of one tree scarcely gaped open at all, and could

[1] [Channing, p. 107.]

not be removed. I did not think at first why these nuts had not been gathered, but I suspect it may be because Puffer, who probably used to get them, has committed suicide.

Nov. 20. P. M. — To Ministerial Swamp.

I have seen more gray squirrels of late (as well as musquash); I think not merely because the trees are bare but because they are stirring about more, — nutting, etc.

Martial Miles tells me of a snapping turtle caught in the river at Waltham, about October 1st, he thinks, which weighed fifty-five pounds (?). He saw it. There were two fighting.

He says that a marsh hawk had his nest in his meadow several years, and though he shot the female three times, the male with but little delay returned with a new mate. He often watched these birds, and saw that the female could tell when the male was coming a long way off. He thought that he fed her and the young all together (?). She would utter a scream when she perceived him, and, rising into the air (before or after the scream?), she turned over with her talons uppermost, while he passed some three rods above, and caught without fail the prey which he let drop, and then carried it to her young. He had seen her do this many times, and always without failing.

The common milkweed (*Asclepias Cornuti*) and some thistles still discounting.

I go across the great Tony Wheeler pasture. It is a cool but pleasant November afternoon. The glory of

November is in its silvery, sparkling lights. I think it is peculiar among the months for the amount [of] sparkling white light reflected from a myriad of surfaces. The air is so clear, and there are so many bare, polished, bleached or hoary surfaces to reflect the light. Few things are more exhilarating, if it is only moderately cold, than to walk over bare pastures and see the abundant sheeny light like a universal halo, reflected from the russet and bleached earth. The earth shines perhaps more than in spring, for the reflecting surfaces are less dimmed now. It is not a red but a white light. In the woods and about swamps, as Ministerial, also, there are several kinds of twigs, this year's shoots of shrubs, which have a slight down or hairiness, hardly perceptible in ordinary lights though held in the hand, but which, seen toward the sun, reflect a cheering silvery light. Such are not only the sweet-fern, but the hazel in a less degree, alder twigs, and even the short huckleberry twigs, also lespedeza stems. It is as if they were covered with a myriad fine spiculæ which reflect a dazzling white light, exceedingly warming to the spirits and imagination. This gives a character of snug warmth and cheerfulness to the swamp, as if it were a place where the sun consorted with rabbits and partridges. Each individual hair on every such shoot above the swamp is bathed in glowing sunlight and is directly conversant with the day god.

The cinnamon-brown of withered pinweeds (how long?) colors whole fields. It may be put with the now paler brown of hardhack heads and the now darker brown of the dicksonia fern by walls.

I notice this afternoon that the pasture white oaks have commonly a few leaves left on the lower limbs and also next the trunk.

Winter-rye is another conspicuous green amid the withered grass fields.

The rubuses are particularly hardy to retain their leaves. Not only low blackberry and high blackberry leaves linger still fresh, but the *Rubus hispidus* leaves last all winter like an evergreen. The great round-leaved pyrola, dwarf cornel, checkerberry, and lambkill have a lake or purplish tinge on the under side at present, and these last two are red or purplish above. It is singular that a blush should suffuse the under side of the thick-leaved pyrola while it is still quite green above.

When walnut husks have fairly opened, showing the white shells within, — the trees being either quite bare or with a few withered leaves at present, — a slight jar with the foot on the limbs causes them to rattle down in a perfect shower, and on bare, grass-grown pasture ground it is very easy picking them up.

As I returned over Conantum summit yesterday, just before sunset, and was admiring the various rich browns of the shrub oak plain across the river, which seemed to me more wholesome and remarkable, as more permanent, than their late brilliant colors, I was surprised to see a broad halo travelling with me and always opposite the sun to me, at least a quarter of a mile off and some three rods wide, on the shrub oaks.

The rare wholesome and permanent beauty of withered oak leaves of various hues of brown mottling a hillside, especially seen when the sun is low, — Quaker

colors, sober ornaments, beauty that quite satisfies the eye. The richness and variety are the same as before, the colors different, more incorruptible and lasting.[1]

Sprague of Cohasset states to the Natural History Society, September 1st, '58, that the light under the tail of the common glow-worm "remained for 15 minutes after death."

Who are bad neighbors? They who suffer their neighbors' cattle to go at large because they don't want their ill will,— are afraid to anger them. They are abettors of the ill-doers.

Who are the religious? They who do not differ much from mankind generally, except that they are more conservative and timid and useless, but who in their conversation and correspondence talk about kindness of Heavenly Father. Instead of going bravely about their business, trusting God ever, they do like him who says "Good sir" to the one he fears, or whistles to the dog that is rushing at him.[2] And because they take His name in vain so often they presume that they are better than you. Oh, their religion is a rotten squash.

Nov. 21. P. M. — To Hubbard's place.

See small water-bugs in Nut Meadow Brook in one place. Probably they were not to be found in the late cold weather, 12th, 13th, etc.

See from Clamshell apparently two little dippers, one up-stream, the other down, swimming and diving in the perfectly smooth river this still, overcast day.

Probably the bulk of the scarlet oak leaves are fallen.

[1] *Vide* four pages forward. [2] [Channing, p. 89.]

I find very handsome ones strewn over the floor of Potter's maple swamp. They are brown above, but still purple beneath. These are so deeply cut and the middle and lobes of the leaf so narrow that they look like the remnant of leafy stuff out of which leaves have been cut, or like scrap-tin. The lobes are remarkably sharp-pointed and armed with long bristles. Yes, they lie one above another like masses of scrap-tin.[1]

Nov. 22. In surveying Mr. Bigelow's wood-lot today I found at the northeasterly angle what in the deed from the Thayers in '38 was called "an old stump by the wall." It is still quite plain and may last twenty years longer. It is oak.

This is quite a pleasant day, but hardly amounting to Indian summer. I see swarms of large mosquito-like insects dancing in the garden. They may be a large kind of *Tipulidæ*. Had slender ringed abdomens and no plumes. The river is quite low, — about as low as it has been, for it has not been very low.

About the first of November a wild pig from the West, said to weigh three hundred pounds, jumped out of a car at the depot and made for the woods. The owner had to give up the chase at once, not to lose his passage, while some railroad employees pursued the pig even into the woods a mile and a half off, but there the pig turned and pursued them so resolutely that they ran for their lives and one climbed a tree. The next day being Sunday, they turned out in force with a gun and a large mastiff, but still the pig had the best of it, — fairly

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 279; Riv. 342.]

frightened the men by his fierce charges, — and the dog was so wearied and injured by the pig that the men were obliged to carry him in their arms. The pig stood it better than the dog. Ran between the gun man's legs, threw him over, and hurt his shoulder, though pierced in many places by a pitchfork. At the last accounts, he had been driven or baited into a barn in Lincoln, but no one durst enter, and they were preparing to shoot him. Such pork might be called venison.[1]

Nov. 23. A northeasterly storm, with occasional sugarings of snow.

Nov. 24. P. M. — To Cliffs and Walden.

There is a slight sugaring of snow on the ground. On grass ground there is much the less, and that is barely perceptible, while plowed ground is quite white, and I can thus distinguish such fields even to the horizon. It is dark, drizzling still from time to time, sprinkling or snowing a little. I see more snow in the north and northwest horizon. I can not only distinguish plowed fields — regular white squares in the midst of russet — but even cart-paths, and foot or cow paths a quarter of a mile long, as I look across to Conantum. It is pleasant to see thus revealed as a feature, even in the distant landscape, a cow-path leading from far inland down to the river.

The young oaks on the plain under the Cliffs are of a more uniform color than a fortnight ago, — a reddish brown.

Fair Haven Pond is closed still.

[1] Caught him at last in a snare, and so conveyed him to Brighton.

It is a lichen day, with a little moist snow falling. The great green lungwort lichen shows now on the oaks, — strange that there should be none on the pines close by, — and the fresh bright chestnut fruit of other kinds, glistening with moisture, brings life and immortality to light.[1] That side of the trunk on which the lichens are thickest is the side on which the snow lodges in long ridges.

When I looked out this morning, the landscape presented a very pretty wintry sight, little snow as there was. Being very moist, it had lodged on every twig, and every one had its counterpart in a light downy white one, twice or thrice its own depth, resting on it.

I hear a screech owl in Wheeler's wood by the railroad, and I heard one a few evenings ago at home.

Saw a scarlet oak some sixteen inches in diameter at three feet from ground blown down evidently in that southeast wind some months ago. It stood on the southerly edge of Wheeler's wood, and had fallen north-northwest, breaking off a white oak nine inches in diameter and a small white pine in its fall. It was a perfectly sound oak. I was surprised to see how little root it had. Very few roots reached deeper than two feet, — the thickness of the crust of earth turned up by its fall, — and those that did were not bigger than one's finger; and there was not a root bigger than your finger at four feet from the centre on any side of the more than semicircle exposed. No wonder it was uprooted!

Here is an author who contrasts love for "the beauties of the person" with that for "excellences of the mind,"

[1] [Channing, pp. 111, 112.]

as if these were the alternatives. I must say that it is for neither of these that I should feel the strongest affection. I love that one with whom I sympathize, be she "beautiful" or otherwise, of excellent mind or not.

Nov. 25. P. M. — To Ministerial Swamp.

I go through the Dennis Swamp by railroad. See a few high blueberry buds which have fairly started, expanded into small red leaves, apparently within a few weeks.[1]

The *Rubus hispidus* is now very common and conspicuous amid the withered grass and leaves of the swamp, with its green or reddened leaves; also the gold-thread. The prinos berries on their light-brown twigs are quite abundant and handsome.

While most keep close to their parlor fires this cold and blustering Thanksgiving afternoon, and think with compassion of those who are abroad, I find the sunny south side of this swamp as warm as their parlors, and warmer to my spirit. Aye, there is a serenity and warmth here which the parlor does not suggest, enhanced by the sound of the wind roaring on the northwest side of the swamp a dozen or so rods off. What a wholesome and inspiring warmth is this! I see aspen (*tremuliformis*) leaves, which have long since fallen, turned black, which also shows the relation of this tree to the willow, many species of which also turn black.

Pass Tarbell's behind. The farmer, now on the

[1] *Vide* Oct. 13, 1859.

down-hill of life, at length gets his new barn and barn-cellar built, far away in some unfrequented vale. This for twoscore years he has struggled for. This is his poem done at last, — to get the means to dig that cavity and rear those timbers aloft. How many millions have done just like him! — or failed to do it! There is so little originality, and just so little, and just as much, fate, so to call it, in literature. With steady struggle, with alternate failure and success, he at length gets a barn-cellar completed, and then a tomb. You would say that there was a tariff on thinking and originality.

I pass through the Ministerial Swamp and ascend the steep hill on the south cut off last winter. In the barren poplar hollow just north of the old mountain cranberry is another, the largest, patch of it (*i. e.* bear-berry) that I remember in Concord. How often I see these aspens standing dead in barren, perhaps frosty, valleys in the woods!

Most shrub oaks there have lost their leaves (*Quercus ilicifolia*), which, very fair and perfect, cover the ground.

You are surprised, late these afternoons, a half an hour perhaps before sunset, after walking in the shade or on looking round from a height, to see the singularly bright yellow light of the sun reflected from pines, especially pitch pines, or the withered oak leaves, through the clear, cold air, the wind, it may be, blowing strong from the northwest. Sunlight in summer falling on green woods is not, methinks, such a noticeable phenomenon. I stand on that high hill south of the swamp cut off by C. (?) Wheeler last winter, and when I look

round northeast I am greatly surprised by the very brilliant sunlight of which I speak, surpassing the glare of any noontide, it seems to me.

Nov. 26. The various evergreens, large and small, may be said generally to turn green or to have turned reddish about the middle of November. Got in boat on account of Reynolds's new fence going up (earlier than usual). A good many leaves of the sweet-fern, though withered now, still hold on; so that this shrub may be put with the oaks in this respect. So far as I remember, it is peculiar among shrubs in this.

Walden is very low, compared with itself for some years. The bar between pond and Hubbard's pond-hole is four feet wide, but the main bar is not *bare*. There is a shore at least six feet wide inside the alders at my old shore, and what is remarkable, I find that not only Goose Pond also has fallen correspondingly within a month, but even the smaller pond-holes only four or five rods over, such as Little Goose Pond, shallow as they are. I begin to suspect, therefore, that this rise and fall extending through a long series of years is not peculiar to the Walden system of ponds, but is true of ponds generally, and perhaps of rivers, though in their case it may be more difficult to detect. Even around Little Goose Pond the shore is laid bare for a space even wider than at Walden, it being less abrupt. The Pout's Nest, also, has lost ten feet on all sides.

Those pouts' nests which I discovered in the spring are high and dry six feet from the water. I overhauled one, ripping up the frozen roof with my hands. The

roof was only three inches thick, then a cavity and a bottom of wet mud. In this mud I found two small frogs, one apparently a *Rana palustris* less than an inch long, the other apparently a young *R. pipiens* an inch and a half long. They were quite sluggish and had evidently gone into winter quarters there, but probably some mink would have got them.

The Pout's Nest was frozen just enough to bear, with two or three breathing-places left. The principal of these was a narrow opening about a rod long by eighteen inches wide within six feet of the southwest side of the pond-hole, and the immediately adjacent ice was darker and thinner than the rest, having formed quite recently. I observed that the water at this breathing-chink was all alive with pollywogs, mostly of large size, though some were small, which apparently had collected there chiefly, as the water-surface was steadily contracted, for the sake of the air (?). There [were] more than a hundred of them there, or ten or a dozen in a square foot, and many more under the ice. I saw one firmly frozen in and dead. One had legs, and his tail was half eaten off by some creature, yet he was alive. There were also one or two frogs stirring among them. Here was evidently warmer water, probably a spring, and they had crowded to it. Looking more attentively, I detected also a great many minnows about one inch long either floating dead there or frozen into the ice, — at least fifty of them. They were shaped like bream, but had the transverse bars of perch. There were more pollywogs in other parts of the pond-hole, and at the north end I saw two perch about seven inches long, dead, close to the shore,

round northeast I am greatly surprised by the very brilliant sunlight of which I speak, surpassing the glare of any noontide, it seems to me.

Nov. 26. The various evergreens, large and small, may be said generally to turn green or to have turned reddish about the middle of November. Got in boat on account of Reynolds's new fence going up (earlier than usual). A good many leaves of the sweet-fern, though withered now, still hold on; so that this shrub may be put with the oaks in this respect. So far as I remember, it is peculiar among shrubs in this.

Walden is very low, compared with itself for some years. The bar between pond and Hubbard's pond-hole is four feet wide, but the main bar is not *bare*. There is a shore at least six feet wide inside the alders at my old shore, and what is remarkable, I find that not only Goose Pond also has fallen correspondingly within a month, but even the smaller pond-holes only four or five rods over, such as Little Goose Pond, shallow as they are. I begin to suspect, therefore, that this rise and fall extending through a long series of years is not peculiar to the Walden system of ponds, but is true of ponds generally, and perhaps of rivers, though in their case it may be more difficult to detect. Even around Little Goose Pond the shore is laid bare for a space even wider than at Walden, it being less abrupt. The Pout's Nest, also, has lost ten feet on all sides.

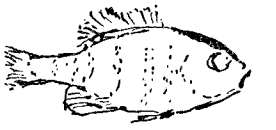
Those pouts' nests which I discovered in the spring are high and dry six feet from the water. I overhauled one, ripping up the frozen roof with my hands. The roof was only three inches thick, then a cavity and a bottom of wet mud. In this mud I found two small frogs, one apparently a *Rana palustris* less than an inch long, the other apparently a young *R. pipiens* an inch and a half long. They were quite sluggish and had evidently gone into winter quarters there, but probably some mink would have got them.

The Pout's Nest was frozen just enough to bear, with two or three breathing-places left. The principal of these was a narrow opening about a rod long by eighteen inches wide within six feet of the southwest side of the pond-hole, and the immediately adjacent ice was darker and thinner than the rest, having formed quite recently. I observed that the water at this breathing-chink was all alive with pollywogs, mostly of large size, though some were small, which apparently had collected there chiefly, as the water-surface was steadily contracted, for the sake of the air (?). There [were] more than a hundred of them there, or ten or a dozen in a square foot, and many more under the ice. I saw one firmly frozen in and dead. One had legs, and his tail was half eaten off by some creature, yet he was alive. There were also one or two frogs stirring among them. Here was evidently warmer water, probably a spring, and they had crowded to it. Looking more attentively, I detected also a great many minnows about one inch long either floating dead there or frozen into the ice, — at least fifty of them. They were shaped like bream, but had the transverse bars of perch. There were more pollywogs in other parts of the pond-hole, and at the north end I saw two perch about seven inches long, dead, close to the shore,

and turned a *bright green*,— which are commonly yellow, — as if poisoned by the water or something they had eaten. Perhaps the fishes had suffered by the falling of this pond-hole and consequent isolation from the main pond, which has left this part still more shallow and stagnant than before. It is full of the target-weed. If the pond continues to fall, undoubtedly all the fishes thus landlocked will die. I noticed at the above-named chink tracks which looked like those of an otter, where some animal had entered and come out of the water, leaving weeds and fragments of ice at the edge of the hole. No doubt several creatures, like otter and mink and foxes, know where to resort for their food at this season. This is now a perfect otter's or mink's preserve. Perhaps such a mass of decaying weeds is fatal to the fishes here.

It is evident that those frogs would have been frozen stiff the first colder night in such a shallow retreat. It is very likely that that hole (*i. e.* pout's hole) was under water when they took refuge there, and, the water going down, they were chilled. In such cases, then, pollywogs and fishes, and even frogs, resort to the last part to freeze, the warmest water, where it is open longest.

Examining those minnows by day, I find that they are one and one sixth inches long by two fifths of an inch wide (this my largest); in form like a bream; of a very pale golden like a perch, or more bluish. Have but one dorsal fin and, as near as I can count, rays, dorsal 19 (first, 9 stouter and stiff and more distinctly pointed, then 10 longer and flexible, whole fin about three times as long as average height), caudal 17 [?], anal 13 or 14, ventral 6, pectoral 10 (?). They have about seven transverse dusky bars like a perch (!). Yet, from their form and single dorsal fin, I think they are breams. Are they not a new species? Have young breams transverse bars? A little narrower than this.[1]



Nov. 27. Those barren hollows and plains in the neighborhood of Walden are singular places.

I see many which were heavily wooded fifteen or thirty years ago now covered only with fine sedge, sweet-fern, or a few birches, willows, poplars, small wild cherries, panicled cornels, etc. They need not amount to hollows at all: many of them are glades merely, and all that region is elevated, but the surrounding higher ground, though it may be only five or ten feet higher, will be covered with a good growth. One should think twice before he cut off such places. Perhaps they had better never be laid bare, but merely thinned out. We do not begin to understand the treatment of woodland yet. On such spots you will see various young trees — and some of them which I have named — dead as if a fire had run through them, killed apparently by frost.

I find scarlet oak acorns like this; in form not essentially different from those of the black oak, except that the scales of the black stand out more loose and bristling about the fruit. So all scarlet oak acorns do not regularly taper to a point from a broad base, and

Scarlet Oak

[1] *Vide* [next page].

Emerson represents but one form of the fruit.[1] The leaf of this was not very deeply cut, was broad for its length.

I got seventeen more of those little bream of yesterday. As I now count, the dorsal fin-rays are 9–10 (Girard says 9–11), caudal 17 (with apparently 4 short on each side), anal 3–11, pectoral 11, ventral 1–5.[2] They have about seven transverse dark bars, a vertical dark mark under eye, and a dark spot on edge of operculum. They appear to be the young of the *Pomotis obesus*, described by Charles Girard to the Natural History Society in April, '54, obtained by Baird in fresh water about Hingham and [in] Charles River in Holliston.[3] I got more perfect specimens than the bream drawn above. They are exceedingly pretty seen floating dead on their sides in a bowl of water, with all their fins spread out. From their size and form and position they cannot fail to remind you of coins in the basin. The conspicuous transverse bars distinguish them at once.  This is the form of the dorsal fin, which consists of two parts, the foremost of shorter stiff, spiny rays, the

[1] *Vide* Jan. 19th, 1859.

[2] *Vide* Dec. 3d. *Vide* also Mar. 26.

[3] [A newspaper clipping pasted into the Journal contains the following extract from a report of the proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History: —

"Specimens of *Pomotis* and *Esox*, and of amphibians, were presented by Mr. H. D. Thoreau, from Concord, Mass. Mr. Putnam was of opinion that one of the *Pomotis* would prove a new species. There are with us two varieties of pickerel commonly known as the long or shovel-nosed, and the short or trout-nosed; these specimens were of the latter. Mr. Putnam was inclined to think these were distinct species, unless the differences should prove to be sexual. Drs. D. H. and H. R. Storer considered them varieties of the same species; Messrs. Baird and Girard think them (*Esox reticulatus* and *E. ornatus*) distinct."

Another clipping says: —

"Mr. F. W. Putnam at a previous meeting stated that possibly the young Pomotis presented by Mr. Thoreau were the *P. obesus* of Girard. He had since then examined Girard's original specimens, and he finds that they are the same. The *P. guttatus* recently described in the Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Philadelphia is identical with *P. obesus*. Having teeth on the palatines, and consequently belonging to the genus *Bryttus*, the proper name for the species is *B. obesus* (Putnam). He had also satisfied himself that the *Esox ornatus* of Girard is the same as the *E. fasciatus* of De Kay."]

other eleven at least half as long again and quite flexible and waving, falling together like a wet rag *out of water*. So, with the anal fin, the three foremost rays are short and spiny, as I see, and one of each of the ventral (according to Girard, and to me). These foremost rays in each case look like slender raking masts, and their points project beyond the thin web of the fin, whose edge looks like the ropes which stretch from masthead to masthead, loop-wise. The stiff and spiny foremost part of the fins evidently serves for a cut-water which bears the brunt of any concussion and perhaps may serve for weapons of offense, while the more ample and gently waving flexible after part more especially guides the motions of the fish. The transverse bars are continued across these parts of the dorsal and anal fins, as the markings of a turtle across its feet or flippers; methinks the fins of the minnows are peculiarly beautiful.

How much more remote the newly discovered species seems to dwell than the old and familiar ones, though

both inhabit the same pond! Where the *Pomotis obesus* swims must be a new country, unexplored by science. The seashore may be settled, but aborigines dwell unseen only thus far inland. This country is so new that species of fishes and birds and quadrupeds inhabit it which science has not yet detected. The water which such a fish swims in must still have a primitive forest decaying in it.

Nov. 28. A gray, overcast, still day, and more small birds — tree sparrows and chickadees — than usual about the house. There have been a very few fine snowflakes falling for many hours, and now, by 2 P. M., a regular snow-storm has commenced, fine flakes falling steadily, and rapidly whitening all the landscape. In half an hour the russet earth is painted white even to the horizon. Do we know of any other so silent and sudden a change?

I cannot now walk without leaving a track behind me; that is one peculiarity of winter walking. Anybody may follow my trail. I have walked, perhaps, a particular wild path along some swamp-side all summer, and thought to myself, I am the only villager that ever comes here. But I go out shortly after the first snow has fallen, and lo, here is the track of a sportsman and his dog in my secluded path, and probably he preceded me in the summer as well. Yet my hour is not his, and I may never meet him!

I asked Coombs the other night if he had been a-hunting lately. He said he had not been out but once this fall. He went out the other day with a companion, and

they came near getting a fox. They broke his leg. He has evidently been looking forward to some such success all summer. Having done thus much, he can afford to sit awhile by the stove at the post-office. He is plotting now how to break his head.

Goodwin cannot be a very bad man, he is so cheery.

And all the years that I have known Walden these striped breams have skulked in it without my knowledge! How many new thoughts, then, may I have?

Nov. 29. P. M. — To Hill.

About three inches of snow fell last evening, and a few cows on the hillside have wandered about in vain to come at the grass. They have at length found that place high on the south side where the snow is thinnest.

How bright and light the day now! Methinks it is as good as half an hour added to the day. White houses no longer stand out and stare in the landscape. The pine woods snowed up look more like the bare oak woods with their gray boughs. The river meadows show now far off a dull straw-color or pale brown amid the general white, where the coarse sedge rises above the snow; and distant oak woods are now more distinctly reddish. It is a clear and pleasant winter day. The snow has taken all the November out of the sky. Now blue shadows, green rivers, — both which I see, — and still winter life.

I see partridge and mice tracks and fox tracks, and crows sit silent on a bare oak-top. I see a living shrike caught to-day in the barn of the Middlesex House.

Nov. 30. The shrike was very violent for a long time, beating itself against the bars of its cage at Stacy's. To-day it is quiet and has eaten raw meat. Its plain dark ash-colored crown and back are separated by a very distinct line from the black wings. It has a powerful hawk-like beak, but slender legs and claws. Close to, it looks more like a muscicapa than anything.

P. M. — To Walden with Channing, and Fair Haven Hill.

It is a pleasant day and the snow melting considerably. We stand on the Pout's Nest, now frozen, with snow ice added to the old, so that it will bear, — a coarse frozen white batter, — and the hills around are covered with snow, though Walden is open. It is a perfect winter scene. This withdrawn but ample recess in the woods, with all that is necessary for a human residence, yet never referred to by the London *Times* and *Galignani's Messenger*, as some of those arctic bays are. Some are hastening to Europe and some to the West Indies, but here is a bay never steered for. These nameless bays where the *Times* and *Tribune* have no correspondent are the true bays of All Saints for me. Green pines on this side, brown oaks on that, the blue sky overhead, and this white counterpane all around. It is an insignificant fraction of the globe which England and Russia and the filibusters have overrun. The open pond close by, though considerably rippled to-day, affects me as a peculiarly mild and genial object by contrast with this frozen pool and the snow-covered shore, and I sit down on the shore in the sun, on the bare rocks. There seems to be a milder air above it, as the water within it is milder.

Going westward through Wheeler's Owl Wood toward Weird Dell, Well Meadow Field, I beheld a peculiar winter scene, seen many times before but forgotten. The sun, rather low, is seen through the wood with a cold, dazzling white lustre, like that of burnished tin reflected from the silvery needles of the pines. No powerful light streams through, but you stand in the quiet and somewhat sombre aisles of a forest cathedral, where cold green masses alternate with pale-brown but warm leather-colored ones, almost ruddy (you are inclined to call them red).[1] These are the internal decorations, while dark trunks, streaked with snow, rise on all sides, and a pure white floor stretches around, and perhaps a single patch of yellow sunlight is seen on the white shaded floor.

The short afternoons are come. Yonder dusky cloud-mass in the northwest will not be wafted across the sky before yonder sun that lurks so low will be set. We see purple clouds in the east horizon.

But did ever clouds flit and change, form and dissolve, so fast as in this clear, cold air? For it is rapidly growing colder, and at such a time, with a clear air and wind and shifting clouds, I never fail to see mother-o'-pearl tints abundant in the sky.

We see the tracks of a hunter and his hounds who have gone along the path from the Dell to the Cliffs. The dog makes a genuine track with his five toes, an honest dog's track, and if his master went barefoot we should count five toe-prints in his track too, and they would be seen to resemble each other remotely; but now we see only

[1] Reddish-tawny (?).

the track of a boot, and I thought the dog must be disgusted to tread in it. Walking thus where a man and two dogs had recently passed along, making a trail only a few inches wide, treading in one another's tracks alternately, the impression was that they had constantly crowded on one another, though in fact the dogs may have been a quarter of a mile ahead [of] or behind their master. The dog rosette identical [with that] which is spotted all over Greece. They go making these perfect imperfect [*sic*] impressions faster than a Hoe's cylinder power-press.

Coming over the side of Fair Haven Hill at sunset, we saw a large, long, dusky cloud in the northwest horizon, apparently just this side of Wachusett, or at least twenty miles off, which was snowing, when all the rest was clear sky. It was a complete snow-cloud. It looked like rain falling at an equal distance, except that the snow fell less directly and the upper outline of a part of the cloud [was] more like that of a dusky mist. It was [not] much of a snow-storm, just enough to partially obscure the sight of the mountains about which it was falling, while the cloud was apparently high above them, or it may have been a little this side. The cloud was of a dun color, and at its south end, near where the sun was just about to set, it was all aglow on its under side with a salmon fulgor, making it look warmer than a furnace at the same time that it was snowing. In short, I saw a cloud, quite local in the heavens, whose south end rested over the portals of the day, twenty and odd miles off, and was lit by the splendor of the departing sun, and from this lit cloud snow was falling. It was merely

an extensive flurry, though it may have lasted twenty minutes.

I have seen a dark cloud as wide as the sky rolling up from the northwest and blasting all my hopes, at sight of which I have dismissed the sun for three weeks and resigned myself to my fate. But when, after being absorbed in other meditations, I have looked round for that cloud half an hour after, I have distinguished only an indistinct white film far in the southeast which only added to the glory of the day by reflecting its light.

The river may be said to have frozen generally last night.

That was a remarkable prospect from the side of Fair Haven Hill just before the sun set, a strong cold northwest wind blowing, and as good a winter prospect as the arctic regions present, — the brilliant Blessed Isles already gathered about the portals of the day, and mother-o'-pearl clouds forming and dissolving in the crisped air between the zenith and the west horizon, while at least twenty miles off (at first thirty) in the northwest a vast dark dun-colored cloud whose southern end overlapped the setting sun, a glowing canopy, was snowing on the mountains seen dimly beneath it. It was a rare and strange sight, that of a snow-storm twenty miles off on the verge of a perfectly clear sky. Thus local is all storm, surrounded by serenity and beauty. The terrestrial mountains were made ridiculous beneath that stupendous range. I said to my companion, "There comes a storm which will cover the earth four feet deep. Make haste and do your necessary work before the night comes." But before we had got home I saw it in the

east still further off, — not having seen it pass us, — a pale ethereal film, almost dissolved in the sky, as indistinct as a fabulous island. In these clear, cold days fear no cloud. They vanish and dissolve before the cloud-consuming air. This air snaps them up like a dog his meat.

Bare hickories now seen over the shining surface of the snow suggest a cold equal to that of the Cold Friday. As I go up the hill eastward while the sun is setting, I see a tinge of green reflected from its surface under my face, and the scattered clouds in the east are greener yet.

C. thought that if he lived in Weird Dell — which I talked of buying — he should come and sit on the northwest side every night and see the shadows steal gradually across it.

Just before the sun disappeared we saw, just in the edge of the horizon westward from Acton, maybe eight miles off, a very brilliant fire or light, just like a star of the first magnitude or a house burning without smoke, and this, though so far and so brilliant, was undoubtedly only the sun reflected from some gilt weathercock there. So incredibly brilliant are all surfaces now. It was pure flame, larger than a house, precisely as if the planet Venus rested in the horizon's edge. Possibly the weathercock was nearer, but we both concluded that it was not.

The sun seen setting through the snow-carpeted woods, with shimmering pine-needles or dark-green masses and warm brown oak leaves for screens. With the advent of snow and ice, so much cold white, the

browns are warmer to the eye. All the red that is in oak leaves and huckleberry twigs comes out.

A cloud, then, which glows high above the portals of the day seven or eight minutes before the sun disappears, may be some twenty miles off only.

Neither England nor America have [*sic*] any right to laugh at that sentence in the rare book called "The Blazon of Gentry," written by a zealous student of heraldry, which says after due investigation that "Christ was a gentleman, as to the flesh, by the part of his mother, . . . and might have borne coat-armor. The apostles also were gentlemen of blood, and many of them descended from that worthy conqueror Judas Machabeus; but, through the tract of time, and persecution of wars, poverty oppressed the kindred and they were constrayned to servile workes." Whatever texts we may quote or commentaries we may write, when we consider the laws and customs of these two countries we cannot fail to perceive that the above sentence is perfectly of a piece with our practical commentary on the New Testament. The above is really a pertinent reason offered why Christianity should be embraced in England and America. Indeed, it is, accordingly, only what may be called "respectable Christianity" that is at all generally embraced in the two countries.

I read that a woman picked a pint of ripe red raspberries at Bunker Hill Cliff, where they get the Quincy granite, October 1st, this year.[1]

There is a late greenness accompanied by a few yellow flowers, a November greenness, methinks, corre-

[1] Was it not Nov. 1st?

sponding to the early greenness of the spring and its blossoms. Early in November (and late in October) lycopodiums and evergreen ferns (the small botrychium sheds pollen then, as well as several lycopodiums) have their day, under the yellow flowers of the witch-hazel and amid a few lingering goldenrods, as in spring green radical leaves are associated with alder and willow blossoms. The cold greens have their day so late in the fall. I do not speak so much of a lingering verdure, but of one which then is most flourishing and, you may say, greenest before the lichen days have come.

I cannot but see still in my mind's eye those little striped breams poised in Walden's glaucous water. They balance all the rest of the world in my estimation at present, for this is the bream that I have just found, and for the time I neglect all its brethren and am ready to kill the fatted calf on its account. For more than two centuries have men fished here and have not distinguished this permanent settler of the township. It is not like a new bird, a transient visitor that may not be seen again for years, but there it dwells and has dwelt permanently, who can tell how long? When my eyes first rested on Walden the striped bream was poised in it, though I did not see it, and when Tahatawan paddled his canoe there. How wild it makes the pond and the township to find a new fish in it! America renews her youth here. But in my account of this bream I cannot go a hair's breadth beyond the mere statement that it exists, — the miracle of its existence, my contemporary and neighbor, yet so different from me! I can only poise my thought there by its side and try to think

like a bream for a moment. I can only think of precious jewels, of music, poetry, beauty, and the mystery of life. I only see the bream in its orbit, as I see a star, but I care not to measure its distance or weight. The bream, appreciated, floats in the pond as the centre of the system, another image of God. Its life no man can explain more than he can his own. I want you to perceive the mystery of the bream. I have a contemporary in Walden.[1] It has fins where I have legs and arms. I have a friend among the fishes, at least a new acquaintance. Its character will interest me, I trust, not its clothes and anatomy. I do not want it to eat. Acquaintance with it is to make my life more rich and eventful. It is as if a poet or an anchorite had moved into the town, whom I can see from time to time and think of yet oftener. Perhaps there are a thousand of these striped bream which no one had thought of in that pond, — not their mere impressions in stone, but in the full tide of the bream life.

Though science may sometimes compare herself to a child picking up pebbles on the seashore, that is a rare mood with her; ordinarily her practical belief is that it is only a few pebbles which are *not* known, weighed and measured. A new species of fish signifies hardly more than a new name. See what is contributed in the scientific reports. One counts the fin-rays, another measures the intestines, a third daguerreotypes a scale, etc., etc.; otherwise there's nothing to be said. As if all but this were done, and these were very rich and generous contributions to science. Her votaries may be seen wan-

[1] [Channing, pp. 299, 300.]

dering along the shore of the ocean of truth, with their backs to that ocean, ready to seize on the shells which are cast up. You would say that the scientific bodies were terribly put to it for objects and subjects. A dead specimen of an animal, if it is only well preserved in alcohol, is just as good for science as a living one preserved in its native element.

What is the amount of my discovery to me? It is not that I have got one in a bottle, that it has got a name in a book, but that I have a little fishy friend in the pond. How was it when the youth first discovered fishes? Was it the number of their fin-rays or their arrangement, or the place of the fish in some system that made the boy dream of them? Is it these things that interest mankind in the fish, the inhabitant of the water? No, but a faint recognition of a living contemporary, a provoking mystery.[1] One boy thinks of fishes and goes a-fishing from the same motive that his brother searches the poets for rare lines. It is the poetry of fishes which is their chief use; their flesh is their lowest use. The beauty of the fish, that is what it is best worth the while to measure. Its place in our systems is of comparatively little importance. Generally the boy loses some of his perception and his interest in the fish; he degenerates into a fisherman or an ichthyologist.[2]

[1] [Channing, p. 300.]

[2] *Vide* [pp. 363, 364].