

VII  
SEPTEMBER, 1859

(ÆT. 42)

Sept. 1. P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook and Flint's Pond.

That reach in the road this side Britton's Camp might be called Nabalus Road, they are so abundant there. Some of them are fully six feet high, — a singularly tall and slender plant.

See, I think, my first tobacco-pipe this afternoon, now that they are about done, and have seen no pine-sap this year, abundant as both the above were last year. Like fungi, these plants are apparently scarce in a dry year, so that you might at first think them rare plants. This is a phenomenon of drought.

I see in different places small grubs splitting leaves now, and so marking them curiously with light brown or whitish on the green. Here are two at work in a *Rhus Toxicodendron* leaf. They appear to have been hatched within the leaf at the apex, and each has eaten upward on its own side of the midrib and equally fast, making a light-colored figure shaped like a column of smoke in the midst of the green. They perfectly split the leaf, making no visible puncture in it, even at the ribs or veins. Some creatures are so minute that they find food enough for them between the two sides of a thin leaf, without injuring the cuticle. The ox requires

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BIRDS AND BERRIES

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the meadows to be shorn for him, and crones both blade and stalk, even of the coarsest grass, as corn; but these grubs do their browsing in narrower pastures, pastures not so wide as their own jaws, between fences (inviolable to them) of their own establishing, or along narrow lanes. There, secure from birds, they mine, and no harm can they do now that the green leaf has so commonly done its office.

If you would study the birds now, go where their food is, *i. e.* the berries, especially to the wild black cherries, elder-berries, poke berries, mountain-ash berries, and ere long the barberries, and for pigeons the acorns. In the sprout-land behind Britton's Camp, I came to a small black cherry full of fruit, and then, for the first time for a long while, I see and hear cherry-birds — their shrill and fine seringo — and the note of robins, which of late are scarce. We sit near the tree and listen to the now unusual sounds of these birds, and from time to time one or two come dashing from out the sky toward this tree, till, seeing us, they whirl, disappointed, and perhaps alight on some neighboring twigs and wait till we are gone. The cherry-birds and robins seem to know the locality of every wild cherry in the town. You are as sure to find them on them now, as bees and butterflies on the thistles. If we stay long, they go off with a fling, to some other cherry tree, which they know of but we do not. The neighborhood of a wild cherry full of fruit is now, for the notes of birds, a little spring come back again, and when, a mile or two from this, I was plucking a basketful of elder-berries (for which it was rather early yet), there too, to my surprise,

I came on a flock of golden robins and of bluebirds, apparently feeding on them. Excepting the vacciniums, now past prime and drying up, the cherries and elder-berries are the two prevailing fruits now. We had remarked on the general scarcity and silence of the birds, but when we came to the localities of these fruits, there again we found the berry-eating birds assembled, — young (?) orioles and bluebirds at the elder-berries.

Green white pine cones are thrown down. An unusual quantity of these have been stripped for some time past, and I see the ground about the bases of the trees strewn with them.

The spikenard berries in the shade at Saw Mill have but just begun to turn. The *Polygonatum biflorum* with its row of bluish-green berries (the blue a bloom), pendulous from the axils of the recurved stem, apparently now in its prime. Red choke-berry ripe. Smooth sumach probably hardly ripe yet generally.

The fruit of the arum is the most remarkable that I see this afternoon, such its brilliancy, color, and form; perhaps in prime now. It is among the most easily detected now on the floor of the swamp, its bright-scarlet cone above the fallen and withered leaves and amid its own brown or whitish and withering leaves. Its own leaves and stem perhaps soft and decaying, while it is perfectly fresh and dazzling. It has the brightest gloss of any fruit I remember, and this makes the green ones about as remarkable as the scarlet. With, perchance, a part of the withered spathe still investing and veiling it. The scarlet fruit of the arum spots the swamp floor.

Now, also, bright-colored fungi of various colors on the swamp floor begin to compete with these fruits. I see a green one.

The elder-berry cyme, held erect, is of very regular form, four principal divisions drooping toward each quarter around an upright central one. Are said to make a good dye. They fill your basket quickly, the cymes are so large and lie up so light.

The autumnal dandelion is a prevailing flower now, but since it shuts up in the afternoon it might not be known as common unless you were out in the morning or in a dark afternoon. Now, at 11 A. M., it makes quite a show, yet at 2 P. M. I do not notice it.

Bought a pair of shoes the other day, and, observing that as usual they were only wooden-pegged at the toes, I required the seller to put in an extra row of iron pegs there while I waited for them. So he called to his boy to bring those zinc pegs, but I insisted on iron pegs and no zinc ones. He gave me considerable advice on the subject of shoes, but I suggested that even the wearer of shoes, of whom I was one, had an opportunity to learn some of their qualities. I have learned to respect my own opinion in this matter. As I do not use blacking and the seller often throws in a box of blacking when I buy a pair of shoes, they accumulate on my hands.

Saw this afternoon, on a leaf in the Saw Mill wood-path, a very brilliant beetle a quarter or a third of an inch in length with brilliant green and copper reflections.<sup>1</sup> The same surface, or any part of the upper surface, of the bug was green from one point of view

<sup>1</sup> Vide June 28th, 1860.

and burnished copper from another. Yet there was nothing in its form to recommend this bug.

You must be careful not to eat too many nuts. I one winter met a young man whose face was broken out into large pimples and sores, and when I inquired what was the matter, he answered that he and his wife were fond of shagbarks, and therefore he had bought a bushel of them, and they spent their winter evenings eating them, and this was the consequence.

Sept. 2. P. M. — To Ledum Swamp.

The pontederia leaves are now decidedly brown or brownish, and this may be the effect of frost, since we have had some considerable in low places. Perhaps they occupy particularly cold places.

The farmer is obliged to hide his melon-patch in the midst of his corn or potatoes, far away. I sometimes stumble on it as I am going across lots. I see one to-day where the watermelons are intermixed with carrots in a carrot-bed, and so concealed by the general resemblance of leaf, etc., at a little distance.

Going along Clamshell Hill, I look over the meadows. Now, after the first rain raising the river, the first assault on the summer's sluggishness, the air is of late cooler and clearer, autumnal, and the meadows and low grounds, which, of course, have been shorn, acquire a fresh yellowish green as in the spring. This is another phase of the second spring, of which the peeping of hylas by and by is another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One reason for this in some even dry fields is owing to the cyperuses — which are yellow and low and late — being revealed by cutting the grass and still growing

I once did some surveying for a man who remarked, *but not till the job was done*, that he did not know when he should pay me. I did not pay much heed to this, though it was unusual, supposing that he meant to pay me some time or other. But after a while he sent to me a quart of red huckleberries, and this I thought was ominous and he distinguished me altogether too much by this gift, since I was not his particular friend. I saw it was the first installment, which would go a great way toward being the last. In course of years he paid a part of the debt in money, and that is the last I have heard of it.

The sarothra grows thickly, and is now abundantly in bloom, on denuded places, *i. e.*, where the sod and more or less soil has been removed, by sandy roadsides.

At Ledum Swamp the frosts have now touched the *Polygonum Careyi* pretty extensively, the leaves and stem, leaving the red spikes; also some erechthites and poke and the tenderest high blueberry shoots, their tips (from where the bushes were cut down). But the *Woodwardia Virginica* is not touched. (*Vide* back, August 23d.)

Poke berries begin at Corner Spring.

Sept. 3. A strong wind, which blows down much fruit. R. W. E. sits surrounded by choice windfall pears.

Sept. 4. P. M. — To Well Meadow and Walden.

The purple culms and spikes of the crab-grass or finger-grass, spreading and often almost prostrate

under our feet in sandy paths and causeways, are where the purple cuticle of the earth again shows itself, and we seem to be treading in our vintage whether we will or not. Earth has donned the purple. When, walking over some dry field (some time since), I looked down and saw the yellowish tuft of the *Pimbristylis capillaris*, with its spreading inverted cone of capillary culms, like the upper half of an hour-glass, but still more, when, pacing over the sandy railroad causeway, I look down and find myself treading on the purple culms of the crab-grass, I am reminded of the maturity of the year. We have now experienced the full effects of heat such as we have in this latitude. The earth itself appears to me as a ripe purple fruit, — though somewhat dusty here, — and I may have rubbed the bloom off with my feet. But if Bacchus can ever stand our climate, this must be his season.

Topping the corn, which has been going on some days, now reveals the yellow and yellowing pumpkins. This is a genuine New England scene. The earth blazes not only with sun-flowers but with sun-fruits.

The four-leaved loosestrife, which is pretty generally withering and withered, seems to have dried up, — to suffer peculiarly from the annual drought, — perhaps both on account of its tenuity and the sandiness or dryness of its locality.

The *Lycopodium complanatum* sheds pollen [*sic*].

Where are the robins and red-wing blackbirds of late? I see no flocks of them: not *one* of the latter, and only a few solitary robins about wild cherry trees, etc.

A few yew berries, but they appear (?) to be drying

up. The most wax-like and artificial and surprising of our wild berries, — as surprising as to find currants on hemlocks.

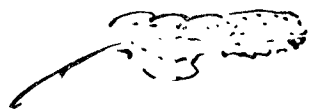
In the Well Meadow Swamp, many apparent *Aster miser*, yet never inclining to red there (in the leaf) and sometimes with larger flowers (five eighths of an inch [in] diameter) and slenderer cauline leaves than common, out apparently almost as long as *miser* elsewhere.

The swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*) is apparently in its prime. One or two on each has faded, but many more are to come. Some are six feet high and have radical leaves nearly two feet long. Even these in the shade have humblebees on them.

You see small flocks of ducks, probably wood ducks, in the smaller woodland ponds now and for a week, as I at Andromeda Ponds, and can get nearer to them than in the spring.

The *Cornus sericea* and *C. paniculata* are rather peculiar for turning to a dull purple on the advent of cooler weather and frosts, in the latter part of August and first part of September. The latter, which grows at the bottom of our frostiest hollows, turns a particularly clear dark purple, an effect plainly attributable to frost. I see it this afternoon in the dry, deep hollow just west of the middle Andromeda Pond.

I think I see two kinds of three-ribbed goldenrod (beside *Canadensis*), both being commonly smooth-stemmed below and downy above, but one has very fine or small rays as compared with the other. They appear to be both equally common now. The fine-rayed at Sedge Path.



See a very large mass of spikenard berries fairly ripening, eighteen inches long.

Three kinds of thistles are commonly out now, — the pasture, lanceolate, and swamp, — and on them all you are pretty sure to see one or two humblebees. They become more prominent and interesting in the scarcity of purple flowers. (On many you see also the splendid goldfinch, yellow and black (?) like the humblebee.) The thistles beloved of humblebees and goldfinches.

Three or four plants are peculiar now for bearing plentifully their fruit in drooping cymes, *viz.* the elderberry and the silky cornel and the *Viburnum Lentago* and *Solanum Dulcamara*. The other cornels do not generally come to droop before they lose their fruit. Nor do the viburnums droop much. The fruit of the *Cornus sericea* is particularly interesting to me, and not too profuse, — small cymes of various tints half concealed amid the leaves.

*Sept. 5.* Spent a part of the forenoon in the woods in the northwest part of Acton, searching for a stone suitable for a millstone for my lead-mill.

*Sept. 6.* Hear the sounds nowadays — the lowing, tramp, and calls of the drivers — of cows coming down from up-country.

Staghorn sumach berries probably some time, but ours are injured by worms. The fever-bush leaves

are remarkably round and entire yet, as if by their odor defended from insects.<sup>1</sup>

The feverwort berries are apparently nearly in their prime, of a clear "corn yellow" and as large as a small cranberry, in whorls at the axils of the leaves of the half-prostrate plants.

I hear occasionally a half-warbled strain from a warbling vireo in the elm-tops, as I go down the street nowadays. There is about as much life in their notes now as in the enfeebled and yellowing elm tree leaves at present.

The liatris is, perhaps, a little past prime. It is a very rich purple in favorable lights and makes a great show where it grows. Any one to whom it is new will be surprised to learn that it is a wild plant. For prevalence and effect it may be put with the vernonia, and it has a general resemblance to thistles and knapweed, but is a handsomer plant than any of them.

*Sept. 8.* The 7th, 8th, and 9th, the State muster is held here. The only observation I have to make is that [Concord] is fuller of dust and more uninhabitable than I ever knew it to be before. Not only the walls, fences, and houses are thickly covered with dust, but the fields and meadows and bushes; and the pads in the river for half a mile from the village are white with it. From a mile or two distant you see a cloud of dust over the town and extending thence to the muster-field. I went to the store the other day to buy a bolt for our front door, for, as I told the storekeeper, the Governor

<sup>1</sup> It is eaten or cut by them. *Vide* Sept. 4th, 1856.

was coming here. "Aye," said he, "and the Legislature too." "Then I will take two bolts," said I. He said that there had been a steady demand for bolts and locks of late, for our protectors were coming. The surface of the roads for three to six inches in depth is a light and dry powder like ashes.

P. M. — To Fair Haven Pond.

Grapes are turning purple, but are not ripe.

I see the black head and neck of a little dipper in mid-stream, a few rods before my boat. It disappears, and though I search carefully, I cannot detect it again. It is undoubtedly hidden mid the weeds — pads, flags, and pontederia, etc. — along the shore. Ducks more common.

Sept. 9. I start many pigeons now in a sprout-land.

I have noticed for a week or more some swarms of light-colored and very small fuzzy gnats in the air, yet not in such concentrated swarms as I shall see by and by.

Now for hazelnuts, — where the squirrels have not got them.

Within a week I think I have heard screech owls at evening from over the river once or twice.

Sept. 10. See wasps, collected in the sun on a wall, at 9 A. M.

Sept. 11. P. M. — To Conantum-end.

The prinos berries are now seen, red (or scarlet), clustered along the stems, amid the as yet green leaves. A cool red.

By the pool in Hubbard's Grove, I see tall tupelos, all dotted with the now ripe (apparently in prime) small oval purple berries, two or three together on the end of slender peduncles, amid the reddening leaves. This fruit is very acid and has a large stone, but I see several robins on the trees, which appear to have been attracted by it. Neither tree nor fruit is generally known, and many liken the former when small to a pear. The trees are quite full of fruit.

The wax-like fruit of *Cornus paniculata* still holds on abundantly.

This being a cloudy and somewhat rainy day, the autumnal dandelion is open in the afternoon.

The *Rhus Toxicodendron* berries are now ripe and greenish-yellow, and some already shrivelled, over bare rocks.

September is the month when various small, and commonly inedible, berries in cymes and clusters hang over the roadsides and along the walls and fences, or spot the forest floor. The clusters of the *Viburnum Lentago* berries, now in their prime, are exceedingly and peculiarly handsome, and edible withal. These are drooping, like the *Cornus sericea* cymes. Each berry in the cyme is now a fine, clear red on the exposed side and a distinct and clear green on the opposite side. Many are already purple, and they turn in your hat, but they are handsomest when thus red and green.

The large clusters of the *Smilacina racemosa* berries, four or five inches long, of whitish berries a little smaller than a pea, finely marked and dotted with vermilion

or bright red, are very conspicuous. I do not chance to see any ripe.

No fruit is handsomer than the acorn. I see but few fallen yet, and they are all wormy. Very pretty, especially, are the white oak acorns, three raying from one centre.

I see dill and saffron still, commonly out at R. W. E.'s.

Sept. 12. P. M. — To Moore's Swamp and Great Fields.

Elder-berries are apparently in prime, generally black, though many have been plucked by birds.

The four kinds of *bidens* (*frondosa*, *connata*, *cernua*, and *chrysanthemoides*) abound now, but much of the *Beckii* was drowned by the rise of the river. Omitting this, the first two are inconspicuous flowers, cheap and ineffectual, commonly without petals, like the crechthites, but the third and fourth are conspicuous and interesting, expressing by their brilliant yellow the ripeness of the low grounds.

Most of the late flowers are already associated in my mind with cooler and clearer, flashing weather, as the witch-hazel, the gentians, the *Bidens cernua*, *Spiranthes cernua*, *Polygonum amphibium* and *hydropiperoides* in its prime, and the *Polygala sanguinea*, still prevalent.

I stand in Moore's Swamp and look at Garfield's dry bank, now before the woods generally are changed at all. How ruddy ripe that dry hillside by the swamp, covered with goldenrods and clumps of hazel bushes here and there, now more or less scarlet. The golden-

rods on the top and the slope of the hill are the *Solidago nemoralis*, at the base the taller *S. altissima*. The whole hillside is perfectly dry and ripe.

Many a dry field now, like that of Sted Buttrick's on the Great Fields, is one dense mass of the bright-golden recurved wands of the *Solidago nemoralis* (a little past prime), waving in the wind and turning upward to the light hundreds, if not a thousand, flowerets each. It is the greatest mass of conspicuous flowers in the year, and uniformly from one to two feet high, just rising above the withered grass all over the largest fields, now when pumpkins and other yellow fruits begin to gleam, now before the woods are noticeably changed. Some field where the grass was too thin and wiry to pay for cutting, with great purplish tufts of *Andropogon furcatus*, going to seed, interspersed. Such a mass of yellow for this field's last crop! Who that had botanized here in the previous month could have foretold this more profuse and teeming crop? All ringing, as do the low grounds, with the shrilling of crickets and locusts and frequented by honey-bees (*i. e.* the goldenrod *nemoralis*). The whole field turns to yellow, as the cuticle of a ripe fruit. This is the season when the prevalence of the goldenrods gives such a ripe and teeming look to the dry fields and to the swamps. They are now (the *arguta* being about done) the *nemoralis* and *altissima*, both a little past prime. The *S. nemoralis* spreads its legions over the dry plains now, as soldiers muster in the fall. It is a muster of all its forces, which I review, eclipsing all other similar shows of the year. Fruit of August and September,

sprung from the sun-dust. The fields and hills appear in their yellow uniform. There are certain fields so full of them that they might give their name to the town or region, as one place in England is called Saffron Walden. Perhaps the general prevalence of yellow is greater now when many individual plants are past prime.

I notice in Moore's Swamp that though the potato vines were killed long since, few if any weeds are. They survive to perpetuate their race, until severer frosts come.

The beach plums are about ripe; the black cherries nearly gone.

I start a flock of five turtle doves from the dry Great Fields, near buckwheat. They go off with a whistling note.

A profusion of wild fruits, agreeable to the eye if not palate, is seen along some walls and hedges now. Take this dry wall-side by Sted Buttrick's field now, though probably not remarkably rich. Here I find elder-berries, paniced cornel, acorns of various kinds, black cherry (nearly gone), green-briar berries, grapes, hazelnuts (the pale-brown nuts now peeping between the husks), alternate cornel (which is about done), sumach, choke-berry, and haws; and earlier there were shad-berries, thimble-berries, and various kinds of huckle- and black-berries, etc. Some shrub oak acorn cups are empty, but they have not many fallen. Large yellowish caterpillars, heaped on the leaves, have so stripped some shrub oaks as to expose and reveal the acorns.

The other day a tender-hearted man came to the depot and informed Neighbor Wild that there was a

Maltese cat caught in a steel trap near the depot, which perhaps was his. Wild thought it must be his or "Min Thoreau." She had tried to jump over a fence with the trap on her leg, but had lodged one side while the trap hung the other. The man could not stand to open the trap, the cat scratched so, but at length he threw the trap over, and so the cat went home, dragging it to Wild's (for it was his cat), and the man advised him to keep the trap to pay the one who set it for his inhumanity. I suspect, however, that the cat had wandered off to Swamp Bridge Brook and there trod in a trap set for mink or the like. It is a wonder it does not happen oftener.

I saw a star-nosed mole dead in the path on Conan-tum yesterday, with no obvious wound.

Sept. 13. P. M. — Up Assabet.

The *Bidens chrysanthemoides*, now apparently in its prime by the river, now almost dazzles you with its great sunny disk. I feast my eyes on it annually. It grows but sparingly near the village, but those few never fail to make their appearance at last. The yellow lily's is a cool yellow in comparison, but in this is seen the concentrated heat of autumn.

Now, while other fruits are ripe or ripening, I see the great peduncle of the peltandra, eighteen or twenty-four inches long, curving downward, with its globular mass of green fruit, often two inches in diameter, at the end, looking like slung shot. This mass of viscid seeds or nuts must be the food of many creatures. Also the pontederia spike is now generally turned downward



beneath the water and increased in size, though some have flowers still at their tips. So, too, probably (for I do not see them) the yellow and white lilies are ripening their seeds in the water and mud beneath the surface.<sup>1</sup>

The bloom and freshness of the river was gone as soon as the pickerel-weed began to be imbrowned, in the latter part of August. It is fall and harvest there now.

I remember my earliest going a-graping. (It was a wonder that we ever hit upon the ripe season.) There was more fun in finding and eying the big purple clusters high on the trees and climbing to them than in eating them. We used to take care not to chew the skins long lest they should make our mouths sore.

Some haws of the scarlet thorn are really a splendid fruit to look at now and far from inedible. They are not only large, but their beauty is enhanced by the persistent calyx relieving the clear scarlet of the fruit.

There are various degrees of living out-of-doors. You must be outdoors long, early and late, and travel far and earnestly, in order to perceive the phenomena of the day. Even then much will escape you. Few live so far outdoors as to hear the first geese go over.

I see some shrub oak acorns turned dark on the bushes and showing their meridian lines, but generally acorns of all kinds are green yet. The great red oak acorns have not fallen. It is a wonder how pigeons can swallow acorns whole, but they do.

Many hemlock leaves which had prematurely ripened and withered in the dry weather have fallen in

<sup>1</sup> Yes, I see them, — the former urn-shaped. *Vide* 14th.

the late winds and washed up along the side of the river, — already red there.

*Sept. 14.* High, gusty winds, with dust and a little rain (more or less for two or three days).

These powerful gusts fill all the air with dust, concealing the earth and sky.

P. M. — To Cliffs *via* Hubbard's Bath.

The *Spiranthes cernua* has a sweet scent like the clethra's.

The mountain sumach appears to bear quite sparingly. Its berries are a hoary crimson and not bright like those of the smooth. Also they are in looser masses. They are, *perhaps*, a little later, but I think ripe now.

I see in the swamp under the Cliffs the dark, decaying leaves of the skunk-cabbage, four or five spreading every way and so flat and decayed as to look like a fungus or mildew, making it doubtful at first what plant it is; but there is the sharp green bud already revealed in the centre between the leaf-stalks, ready to expand in the spring.

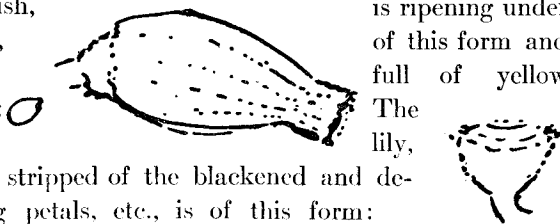
This wind has strewn the Fair Haven Hill-side with apples. I think that fully three quarters of all are on the ground. Many trees are almost entirely stripped, the whole crop lying in a circular form beneath, yet hard and green. Others on the hillside have rolled far down. The farmers will be busy for some time gathering these windfalls. The winds have come to shake the apple trees prematurely, making fruit (for pies) cheap, I trust, against Thanksgiving or Cattle-Show.<sup>1</sup> Not

<sup>1</sup> [*Excursions*, p. 296; Riv. 361.]

only apples and other fruit, but a great many green as well as withered leaves, strew the ground under almost all kinds of trees.

I notice of late the green or ripe pods of the *Orchidaceæ*, — some for a long time, — including *gymnadenia*, lady's-slipper, etc.; pods full of a fine, dust-like seed. The dusty-seeded *Orchidaceæ*.

The yellow lily (*Nuphar advena*) fruit, now green and purplish, is ripening under water, of this form and size: full of yellow seeds: The white lily, when stripped of the blackened and decaying petals, etc., is of this form:



Even the tough-twigged mocker-nut, yet green, is blown off in some places. I bring home a twig with three of its great nuts together, as big as small apples, and children follow and eye them, not knowing what kind of fruit it is.

Like the fruits, when cooler weather and frosts arrive, we too are braced and ripened. When we shift from the shady to the sunny side of the house, and sit there in an extra coat for warmth, our green and leafy and pulpy thoughts acquire color and flavor, and perchance a sweet nuttiness at last, worth your cracking. Now all things suggest fruit and the harvest, and flowers look *late*, and for some time the sound of the flail has been heard in the barns.

They are catching pigeons nowadays. Coombs has a stand west of Nut Meadow, and he says that he has

just shot fourteen hawks there, which were after the pigeons. I have one which he has shot within a day or two and calls a pigeon hawk. It is about twenty inches in alar extent. Above dark-slate or brownish with the edges, *i. e.* tips, of the feathers (especially of wing-coverts) rufous. The primaries and secondaries dark or blackish brown, barred with black, and only a [*sic*] some white concealed on the inner vanes near the base. Wings beneath white or whitish, thickly barred with dark. Scapulars with white spots. Head much mutilated, but no "black spots" visible, but apparently the dark brown mixed or edged with rufous. Cere, etc., said to have been green. Beneath brownish-white, centred with brown, with a darker line through that. Femorals still more rustyish brown, with central dashes. Legs yellowish. Tail slate, with four black bars half an inch or more wide; the edge slate, with a very narrow edging of white; beneath the slate is almost white.

What kind of hawk is this? I can learn nothing from Wilson and Nuttall. The latter thinks that neither the pigeon nor sparrow hawk is found here!!<sup>1</sup>

Sept. 15. Yesterday was very cold, with northwest wind, and this morning the first frost in the garden, killing some of our vines.

W. Ricketson says that, when looking for insects this morning under the loose bark of an apple tree on Nawshawtuct, he found a bat hanging there which measured eleven feet [*sic*], alar extent.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kneeland, to whom I showed the tail and wings, thought it a pigeon hawk.

P. M. — To Annurnsack.

Dense flocks of pigeons hurry-scurry over the hill. Pass near Brooks's pigeon-stands. There was a flock perched on his poles, and they sat so still and in such regular order there, being also the color of the wood, that I thought they were wooden figures at first. They were perched not only in horizontal straight lines one above the other, which the cross-bars required, but at equal distances apart on these perches, which must be their own habit; and it struck me that they made just such a figure seen against the sky as pigeonholes cut in a doves' house do, *i. e.* a . . . more or less triangular figure, thus: . . . and possibly the seeing them . . . thus perched might have originally . . . suggested this arrangement of the . . . holes.

Pigeons dart by on every side, — a dry slate color, like weather-stained wood (the weather-stained birds), fit color for this aerial traveller, a more subdued and earthy blue than the sky, as its field (or path) is between the sky and the earth, — not black or brown, as is the earth, but a terrene or slaty blue, suggesting their aerial resorts and habits.

The Emersons tell me that their Irishman, James, held his thumb for the calf to suck, after dipping it in a pitcher of milk, but, the milk not coming fast enough, [the calf] butted (or bunted) the pitcher to make the milk come down, and broke it.

The grain of the wild rice is all green yet.

I find that Temple raises his own tobacco. The great leaves were spread over the bottom and sides of a hay-

rigging in his barn, by the open door, to dry. He smokes them. He says that the season is rather short for it here, but I saw some still growing and in bloom abundantly. What kind is it? "Cuby, they call it." He smokes it and thinks it better than any he can buy.

Sept. 16. Another and severer frost, which cut off all our vines, etc., lespedeza, corn, etc.

P. M. — By the roadside, forty or fifty rods east of the South Acton station, I find the *Aster Novæ-Angliæ*, apparently past prime. I must call it a plant of this vicinity, then. I thought it "in prime or a little past" at Salem, September 21, 1858. I will venture to put it with the *A. puniceus*.

Young Nealy says that there are blue-winged teal about now. Others are out after ducks. Nealy says he shot the first golden plover he has seen, this morning.<sup>1</sup>

How unpromising are promising men! Hardly any disgust me so much. I have no faith in them. They make gratuitous promises, and they break them gratuitously.

When an Irishwoman tells me that she would n't tell a lie for her life (because I appear to doubt her), it seems to me that she has already told a lie. She holds herself and the truth very cheap to say that so easily.

What troubles men lay up for want of a little energy and precision! A man who steps quickly to his mark leaves a great deal of filth behind. There's many a well-meaning fellow who thinks he has a hard time of it who will not put his shoulder to the wheel, being spell-

<sup>1</sup> Does he know it??

bound, — who sits about, as if he were hatching his good intentions, and every now and then his friends get up a subscription for him, and he is cursed with the praise of being “a clever fellow.” It would really be worth his while to go straight to his master the devil, if he would only shake him up when he got there. Men who have not learned the value of time, or of anything else; for whom an infant school and a birchen rod is still and forever necessary. A man who is not prompt affects me as a creature covered with slime, crawling through mud and lying dormant a great part of the year. Think of the numbers — men and women — who want and *will* have and *do* have (how do they get it?!) what they will not earn! The non-producers. How many of these bloodsuckers there are fastened to every helpful man or woman in this world! They constitute this world. It is a world full of snivelling prayers, — whose very religion is a prayer! As if beggars were admirable, were respectable, to anybody!

Again and again I am surprised to observe what an interval there is, in what is called civilized life, between the shell and the inhabitant of the shell, — what a disproportion there is between the life of man and his conveniences and luxuries. The house is neatly painted, has many apartments. You are shown into the sitting-room, where is a carpet and couch and mirror and splendidly bound Bible, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, photographs of the whole family even, on the mantelpiece. One could live here more deliciously and improve his divine gifts better than in a cave surely. In the bright and costly saloon man will not be starv-

ing or freezing or contending with vermin surely, but he will be meditating a divine song or a heroic deed, or perfuming the atmosphere by the very breath of his natural and healthy existence. As the parlor is preferable to the cave, so will the life of its occupant be more godlike than that of the dweller in the cave. I called at such a house this afternoon, the house of one who in Europe would be called an operative. The woman was not in the third heavens, but in the third kitchen, as near the wood-shed or to outdoors and to the cave as she could instinctively get, for there she belonged, — a coarse scullion or wench, not one whit superior, but in fact inferior, to the squaw in a wigwam, — and the master of the house, where was he? He was drunk somewhere, on some mow or behind some stack, and I could not see him. He had been having a spree. If he had been as sober as he may be to-morrow, it would have been essentially the same; for refinement is not in him, it is only in his house, — in the appliances which he did not invent. So is it in the Fifth Avenue and all over the civilized world. There is nothing but confusion in our New England life. The hogs are in the parlor. This man and his wife — and how many like them! — should have sucked their claws in some hole in a rock, or lurked like gypsies in the outbuildings of some diviner race. They’ve got into the wrong boxes; they rained down into these houses by mistake, as it is said to rain toads sometimes. They wear these advantages helter-skelter and without appreciating them, or to satisfy a vulgar taste, just as savages wear the dress of civilized men, just as that Indian chief

walked the streets of New Orleans clad in nothing but a gaudy military coat which his Great Father had given him. Some philanthropists trust that the houses will civilize the inhabitants at last. The mass of men, just like savages, strive always after the outside, the clothes and finery of civilized life, the blue beads and tinsel and centre-tables. It is a wonder that any load ever gets moved, men are so prone to put the cart before the horse.

We do everything according to the fashion, just as the Flatheads flatten the heads of their children. We conform ourselves in a myriad ways and with infinite pains to the fashions of our time. We mourn for our lost relatives according to fashion, and as some nations hire professed mourners to howl, so we hire stone-masons to hammer and blast by the month and so express our grief. Or if a public character dies, we get up a regular wake with eating and drinking till midnight.

Grasshoppers have been very abundant in dry fields for two or three weeks. Sophia walked through the Depot Field a fortnight ago, and when she got home picked fifty or sixty from her skirts, — for she wore hoops and crinoline. Would not this be a good way to clear a field of them, — to send a bevy of fashionably dressed ladies across a field and leave them to clean their skirts when they get home? It would supplant anything at the patent office, and the motive power is cheap.

I am invited to take some party of ladies or gentlemen on an excursion, — to walk or sail, or the like, — but by all kinds of evasions I omit it, and am thought to

be rude and unaccommodating therefore. They do not consider that the wood-path and the boat are my studio, where I maintain a sacred solitude and cannot admit promiscuous company. I will see them occasionally in an evening or at the table, however. They do not think of taking a child away from its school to go a-huckleberrying with them. Why should not I, then, have my school and school hours to be respected? Ask me for a certain number of dollars if you will, but do not ask me for my afternoons.

*Sept. 18.* Considerable rain yesterday, raising the streams at last somewhat.

The frost of the 16th was very severe for the season, killing all our vines, and to-day I see the corn, much of which was not yet topped, all withered and white, and the lespedeza withered in the paths, etc., etc., grape-vines very generally, and the ground-nut.

P. M. — To Grape Cliff.

There is an abundant crop of cones on the white pines this year,<sup>1</sup> and they are now for the most part brown and open. They make a great show even sixty rods off. The tops of the high trees for six or ten feet downward are quite browned with them, hanging straight downward. It is worth the while to observe this evidence of fertility, even in the white pine, which commonly we do not regard as a fruit-bearing tree. It is worth a long walk to look from some favorable point over a pine forest whose tops are thus covered with the brown cones just opened, — from which the

<sup>1</sup> Not only here, but as far off as Worcester, I observe.

winged seeds have fallen or are ready to fall. It is really a rich and interesting sight. How little observed are the fruits which we do not use! How few attend to the ripening and dispersion of the pine seed!

From the observation of this year I should say that the fringed gentian opened before the witch-hazel, for though I know many more localities of the last than the first, I do not find the last out till to-day, and it cannot have been out but a day or two.

Grape-vines are cut off, *i. e.* the leaves, before they have generally turned, this year.

The witch-hazel fruit appears to be now opening. The double-fruited stone splits and reveals the two shining black oblong seeds. It has a peculiarly formed nut, in pretty clusters, clothed, as it were, in close-fitting buckskin, amid the now yellowing leaves.

I hear the *chewink* note now more than a month ago, and it sounds cool and solitary.

Rice, who walks with me, thinks that that fine early sedge grass would be a capital thing to stuff cushions and beds with, it is so tough. (In hollows in woods.)

See checkerberries not yet fully grown nor ripe, somewhat pear-shaped, and whitish at the blossom end. A bear-berry ripe.

One might at first expect that the earth would bear its best men within the tropics, where vegetation is most luxuriant and there is the most heat. But the temperate zone is found to be most favorable to the growth and ripening of men. This fruit attains to the finest flavor there. So, methinks, it is neither the stem nor blossom end of a fruit that is sweetest and maturest, but its

blossom cheek or temperate zone, the portion that lies under its temperate zone. I suspect that the south pole is the stem end of the globe and that Europe and America are on its rosy cheek, and fortunate are we who live in America, where the bloom is not yet rubbed off.

I have seen no *Viburnum nudum* berries for some time. They are considerably earlier than the *V. Lentago*.

Dr. Bartlett handed me a paper to-day, desiring me to subscribe for a statue to Horace Mann. I declined, and said that I thought a man ought not any more to take up room in the world after he was dead. We shall lose one advantage of a man's dying if we are to have a statue of him forthwith. This is probably meant to be an opposition statue to that of Webster. At this rate they will crowd the streets with them. A man will have to add a clause to his will, "No statue to be made of me." It is very offensive to my imagination to see the dying stiffen into statues at this rate. We should wait till their bones begin to crumble — and then avoid too near a likeness to the living.

See large flocks, apparently of chip-birds,<sup>1</sup> rise from the weeds in the garden, now after it clears up. Has the storm driven them from the north? Robins are eating the mountain-ash berries very fast. The robins are more seen than a fortnight ago.

Cistus, some gone to seed and open several days.

Sept. 19. A. M. — To Stow.

Hear the note of the goldfinch on all sides this fine day after the storm. Butternuts have been falling for two

<sup>1</sup> And Sept. 26th.

or three weeks, — now mostly fallen, — but must dry and lose their outer shells before cracking them.

They say that kittens' tails are brittle, and perhaps the tip of that one's was *broken* off.

The young gentleman who travels abroad learns to *pronounce*, and makes acquaintance with foreign lords and ladies, — among the rest perchance with Lord Ward, the inventor and probably consumer of the celebrated Worcestershire Sauce.

See many yellow butterflies in the road this very pleasant day after the rain of yesterday. One flutters across between the horse and the wagon safely enough, though it looks as if it would be run down.

Sept. 20. P. M. — To White Pond.

The button-bushes by the river are generally overrun with the mikania. This is married to the button-bush as much as the vine to the elm, and more. I suspect that the button-bushes and black willows have been as ripe as ever they get to be.

I get quite near to a blackbird on an apple tree, singing with the grackle note very earnestly and not minding me. He is all alone. Has a (rustyish) brown head and shoulders and the rest black. I think it is a grackle. Where are the red-wings now? I have not seen nor heard one for a long time. Is this a grackle come from its northern breeding-place?

Sept. 21. Heard in the night a snapping sound and the fall of some small body on the floor from time to time. In the morning I found that it was produced by

the witch-hazel nuts on my desk springing open and casting their seeds quite across the chamber, hard and stony as these nuts are.<sup>1</sup>

It is overcast, like yesterday, and yet more rain-promising.<sup>2</sup>

Methinks the 19th was such a day (the second after rain) as the 18th in '58, — a peculiarly fine September day, looking toward the fall, warm and bright, with yellow butterflies in the washed road, and early-changed maples and shrubs adorning the low grounds. The red nesæa blazing along the Assabet above the powder-mills. The apple crop, red and yellow, more conspicuous than ever amid the washed leaves.

The farmers on all sides are digging their potatoes, so prone to their work that they do not see me going across lots.

I sat near Coombs's pigeon-place by White Pond. The pigeons sat motionless on his bare perches, from time to time dropping down into the bed and uttering a *quivet* or two. Some stood on the perch; others squatted flat. I could see their dove-colored breasts. Then all at once, being alarmed, would take flight, but ere long return in straggling parties. He tells me that he has fifteen dozen baited, but does not intend to catch any more at present, or for two or three weeks, hoping to attract others. Rice says that white oak acorns pounded up, shells and all, make the best bait for them.


I see now in the wood-paths where small birds and

<sup>1</sup> For several days they are shooting their shining black seeds about my chamber. *Vide* [next page].

<sup>2</sup> Rains in afternoon and night.

partridges, etc., have been destroyed, — only their feathers left, — probably by hawks. Do they not take their prey often to a smooth path in the woods?

White Pond is being dimpled here and there all over, perhaps by fishes; and so is the river. It is an overcast day. Has that anything to do with it? I see some of the rainbow girdle reflected around its edge. Looking with the proper intention of the eye, I see it is ribbed with the dark prolonged reflections of the pines almost across. But why are they bent one side? Is it the effect of the wind?

We are having our dog-days now and of late, methinks, having had none to speak of in August; and now at last I see a few toadstools, — the election-cake (the yellowish, glazed over) and the taller, brighter-yellow above.  Those shell-less slugs which eat apples eat these also.

Jays are more frequently heard of late, maybe because other birds are more silent.

Considerable many acorns are fallen (black oak chiefly) in the path under the south edge of Conant's Wood, this side of White Pond. Acorns have been falling very sparingly ever since September 1, but are mostly wormy. They are as interesting now on the shrub oak (green) as ever.

I suspect that it is not when the witch-hazel nut first gapes open that the seeds fly out, for I see many (if not most of them) open first with the seeds in them; but when I release a seed (it being still held by its base), it flies as I have said. I think that its slippery base is compressed by the unyielding shell, which at length expels

it, just as I can make one fly by pressing it and letting it slip from between my thumb and finger. It appears to fit close to the shell at its base, even after the shell gapes.

The ex-plenipotentiary refers in after[-dinner] speeches with complacency to the time he spent abroad and the various lords and distinguished men he met, as to a *deed done* and an ever-memorable occasion! Of what account are titles and offices and opportunities, if you do no memorable deed?

I perceive that a spike of arum berries which I gathered quite green September 1 is now turned completely scarlet, and though it has lain on my desk in a dry and warm chamber all the while, the berries are still perfectly plump and fresh (as well as glossy) to look at, — as much so as any.

The greater part [of], almost all, the mikania was killed by the frost of the 15th and 16th. Only that little which was protected by its position escaped and is still in bloom. And the button-bush too is generally browned above by the same cause. This has given a considerably brown look to the side of the river.

Saw *bæomyces* (lately opened, probably with the rain of the 17th) by roadside.

Yesterday was a still, overcast, rain-promising day, and I saw this morning (perhaps it was yesterday) the ground about the back door all marked with worm-piles. Had they not come out for water after the dry weather?

See a St. Domingo cuckoo (black-billed) still.

Sept. 22. A mizzling day, with less rain than yesterday, filling the streams.



As I went past the Hunt cellar, where Hosmer pulled down the old house in the spring, I thought I would see if any new or rare plants had sprung up in that place which had so long been covered from the light. I was surprised to find there *Urtica urens* (?), very fresh and in bloom, one to three feet high, with ovate deeply cut leaves, which I never saw before; also *Nicotiana*, probably *Tabacum* (not the wild one), in flower, and *Anethum graveolens* (?), or dill, also in flower. I had not seen either of the last two growing spontaneously in Concord before. It is remarkable that tobacco should have sprung up there. Could the seed have been preserved from a time when it was cultivated there?<sup>1</sup> Also the *Solanum nigrum*, which is rare in Concord, with many flowers and green fruit. The prevailing plants in and about this cellar were mallows, *Urtica urens*, rich-weed (very rank), catnep, *Chenopodium Botrys*, *Solanum nigrum*, chickweed, *Bidens frondosa*, etc.<sup>2</sup>

It is remarkable what a curse seems to attach to any place which has long been inhabited by man. Vermin of various kinds abide with him. It is said that the site of Babylon is a desert where the lion and the jackal prowl. If, as here, an ancient cellar is uncovered, there springs up at once a crop of rank and noxious weeds, evidence of a certain unwholesome fertility, — by which perchance the earth relieves herself of the poisonous qualities which have been imparted to her.

<sup>1</sup> I learn that it was formerly cultivated in Concord, but Temple, who has raised a little for two years past a mile and a quarter west of this, thinks he is the only one who has cultivated any in C. of late years.

<sup>2</sup> [See *Excursions*, p. 201. Riv. 247.]

As if what was foul, baleful, grovelling, or obscene in the inhabitants had sunk into the earth and infected it. Certain qualities are there in excess in the soil, and the proper equilibrium will not be attained until after the sun and air have purified the spot. The very shade breeds saltpetre. Yet men value this kind of earth highly and will pay a price for it, as if it were as good a soil for virtue as for vice.


In other places you find henbane and the Jamestown-weed and the like, in cellars, — such herbs as the witches are said to put into their caldron.

It would be fit that the tobacco plant should spring up on the house-site, aye on the grave, of almost every householder of Concord. These vile weeds are sown by vile men. When the house is gone they spring up in the corners of cellars where the cider-casks stood always on tap, for murder and all kindred vices will out. And that rank crowd which lines the gutter, where the wash of the dinner dishes flows, are but more distant parasites of the host. What obscene and poisonous weeds, think you, will mark the site of a Slave State? — what kind of Jamestown-weed?

There are mallows for food, — for cheeses, at least; rich-weed for high living; the nettle for domestic felicity, — a happy disposition; black nightshade, tobacco, henbane, and Jamestown-weed as symbols of the moral atmosphere and influences of that house, the idiocy and insanity of it; dill and Jerusalem-oak and catnep for senility grasping at a straw; and beggar-ticks for poverty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* next page.

I see the fall dandelions all closed in the rain this afternoon. Do they, then, open only in fair or cloudy forenoons and cloudy afternoons?

There is mallow with its pretty little button-shaped fruit, which children eat  and call cheeses, — eaten green. There are several such fruits discoverable and edible by children.

The mountain-ash trees are alive with robins and cherry-birds nowadays, stripping them of their fruit (in drooping clusters). It is exceedingly bitter and *austere* to my taste. Such a tree fills the air with the watch-spring-like note of the cherry-birds coming and going.

Sept. 23. Pretty copious rain in the night.

11 A. M. — River risen about fourteen inches above lowest this year (or thirteen and three quarters above my mark by boat).

What an army of non-producers society *produces*, — ladies generally (old and young) and gentlemen of *leisure*, so called! Many think themselves well employed as charitable dispensers of wealth which somebody else earned, and these who produce nothing, being of the most luxurious habits, are precisely they who want the most, and complain loudest when they do not get what they want. They who are literally paupers maintained at the public expense are the most importunate and insatiable beggars. They cling like the glutton to a living man and suck his vitals up. To every locomotive man there are three or four deadheads clinging to him, as if they conferred a great favor on society by living

upon it. Meanwhile they fill the churches, and die and revive from time to time. They have nothing to do but sin, and repent of their sins. How can you expect such bloodsuckers to be happy? <sup>1</sup>

Not only foul and poisonous weeds grow in our tracks, but our vileness and luxuriance make simple and wholesome plants rank and weed-like. All that I ever got a premium for was a monstrous squash, so coarse that nobody could eat it. Some of these bad qualities will be found to lurk in the pears that are invented in and about the purlicus of great towns. "The evil that men do lives after them." The corn and potatoes produced by excessive manuring may be said to have, not only a coarse, but a poisonous, quality. They are made food [for] hogs and oxen too. What creatures is the grain raised on the corn-fields of Waterloo food for, unless it be for such as prey upon men? Who cuts the grass in the graveyard? I can detect the site of the shanties that have stood all along the railroads by the ranker vegetation. I do not go there for delicate wild-flowers.

It is important, then, that we should air our lives from time to time by removals, and excursions into the fields and woods, — starve our vices. Do not sit so long over any cellar-hole as to tempt your neighbor to bid for the privilege of digging saltpetre there.

So live that only the most beautiful wild-flowers will spring up where you have dwelt, — harebells, violets, and blue-eyed grass.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* back, Sept. 16th.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Oct. 13th.

Sept. 24. P. M. — To Melvin's Preserve.

Was that a flock of grackles on the meadow? I have not seen half a dozen blackbirds, methinks, for a month.

I have many affairs to attend to, and feel hurried these days. Great works of art have endless leisure for a background, as the universe has space. Time stands still while they are created. The artist cannot be in [a] hurry. The earth moves round the sun with inconceivable rapidity, and yet the surface of the lake is not ruffled by it. It is not by a compromise, it is not by a timid and feeble repentance, that a man will save his soul and *live*, at last. He has got to *conquer* a clear field, letting Repentance & Co. go. That's a well-meaning but weak firm that has assumed the debts of an old and worthless one. You are to fight in a field where no allowances will be made, no courteous bowing to one-handed knights. You are expected to do your duty, not in spite of every thing but *one*, but in spite of *everything*.

See a green snake.

Stedman Buttrick's handsome maple and pine swamp is full of cinnamon ferns. I stand on the elevated road, looking down into it. The trees are very tall and slender, without branches for a long distance. All the ground, which is perfectly level, is covered and concealed, as are the bases of the trees, with the tufts of cinnamon fern, now a pale brown. It is a very pretty sight, these northern trees springing out of a groundwork of ferns. It is like pictures of the tropics, except that here the palms are the undergrowth. You could not have arranged a nosegay more tastefully. It is a rich

groundwork, out of which the maples and pines spring.<sup>1</sup> But outside the wood and by the roadside, where they are exposed, these ferns are withered, shrivelled, and brown, for they are tenderer than the dicksonia. The fern, especially if large, is so foreign and tropical that these remind me of artificial groundworks set in sand, to set off other plants. These ferns (like brakes) begin to decay, *i. e.* to turn yellow or brown and ripen, as here, before they are necessarily frost-bitten. Theirs is another change and decay, like that of the brake and sarsaparilla in the woods and swamps, only later, while the exposed ones are killed before they have passed through all their changes. The exposed ones attained to a brighter yellow early and were then killed; the shaded ones pass through various stages of rich, commonly pale brown, as here, and last much longer. The brown ones are the most interesting.

Going along this old Carlisle road, — road for walkers, for berry-pickers, and no more worldly travellers; road for Melvin and Clark, not for the sheriff nor butcher nor the baker's jingling cart; road where all wild things and fruits abound, where there are countless rocks to jar those who venture there in wagons; which no jockey, no wheelwright in his right mind, drives over, no little spidery gigs and Flying Childers; road which leads to and through a great but not famous garden, zoölogical and botanical garden, at whose *gate* you never arrive,<sup>2</sup> — as I was going along there, I perceived the grateful scent of the dicksonia fern, now

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Aug. 23d, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* forward.

partly decayed, and it reminds me of all up-country with its springy mountainsides and unexhausted vigor. Is there any essence of dicksonia fern, I wonder? Surely that giant who, my neighbor expects, is to bound up the Alleghanies will have his handkerchief scented with that. In the lowest part of the road the dicksonia by the wall-sides is more than half frost-bitten and withered, — a sober Quaker-color, brown crape! — though not so tender or early [?] as the cinnamon fern; but soon I rise to where they are more yellow and green, and so my route is varied. On the higher places there are very handsome tufts of it, all yellowish outside and green within. The sweet fragrance of decay! When I wade through by narrow cow-paths, it is as if I had strayed into an ancient and decayed herb-garden. Proper for old ladies to scent their handkerchiefs with. Nature perfumes her garments with this essence now especially. She gives it to those who go a-barbering and on dank autumnal walks. The essence of this as well as of new-mown hay, surely! The very scent of it, if you have a decayed frond in your chamber, will take you far up country in a twinkling. You would think you had gone after the cows there, or were lost on the mountains. It will make you as cool and well as a frog, — a wood frog, *Rana sylvatica*. It is the scent the earth yielded in the saurian period, before man was created and fell, before milk and water were invented, and the mints. Far wilder than they. *Rana sylvatica* passed judgment on it, or rather that peculiar-scented *Rana palustris*. It was in his reign it was introduced. That is the scent of the Silurian Period precisely,

and a modern beau may scent his handkerchief with it. Before man had come and the plants that chiefly serve him. There were no *Rosaceæ* nor mints then. So the earth smelled in the Silurian (?) Period, before man was created and any soil had been debauched with manure. The saurians had their handkerchiefs scented with it. For all the ages are represented still and you can smell them out.

A man must attend to Nature closely for many years to know when, as well as where, to look for his objects, since he must always anticipate her a little. Young men have not learned the phases of Nature; they do not know what constitutes a year, or that one year is like another. I would know when in the year to expect certain thoughts and moods, as the sportsman knows when to look for plover.

Though you may have sauntered near to heaven's gate, when at length you return toward the village you give up the enterprise a little, and you begin to fall into the old ruts of thought, like a regular roadster. Your thoughts very properly fail to report themselves to headquarters. Your thoughts turn toward night and the evening mail and become begrimed with dust, as if you were just going to put up at (with?) the tavern, or even come to make an exchange with a brother clergyman here on the morrow.

Some eyes cannot see, even through a spy-glass. I showed my spy-glass to a man whom I met this afternoon, who said that he wanted to see if he could look through it. I tried it carefully on him, but he failed. He said that he tried a lot lately on the muster-field

but he never could see through them, somehow or other everything was all a blur. I asked him if he considered his eyes good. He answered that they were good to see far. They looked like two old-fashioned china saucers. He kept steadily chewing his quid all the while he talked and looked. This is the case with a great many, I suspect. Everything is in a blur to them. He enjoys the distinction of being the only man in the town who raises his own tobacco. Seeing is not in them. No focus will suit them. You wonder how the world looks to them, — if those are *eyes* which they have got, or bits of old china, familiar with soap-suds.

As I stood looking over a wall this afternoon at some splendid red sumach bushes, now in their prime, I saw Melvin the other side of the wall and bailed him. "What are *you* after there?" asked he. "After the same thing that you are, perhaps," answered I. But I mistook, this time, for he said that he was looking amid the huckleberry bushes for some spectacles which a woman lost there in the summer. It was his mother, no doubt.

Road — that old Carlisle one — that leaves towns behind; where you put off worldly thoughts; where you do not carry a watch, nor remember the proprietor; where the proprietor is the only trespasser, — looking after *his* apples! — the only one who mistakes his calling there, whose title is not good; where fifty may be a-barberrying and you do not see one. It is an endless succession of glades where the barberries grow thickest, successive yards amid the barberry bushes where you

do not see out. There I see Melvin and the robins, and many a nut-brown maid *sashé-ing* [*sic*] to the barberry bushes in hoops and crinoline, and none of them see me. The world-surrounding hoop! faery rings! Oh, the jolly cooper's trade it is the best of any! Carried to the furthest isles where civilized man penetrates. This the girdle they've put round the world! Saturn or Satan set the example. Large and small hogsheds, barrels, kegs, worn by the misses that go to that lone schoolhouse in the Pinkham notch. The lonely horse in its pasture is glad to see company, comes forward to be noticed and takes an apple from your hand. Others are called *great* roads, but this is greater than they all. The road is only laid out, offered to walkers, not *accepted* by the town and the travelling world. To be represented by a dotted line on charts, or drawn in lime-juice, undiscoverable to the uninitiated, to be held to a warm imagination. No guide-boards indicate it. No odometer would indicate the miles a wagon had run there. Rocks which the druids *might* have raised — if they could. There I go searching for malic acid of the right quality, with my tests. The process is simple. Place the fruit between your jaws and then endeavor to make your teeth meet. The very earth contains it. The Easterbrooks Country contains malic acid.

To my senses the dicksonia fern has the most wild and primitive fragrance, quite unalloyed and untamable, such as no human institutions give out, — the early morning fragrance of the world, antediluvian, strength and hope imparting. They who scent it can never faint. It is ever a new and untried field where it grows, and

only when we think original thoughts can we perceive it. If we keep that on [*sic*] our boudoir we shall be healthy and evergreen as hemlocks. Older than, but related to, strawberries. Before strawberries were, it was, and it will outlast them. Good for the trilobite and saurian in us; death to dandies. It yields its scent most morning and evening. Growing without manure; older than man; refreshing him; preserving his original strength and innocence. When the New Hampshire farmer, far from travelled roads, has cleared a space for his mountain home and conducted the springs of the mountain to his yard, already it grows about the sources of that spring, before any mint is planted in his garden. There his sheep and oxen and he too scent it, and he realizes that the world is new to him. There the pastures are rich, the cattle do not die of disease, and the men are strong and free. The wild original of strawberries and the rest.

Nature, the earth herself, is the only panacea. They bury poisoned sheep up to the necks in earth to take the poison out of them.

After four days cloud and rain we have fair weather. A great many have improved this first fair day to come a-barberying to the Easterbrooks fields. These bushy fields are all alive with them, though I scarcely see one. I meet Melvin loaded down with barberries, in bags and baskets, so that he has to travel by stages and is glad to stop and talk with me. It is better to take thus what Nature offers, in her season, than to buy an extra dinner at Parker's.

The sumach berries are probably past their beauty. Fever-bush berries are scarlet now, and also green.

They have a more spicy taste than any of our berries, carrying us in thought to the spice islands. Taste like lemon-peel. The panicked andromeda berries (?) begin to brown. The bayberry berries are apparently ripe, though not so gray as they will be, — more lead-colored. They bear sparingly here. Leaves not fallen nor changed, and I the more easily find the bushes amid the changed huckleberries, brakes, etc., by their greenness.

The poke on Eb. Hubbard's hillside has been considerably frost-bitten before the berries are one-third ripe. It is in flower still. Great drooping cylindrical racemes of blackish-purple berries, six inches or more in length, tapering a little toward the end; great flat blackish and ripe berries at base, with green ones and flowers at the other end; all on brilliant purple or crimson-purple peduncle and pedicels.<sup>1</sup>

Those thorns by Shattuck's barn, now nearly leafless, have hard green fruit as usual.

The shrub oak is apparently the most fertile of our oaks. I count two hundred and sixty-six acorns on a branch just two feet long. Many of the cups are freshly empty now, showing a pretty circular pink scar at the bottom, where the acorn adhered. They are of various forms and sizes on different shrubs; are now turning dark-brown and showing their converging meridional light-brown lines. Never fear for striped squirrels in our shrub oak land.

Am surprised to find, by Botrychium Swamp, a *Rhus*

<sup>1</sup> [The word "poke" appears here, drawn across the page in large characters now (1906) of a dirty light-brown color. The stain is doubtless what remains of the poke berry's purple juice.]

*radicans* which is quite a tree by itself. It is about nine feet high by nine in width, growing in the midst of a clump of barberry bushes, which it overhangs. It is now at the height of its change, very handsome, scarlet and yellow, and I did not at first know what it was. I found it to consist of three or four branches, each nearly two inches thick and covered with those shaggy fibres, and these are twined round some long-since rotted barberry stems, and around one another, and now make a sizable-looking trunk, which rises to the height of four feet before it branches, and then spreads widely every way like an oak. It was, no doubt, indebted to the barberry for support at first, but now its very branches are much larger than that, and it far overtops and over-spreads all the barberry stems.

Sept. 25. P. M. — To Emerson's Cliff.

Holding a white pine needle in my hand, and turning it in a favorable light, as I sit upon this cliff, I perceive that each of its three edges is notched or serrated with minute forward-pointing bristles. So much does Nature avoid an unbroken line that even this slender leaf is serrated; though, to my surprise, neither Gray nor Bigelow mention it. Loudon, however, says, "Scabrous and inconspicuously serrated on the margin; spreading in summer, but in winter contracted, and lying close to the branches." Fine and smooth as it looks, it is serrated after all. This is its concealed wildness, by which it connects itself with the wilder oaks.

Prinos berries are fairly ripe for a few days. Moles work in meadows.

I see at Brister Spring Swamp the (apparently) *Aspidium Noveboracense*, more than half of it turned white. Also some dicksonia is about equally white. These especially are the white ones. There is another, largish, and more generally decayed than either of these, with large serrated segments, rather far apart, — perhaps the *Asplenium Filix-femina* (?). The first may be called now the white fern, — with rather small entire and flat segments close together. In shade is the laboratory of white. Color is produced in the sun. The cinnamon ferns are all a decaying brown there. The sober brown colors of those ferns are in harmony with the twilight of the swamp. The terminal shield fern and the *Aspidium spinulosum* (?) are still fresh and green, the first as much so as the polypody.

At 2 P. M. the river is sixteen and three quarters inches above my hub[?] by boat.

*Nabalus albus* still common, though much past prime. Though concealed amid trees, I find three humblebees on one.

As when Antæus touched the earth, so when the mountaineer scents the fern, he bounds up like a chamois, or mountain goat, with renewed strength. There is no French perfumery about it. It has not been tampered with by any perfumer to their majesties. It is the fragrance of those plants whose impressions we see on our coal. Beware of the cultivation that eradicates it.

The very crab-grass in our garden is for the most part a light straw-color and withered, probably by the frosts of the



15th and 16th, looking almost as white as the corn; and hundreds of sparrows (chip-birds?) find their food amid it. The same frosts that kill and whiten the corn whiten many grasses thus.

Sept. 26. P. M. — To Clamshell by boat.

The *Solanum dulcamara* berries are another kind which grows in drooping clusters. I do not know any clusters more graceful and beautiful than these drooping cymes of scarlet or translucent cherry-colored elliptical berries with steel-blue (or lead?) purple pedicels (not peduncles) like those leaves on the tips of the branches. These in the water at the bend of the river are peculiarly handsome, they are so long an oval or ellipse. No berries, methinks, are so well spaced and agreeably arranged in their drooping cymes, — somewhat hexagonally like a honeycomb. Then what a variety of color! The peduncle and its branches are green, the pedicels and sepals only that rare steel-blue purple, and the berries a clear translucent cherry red. They hang more gracefully over the river's brim than any pendants in a lady's ear. The cymes are of irregular yet regular form, not too crowded, elegantly spaced. Yet they are considered poisonous! Not to look at, surely. Is it not a reproach that so much that is beautiful is poisonous to us? Not in a stiff, flat cyme, but in different stages above and around, finding ample room in space. But why should they not be poisonous? Would it not be in bad taste to eat these berries which are ready to feed another sense? A drooping berry should always be of an oval or pear shape. Nature not

only produces good wares, but puts them up handsomely. Witness these pretty-colored and variously shaped skins in which her harvests, the seeds of her various plants, are now being packed away. I know in what bags she puts her nightshade seeds, her cranberries, viburnums, cornels, by their form and color, often by their fragrance; and thus a legion of consumers find them.

The celtis berries are still green. The pontederia is fast shedding its seeds of late. I saw a parcel suddenly rise to the surface of their own accord, leaving the axis nearly bare. Many are long since bare. They float, at present, but probably sink at last. There are a great many floating amid the pads and in the wreck washed up, of these singular green spidery(?) -looking seeds. Probably they are the food of returning water-fowl. They are ripe, like the seeds of different lilies, at the time the fowl return from the north.

I hear a frog or two, either *palustris* or *halecina*, croak and *work* faintly, as in spring, along the side of the river. So it is with flowers, birds, and frogs a renewal of spring.

Hearing a sharp *phe-phe* and again *phe-phe-phe*, I look round and see two (probably larger) yellow-legs, like pigeons, standing in the water by the bare, flat ammannia shore, their whole forms reflected in the water. They allow me to paddle past them, though on the alert.

Heavy Haynes says he has seen one or two fish hawks within a day or two. Also that a boy caught a very large snapping turtle on the meadow a day or two



ago. He once dug one up two or three feet deep in the meadow in winter when digging mud. He was rather dormant. Says he remembers a fish-house that stood by the river at Clamshell.

Observed the spiders at work at the head of Willow Bay. Their fine lines are extended from one flag or burreed to another, even six or eight feet, perfectly parallel with the surface of the water and only a few inches above it. I see some,—though it requires a very favorable light to detect them, they are so fine,—blowing off perfectly straight horizontally over the water, only half a dozen inches above it, as much as seven feet, one end fastened to a reed, the other free. They look as stiff as spears, yet the free end waves back and forth horizontally in the air several feet. They work thus in calm and fine weather when the water is smooth. Yet they can run over the surface of the water readily.

The savage in man is never quite eradicated. I have just read of a family in Vermont who, several of its members having died of consumption, just *burned* the lungs, heart, and liver of the last deceased, in order to prevent any more from having it.

How feeble women, or rather ladies, are! They cannot bear to be shined on, but generally carry a parasol to *keep off* the sun.

Sept. 28. At Cattle-Show to-day I noticed that the ladies' apple (small, one side green, the other red, glossy) and maiden's-blush (good size, yellowish-white with a pink blush) were among the handsomest. The pumpkin-sweet one of the largest exhibited. The ram's-

horn was a handsome uniformly very dark purple or crimson.

The white pine seed is very abundant this year, and this must attract more pigeons. Coombs tells me that he finds the seed in their crops. Also that he found within a day or two a full-formed egg with shell in one.

In proportion as a man has a poor ear for music, or loses his ear for it, he is obliged to go far for it or fetch it from far, and pay a great price for such as he *can* hear. Operas, ballet-singers, and the like only affect him. It is like the difference between a young and healthy appetite and the appetite of an epicure, between a sweet crust and a mock-turtle soup.

As the lion is said to lie in a thicket or in tall reeds and grass by day, slumbering, and sallies at night, just so with the cat. She will ensconce herself for the day in the grass or weeds in some out-of-the-way nook near the house, and arouse herself toward night.

Sept. 29. Down railroad and to Fair Haven Hill.

In Potter's maple swamp I see the (apparently) *Aspidium Thelypteris* (revolute segments) about half decaying or whitish, but later than the flowering fern and the osmunda, which are almost entirely withered and brown there.

Dogwood (poison) berries are ripe, and leaves begun to fall.

*Juniperus repens* berries are quite green yet. I see some of last year's *dark-purple* ones at the base of the branchlets. There is a very large specimen on the side of Fair Haven Hill, above Cardinal Shore. This is very

handsome this bright afternoon, especially if you stand on the lower and sunny side, on account of the various ways in which its surging flakes and leaflets, green or silvery, reflect the light. It is as if we were giants, and looked down on an evergreen forest from whose flaky surface the light is variously reflected. Though so low, it is so dense and rigid that neither men nor cows think of wading through it. We get a bird's-eye view of this evergreen forest, as a hawk sailing over, looking into its unapproachable clefts and recesses, reflecting a green or else a cheerful silvery light.

Horse-chestnuts strew the roadside, very handsome-colored but simply formed nuts, looking like mahogany knobs, with the waved and curled grain of knots.

Having just dug my potatoes in the garden, — which did not turn out very well, — I took a basket and trowel and went forth to dig my wild potatoes, or ground-nuts, by the railroad fence. I dug up the tubers of some half a dozen plants and found an unexpected yield. One string weighed a little more than three quarters of a pound. There were thirteen which I should have put with the large potatoes (this year) if they had been the common kind. The biggest was two and three quarters inches long and seven inches in circumference the smallest way. Five would have been called good-sized potatoes. It is but a slender vine now, killed by frost, and not promising such a yield, but deep in the soil (or sand), five or six inches or sometimes a foot, you come to the string of brown and commonly *knobby* nuts. The cuticle of the tuber is more or less cracked longitudinally, forming meridional furrows, and the roots (?), or shoots,

bear a large proportion to the tuber. In case of a famine I should soon resort to these roots. If they increased in size, on being cultivated, as much as the common potato has, they would become monstrous.<sup>1</sup>

Saw a warbler in Potter's Swamp, light-slate head and above and no bars on wings; yellow all beneath, except throat, which was lighter ash, and perhaps upper part of breast; a distinct light ring about eye, iris-like; light bill, and apparently flesh-color legs, etc. Very inquisitive, hopping within ten feet, with a *chip*. It is somewhat like the Nashville warbler.<sup>2</sup>

Sept. 30. P. M. — Up Assabet.

Ever since the unusually early and severe frost of the 16th, the evergreen ferns have been growing more and more distinct amid the fading and decaying and withering ones, and the sight of those suggests a cooler season. They are greener than ever, by contrast. The terminal shield fern is one of the handsomest. The most decidedly evergreen are the last, polypody, *Aspidium marginale*, and *Aspidium spinulosum* of Woodis Swamp and Brister's. *Asplenium Filix-fœmina* (?) is decaying, maybe a little later than the dicksonia, — the largish fern with long, narrow pinnules deeply cut and toothed, and reniform fruit-dots.

Of the twenty-three ferns which I seem to know here, seven may be called evergreens. As far as I know, the earliest to wither and fall are the brake (mostly fallen),

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

<sup>2</sup> Was it a yellow-rump warbler? [A surprising question. The bird may have been a Connecticut warbler.]

the *Osmunda cinnamomea* (begun to be stripped of leaves), *O. Claytoniana*, and *O. regalis* (the above four generally a long time withered, or say since the 20th); also (5th), as soon, the exposed onoclea; then (6th) the dicksonia, (7th) *Aspidium Noveboracense*, (8th) *Thelypteris*, (9th) *Filix-femina* (the last four now fully half faded or decayed or withered). Those not seen are *Adiantum pedatum*, *Woodwardia Virginica*, *Asplenium thelypteroides*, *Woodsia Ilvensis*, *Aspidium cristatum*, *Lygodium palmatum*, *Botrychium Virginicum*.

Some acorns (swamp white oak) are browned on the trees, and some bass berries. Most shrub oak acorns browned.

The wild rice is almost entirely fallen or eaten, apparently by some insect, but I see some green and also black grains left.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more of September, *vide* [p. 362].