

VIII

SEPTEMBER, 1851

(ÆT. 34)

Sept. 1. Mikania scandens, with its purplish white flowers, now covering the button-bushes and willows by the side of the stream. *Bidens chrysanthemoides*, large-flowered bidens, edge of river. Various-colored polygonums standing high among the bushes and weeds by riverside, — white and reddish and red.

Is not disease the rule of existence? There is not a lily pad floating on the river but has been riddled by insects. Almost every shrub and tree has its gall, oftentimes esteemed its chief ornament and hardly to be distinguished from the fruit. If misery loves company, misery has company enough. Now, at midsummer, find me a perfect leaf or fruit.

The fruit of the trilliums is very handsome. I found some a month ago, a singular *red*, angular-cased pulp, drooping, with the old anthers surrounding it three quarters of an inch in diameter; and now there is another kind, a dense crowded cluster of many ovoid berries turning from green to scarlet or bright brick-color. Then there is the mottled fruit of the clustered Solomon's-seal, and also the greenish (with blue meat) fruit of the *Convallaria multiflora* dangling from the axils of the leaves.

Sept. 2. The dense fog came into my chamber early this morning, freighted with light, and woke me. It was, no doubt, lighter at that hour than if there had been no fog.

Not till after several months does an infant find its hands, and it may be seen looking at them with astonishment, holding them up to the light; and so also it finds its toes. How many faculties there are which we have never found! ¹ Some men, methinks, have found only their hands and feet. At least I have seen some who appeared never to have found their heads, but used them only instinctively, as the negro who butts with his,² or the water-carrier who makes a pack-horse of his. They have but partially found their heads.

We cannot write well or truly but what we write with gusto. The body, the senses, must conspire with the mind. Expression is the act of the whole man, that our speech may be vascular. The intellect is powerless to express thought without the aid of the heart and liver and of every member. Often I feel that my head stands out too dry, when it should be immersed. A writer, a man writing, is the scribe of all nature; he is the corn and the grass and the atmosphere writing. It is always essential that we love to do what we are doing, do it with a heart. The maturity of the mind, however, may perchance consist with a certain dryness.

There are flowers of thought, and there are leaves of thought; most of our thoughts are merely leaves, to which the thread of thought is the stem.

What affinity is it brings the goldfinch to the sun-

¹ [Channing, p. 203.]

² [Channing, p. 86.]

flower — both yellow — to pick its seeds? Whatever things I perceive with my entire man, those let me record, and it will be poetry. The sounds which I hear with the consent and coincidence of all my senses, these are significant and musical; at least, they only are heard.¹

In a day or two the first message will be conveyed or transmitted over the magnetic telegraph through this town, as a thought traverses space, and no citizen of the town shall be aware of it. The atmosphere is full of telegraphs equally unobserved. We are not confined to Morse's or House's or Bain's line.

Raise some sunflowers to attract the goldfinches, to feed them as well as your hens. What a broad and loaded, bounteously filled platter of food is presented this *bon-vivant*!

Here is one of those thick fogs which last well into the day. While the farmer is concerned about the crops which his fields bear, I will be concerned about the fertility of my human farm. I will watch the winds and the rains as they affect the crop of thought, — the crop of crops, ripe thoughts, which glow and rustle and fill the air with fragrance for centuries. Is it a drought? How long since we had a rain? What is the state of the springs? Are the low springs high?

I now begin to pluck wild apples.

The difference is not great between some fruits in which the worm is always present and those gall fruits which were produced by the insect.

Old Cato says well, "*Patremfamilias vendacem, non*

¹ [Channing, p. 87.]

emacem, esse oportet." These Latin terminations express better than any English that I know the greediness, as it were, and tenacity of purpose with which the husbandman and householder is required to be a seller and not a buyer, — with mastiff-like tenacity, — these *lipped* words, which, like the lips of moose and browsing creatures, gather in the herbage and twigs with a certain greed. This termination *cious* adds force to a word, like the lips of browsing creatures, which greedily collect what the jaw holds; as in the word "tenacious" the first half represents the kind of jaw which holds, the last the lips which collect. It can only be pronounced by a certain opening and protruding of the lips; so "avaricious." These words express the sense of their simple roots with the addition, as it were, of a certain lip greediness. Hence "capacious" and "capacity," "emacity." When these expressive words are used, the hearer gets something to chew upon. To be a seller with the tenacity and firmness and steadiness of the jaws which hold and the greediness of the lips which collect. The audacious man not only dares, but he greedily collects more danger to dare. The avaricious man not only desires and satisfies his desire, but he collects ever new browse in anticipation of his ever-springing desires. What is *luscious* is especially enjoyed by the lips. The mastiff-mouthed are tenacious. To be a seller with mastiff-mouthed tenacity of purpose, with moose-lipped greediness, — ability to browse! To be edacious and voracious is to be not nibbling and swallowing merely, but eating and swallowing while the lips are greedily collecting more food.

There is a reptile in the throat of the greedy man always thirsting and famishing. It is not his own natural hunger and thirst which he satisfies.

The more we know about the ancients, the more we find that they were like the moderns. When I read Marcus Cato De Re Rustica, a small treatise or Farmer's Manual of those days, fresh from the field of Roman life, all reeking with and redolent of the life of those days, containing more indirect history than any of the histories of Rome of direct, — all of that time but that time, — *here* is a simple, direct, pertinent word addressed to the Romans. And where are *the Romans*? Rome and the Romans are commonly a piece of rhetoric. As if New England had disappeared poetically and there were left Buel's "Farmer's Companion," or the letters of Solon Robinson, or a volume of extracts from the *New England Farmer*. Though the Romans are no more but a fable and an ornament of rhetoric, we have here their *New England Farmer*, the very manual those Roman farmers read, speaking as if they were to hear it, its voice not silenced, as if Rome were still the mistress of the world, — as fresh as a dripping dish-cloth from a Roman kitchen.¹ As when you overhaul the correspondence of a man who died fifty years ago, with like surprise and feelings you overhaul the manuscripts of the Roman nation. There exist certain old papers, manuscripts, either the originals or faithful and trustworthy old copies of the originals, which were left by the Roman people. They have gone their way, but these old papers of all sorts remain. Among them there are some

¹ [Channing, pp. 60, 61.]

farm journals, or farm books; just such a collection of diary and memorandum — as when the cow calved, and the dimensions, with a plan, of the barn, and how much paid to Joe Farrar for work done on the farm, etc., etc. — as you might find in an old farmer's pocket-book to-day.

Indeed the farmer's was pretty much the same routine then as now. Cato says: "Sterquilinum magnum stude ut habeas. Stercus sedulo conserva, cum exportabis purgato et comminuito. Per autumnum evehito." (Study to have a great dungheap. Carefully preserve your dung, when you carry it out, make clean work of it and break it up fine. Carry it out during the autumn.) Just such directions as you find in the "Farmer's Almanack" to-day. It reminds me of what I see going on in our fields every autumn. As if the farmers of Concord were obeying Cato's directions. And Cato but repeated the maxims of a remote antiquity. Nothing can be more homely and suggestive of the every-day life of the Roman agriculturalists, thus supplying the very deficiencies in what is commonly called Roman history, *i. e.* revealing to us the actual life of the Romans, the how they got their living and what they did from day to day.¹

They planted *rapa*, *raphanos*, *milium*, and *panicum* in low foggy land, *ager nebulosus*.

I see the farmer now — *i. e.* I shall in autumn — on every side carting out his manure and sedulously making his compost-heap, or scattering it over his grass ground and breaking it up with a mallet; and it reminds me of Cato's advice. He died one hundred and fifty

¹ [Channing, pp. 60, 61.]

years before Christ.¹ Before Christianity was heard of, this was done. A Roman family appears to have had a great supply of tubs and kettles.

A fire in the sitting-room to-day. Walk in the afternoon by Walden road and railroad to Minn's place, and round it to railroad and home. The first coolness is welcome, so serious and fertile of thought. My skin contracts, and I become more continent. Carried umbrellas, it mizzling. As in the night, now in the rain, I smell the fragrance of the woods. The prunella leaves have turned a delicate claret or lake color by the roadside. I am interested in these revolutions as much as in those of kingdoms. Is there not tragedy enough in the autumn? Walden seems to be going down at last. The pines are dead and leaning, red and half upset, about its shore. Thus, by its rising once in twenty-five years, perchance, it keeps an open shore, as if the ice had heaved them over. Found the succory at Minn's Bridge on railroad and beyond. Query: May not this and the tree-primrose and other plants be distributed from Boston on the rays of the railroads, the seeds mixing with the grains and all kinds of dirt and being blown from the passing freight-cars? The feathery-tailed fruit of the fertile flowers of the clematis conspicuous now.

The shorn meadows looked of a living green as we came home at eve, even greener than in spring. The *jaenum cordum*, the aftermath, *sicilimenta de prato*, the second mowings of the meadow, this reminds me of, in Cato.²

¹ [Channing, p. 60.]

² [Channing, p. 220.]

Sept. 3. Why was there never a poem on the cricket? Its creak seems to me to be one of the most prominent and obvious facts in the world, and the least heeded. In the report of a man's contemplations I look to see somewhat answering to this sound.¹ When I sat on Lee's Cliff the other day (August 29th), I saw a man working with a horse in a field by the river, carting dirt; and the horse and his relation to him struck me as very remarkable. There was the horse, a mere animated machine, — though his tail was brushing off the flies, — his whole existence subordinated to the man's, with no tradition, perhaps no instinct, in him of independence and freedom, of a time when he was wild and free, — completely humanized. No compact made with him that he should have the Saturday afternoons, or the Sundays, or any holidays. His independence never recognized, it being now quite forgotten both by men and by horses that the horse was ever free. For I am not aware that there are any wild horses known surely not to be descended from tame ones. Assisting that man to pull down that bank and spread it over the meadow; only keeping off the flies with his tail, and stamping, and catching a mouthful of grass or leaves from time to time, on his own account, — all the rest for man. It seemed hardly worth while that he should be *animated* for this. It was plain that the man was not educating the horse; not trying to develop his nature, but merely getting work out of him. That mass of animated matter seemed more completely the servant of man than any inanimate. For slaves have their holidays; a heaven

¹ [Channing, p. 78.]

is conceded to them, but to the horse none. Now and forever he is man's slave. The more I considered, the more the man seemed akin to the horse; only his was the stronger will of the two. For a little further on I saw an Irishman shovelling, who evidently was as much tamed as the horse. He had stipulated that to a certain extent his independence be recognized, and yet really he was but little more independent. I had always instinctively regarded the horse as a free people somewhere, living wild. Whatever has not come under the sway of man is wild. In this sense original and independent men are wild, — not tamed and broken by society. Now for my part I have such a respect for the horse's nature as would tempt me to let him alone; not to interfere with him, — his walks, his diet, his loves. But by mankind he is treated simply as if he were an engine which must have rest and is sensible of pain. Suppose that every squirrel were made to turn a coffee-mill! Suppose that the gazelles were made to draw milk-carts!

There he was with his tail cut off, because it was in the way, or to suit the taste of his owner; his mane trimmed, and his feet shod with iron that he might wear longer. What is a horse but an animal that has lost its liberty? What is it but a system of slavery? and do you not thus by *insensible* and unimportant degrees come to human slavery? Has lost its liberty! — and has man got any more liberty himself for having robbed the horse, or has he lost just as much of his own, and become more like the horse he has robbed? Is not the other end of the bridle in this case, too, coiled round his own neck? Hence stable-boys, jockeys, all

that class that is daily transported by fast horses. There he stood with his oblong square figure (his tail being cut off) seen against the water, brushing off the flies with his tail and stamping, braced back while the man was filling the cart.¹

It is a very remarkable and significant fact that, though no man is quite well or healthy, yet every one believes practically that health is the rule and disease the exception, and each invalid is wont to think himself in a minority, and to postpone somewhat of endeavor to another state of existence. But it may be some encouragement to men to know that in this respect they stand on the same platform, that disease is, in fact, the *rule* of our terrestrial life and the prophecy of a *celestial* life. Where is the coward who despairs because he is sick? Every one may live either the life of Achilles or of Nestor. Seen in this light, our life with all its diseases will look healthy, and in one sense the more healthy as it is the more diseased. Disease is not the accident of the individual, nor even of the generation, but of life itself. In some form, and to some degree or other, it is one of the permanent conditions of life. It is, nevertheless, a cheering fact that men affirm health unanimously, and esteem themselves miserable failures. Here was no blunder. They gave us life on exactly these conditions, and methinks we shall live it with more heart when we perceive clearly that these are the terms on which we have it. Life is a warfare, a struggle, and the diseases of the body answer to the troubles and defeats of the spirit. Man begins by quarrelling with the animal in him, and

¹ [Channing, pp. 173-175.]

the result is immediate disease. In proportion as the spirit is the more ambitious and persevering, the more obstacles it will meet with. It is as a seer that man asserts his disease to be exceptional.¹

2 P. M. — To Hubbard's Swimming-Place and Grove in rain.

As I went under the new telegraph-wire, I heard it vibrating like a harp high overhead. It was as the sound of a far-off glorious life, a supernal life, which came down to us, and vibrated the lattice-work of this life of ours.²

The melons and the apples seem at once to feed my brain.

Here comes a laborer from his dinner to resume his work at clearing out a ditch notwithstanding the rain, remembering as Cato says, *per ferias potuisse fossas veteres tergeri*, that in the holidays old ditches might have been cleared out. One would think that I were the paterfamilias come to see if the steward of my farm has done his duty.

The ivy leaves are turning red. Fall dandelions stand thick in the meadows.

How much the Roman must have been indebted to his agriculture, dealing with the earth, its clods and stubble, its dust and mire. Their farmer consuls were their glory, and they well knew the farm to be the nursery of soldiers. Read Cato to see what kind of legs the Romans stood on.

The leaves of the hardhack are somewhat appressed,

¹ [Channing, p. 164.]

² [Channing, p. 199.]

clothing the stem and showing their downy under sides like white, waving wands. Is it peculiar to the season, or the rain, — or the plant?

Walk often in drizzly weather, for then the small weeds (especially if they stand on bare ground), covered with rain-drops like beads, appear more beautiful than ever, — the hypericums, for instance. They are equally beautiful when covered with dew, fresh and adorned, almost spirited away, in a robe of dewdrops.¹

Some farmers have begun to thresh and winnow their oats.

Identified spotted spurge (*Euphorbia maculata*), apparently out of blossom. Shepherd's-purse and chickweed.

As for walking, the inhabitants of large English towns are confined almost exclusively to their parks and to the highways. The few footpaths in their vicinities "are gradually vanishing," says Wilkinson, "under the encroachments of the proprietors." He proposes that the people's right to them be asserted and defended and that they be kept in a passable state at the public expense. "This," says he, "would be easily done by means of asphalt laid upon a good foundation" !!! So much for walking, and the prospects of walking, in the neighborhood of English large towns.

Think of a man — he may be a genius of some kind — being confined to a highway and a park for his world to range in! I should die from mere nervousness at the thought of such confinement. I should hesitate before I were born, if those terms could be made known to me

¹ [Channing, p. 216.]

beforehand. Fenced in forever by those green barriers of fields, where gentlemen are seated! Can they be said to be inhabitants of this globe? Will they be content to inhabit heaven thus partially?

Sept. 4. 8 A. M. — A clear and pleasant day after the rain. Start for Boon's Pond in Stow with C. Every sight and sound was the more interesting for the clear atmosphere. When you are starting away, leaving your more familiar fields, for a little adventure like a walk, you look at every object with a traveller's, or at least with historical, eyes; you pause on the first bridge, where an ordinary walk hardly commences, and begin to observe and moralize like a traveller. It is worth the while to see your native village thus sometimes, as if you were a traveller passing through it, commenting on your neighbors as strangers.¹ We stood thus on Wood's Bridge, the first bridge, in the capacity of pilgrims and strangers to its familiarity, giving it one more chance with us, though our townsmen who passed may not have perceived it.

There was a pretty good-sized pickerel poised over the sandy bottom close to the shore and motionless as a shadow. It is wonderful how they resist the slight current of our river and remain thus stationary for hours. He, no doubt, saw us plainly on the bridge, — in the sunny water, his whole form distinct and his shadow, — motionless as the steel trap which does not spring till the fox's foot has touched it.

—— —'s dog sprang up, ran out, and growled at

¹ [Channing, p. 222.]

us, and in his eye I seemed to see the eye of his master. I have no doubt but that, as is the master, such in course of time tend to become his herds and flocks as well as dogs. One man's oxen will be clever and solid, another's mischievous, another's mangy, — in each case like their respective owners. No doubt man impresses his own character on the beasts which he tames and employs; they are not only humanized, but they acquire his particular human nature.¹ How much oxen are like farmers generally, and cows like farmers' wives! and young steers and heifers like farmers' boys and girls! The farmer acts on the ox, and the ox reacts on the farmer. They do not meet half-way, it is true, but they do meet at a distance from the centre of each proportionate to each one's intellectual power.² The farmer is ox-like in his thought, in his walk, in his strength, in his trustworthiness, in his taste.³

Hosmer's man was cutting his millet, and his buckwheat already lay in *red* piles in the field.

The first picture we noticed was where the road turned among the pitch pines and showed the Hadley house, with the high wooded hill behind with dew and sun on it, the gracefully winding road path, and a more distant horizon on the right of the house. Just beyond, on the left, it was pleasant walking where the road was shaded by a high hill, as it can be only in the morning. Even in the morning that additional coolness and early-dawn-like feeling of a more sacred and earlier season are agreeable.

¹ [Channing, p. 76.]

² [*Ibid.*]

³ [Channing, p. 175.]

The lane in front of Tarbell's house, which is but little worn and appears to lead nowhere, though it has so wide and all-engulfing an opening, suggested that such things might be contrived for effect in laying out grounds. (Only those things are sure to have the greatest and best effect, which like this were not contrived for the sake of effect.) An open path which would suggest walking and adventuring on it, the going to some place strange and far away. It would make you think of or imagine distant places and spaces greater than the estate.

It was pleasant, looking back just beyond, to see a heavy shadow (made by some high birches) reaching quite across the road. Light and shadow are sufficient contrast and furnish sufficient excitement when we are well.

Now we were passing the vale of Brown and Tarbell, a sunshiny mead pastured by cattle and sparkling with dew, the sound of crows and swallows heard in the air, and leafy-columned elms seen here and there shining with dew. The morning freshness and unworldliness of that domain!¹ The vale of Tempe and of Arcady is not farther off than are the conscious lives of men from their opportunities. Our life is as far from corresponding to its scenery as we are distant from Tempe and Arcadia: that is to say, they are far away because we are far from living natural lives. How absurd it would be to insist on the vale of Tempe in particular when we have such vales as we have!

In the Marlborough road, in the woods, I saw a pur-

¹ [Channing, p. 222.]

ple streak like a stain on the red pine leaves and sand under my feet, which I was surprised to find was made by a dense mass of purple fleas, somewhat like snowfleas, — a faint purple stain as if some purple dye had been spilt. What is that slender pink flower that I find in the Marlborough road, — smaller than a snapdragon? The slender stems of grass which hang over the ruts and horses' path in this little-frequented road are so laden with dew that I am compelled to hold a bush before me to shake it off. The jays scream on the right and left and are seen flying further off as we go by.

We drink in the meadow at Second Division Brook, then sit awhile to watch its yellowish pebbles and the cress (?) in it and other weeds. The ripples cover its surface like a network and are faithfully reflected on the bottom. In some places, the sun reflected from ripples on a flat stone looks like a golden comb. The whole brook seems as busy as a loom: it is a woof and warp of ripples; fairy fingers are throwing the shuttle at every step, and the long, waving brook is the fine product. The water is wonderfully clear.

To have a hut here, and a footpath to the brook! For roads, I think that a poet cannot tolerate more than a footpath through the fields; that is wide enough, and for purposes of winged poesy suffices. It is not for the muse to speak of cart-paths. I would fain travel by a footpath round the world.¹ I do not ask the railroads of commerce, not even the cart-paths of the farmer. Pray, what other path would you have than a footpath? What

¹ [Channing, p. 69.]

else should wear a path? This is the track of man alone. What more suggestive to the pensive walker? ¹ One walks in a wheel-track with less emotion; he is at a greater distance from man; but this footpath was, perchance, worn by the bare feet of human beings, and he cannot but think with interest of them.

The grapes, though their leaves are withering and falling, are yet too sour to eat.

In the summer we lay up a stock of experiences for the winter, as the squirrel of nuts, — something for conversation in winter evenings. I love to think then of the more distant walks I took in summer. ²

At the powder-mills the carbonic acid gas in the road from the building where they were making charcoal made us cough for twenty or thirty rods.

Saw some gray squirrels whirling their cylinder by the roadside. How fitted that cylinder to this animal! "A squirrel is easily taught to turn his cylinder" might be a saying frequently applicable. And as they turned, one leaped over or dodged under another most gracefully and unexpectedly, with interweaving motions. It was the circus and menagerie combined. So human they were, exhibiting themselves.

In the Marlborough road, I forgot to say, we brushed the *Polygonum articulatum* with its spikes of reddish-white flowers, a slender and tender plant which loves the middle of dry and sandy not-much-travelled roads. To find that the very atoms bloom, that there are

¹ *Vide* last journal for bare foot track in Corner road [p. 328 of this volume].

² [Channing, p. 70.]

flowers we rudely brush against which only the microscope reveals!

It is wise to write on many subjects, to try many themes, that so you may find the right and inspiring one. Be greedy of occasions to express your thought. Improve the opportunity to draw analogies. There are innumerable avenues to a perception of the truth. Improve the suggestion of each object however humble, however slight and transient the provocation. What else is there to be improved? Who knows what opportunities he may neglect? It is not in vain that the mind turns aside this way or that: follow its leading; apply it whither it inclines to go. Probe the universe in a myriad points. Be avaricious of these impulses. You must try a thousand themes before you find the right one, as nature makes a thousand acorns to get one oak. He is a wise man and experienced who has taken many views; to whom stones and plants and animals and a myriad objects have each suggested something, contributed something. ¹

And now, methinks, this wider wood-path ² is not bad, for it admits of society more conveniently. Two can walk side by side in it in the ruts, aye, and one more in the horse-track. ³ The Indian walked in single file, more solitary, — not side by side, chatting as he went. The woodman's cart and sled make just the path two walkers want through the wood.

Beyond the powder-mills we watched some fat oxen,

¹ [Channing, p. 86.]

² By Second Division Brook.

³ [Channing, p. 70.]

elephantine, behemoths, — one Rufus-Hosmer-eyed, with the long lash and projecting eye-ball.

Now past the paper-mills, by the westernmost road east of the river, the first new ground we've reached.

Not only the prunella turns *lake*, but the *Hypericum Virginicum* in the hollows by the roadside, — a handsome blush. A part of the autumnal tints, ripe leaves. Leaves acquire red blood. Red colors touch our blood, and excite us as well as cows and geese.

And now we leave the road and go through the woods and swamps toward Boon's Pond, crossing two or three roads and by Potter's house in Stow; still on east of river. The fruit of the *Pyrola rotundifolia* in the damp woods. Larch trees in Stow about the houses. Beyond Potter's we struck into the extensive wooded plain where the ponds are found in Stow, Sudbury, and Marlborough. Part of it called Boon's Plain.¹ Boon said to have lived on or under Bailey's Hill at west of pond. Killed by Indians between Boon[s Pond] and White's Pond as he was driving his ox-cart. The oxen ran off to Marlborough garrison-house. His remains have been searched for. A sandy plain, a large level tract. The pond shores handsome enough, but water shallow and muddy looking. Well-wooded shores. The maples begin to show red about it. Much fished.

Saw a load of sunflowers in a farmers [*sic*]. Such is the destiny of this large, coarse flower; the farmers gather it like pumpkins.

Returned by railroad down the Assabet. A potato-field yellow with wild radish. But no good place to

¹ *Vide* hawks [p. 480].

bathe for three miles, Knight's new dam has so raised the river. A permanent freshet, as it were, the fluvial trees standing dead for fish hawk perches, and the water stagnant for weeds to grow in. You have only to dam up a running stream to give it the aspect of a dead stream, and to some degree restore its primitive wild appearance. Tracts made inaccessible to man and at the same time more fertile. Some speculator comes and dams up the stream below, and lo! the water stands over all meadows, making impassable morasses and dead trees for fish hawks, — a wild, stagnant, fenny country, the last gasp of wildness before it yields to the civilization of the factory, — to cheer the eyes of the factory people and educate them. It makes a little wilderness above the factories.

The woodbine now begins to hang red about the maples and other trees.

As I looked back up the stream from near the bridge (I suppose on the road from Potter's house to Stow), I on the railroad, I saw the ripples sparkling in the sun, reminding me of the sparkling icy fleets which I saw last winter; and I saw how one corresponded to the other, ice waves to water ones; the erect ice-flakes were the waves stereotyped. It was the same sight, the reflection of the sun sparkling from a myriad slanting surfaces at a distance, a rippled water surface or a crystallized frozen one.

Here crossed the river and climbed the high hills on the west side. The walnut trees con-  formed in their branches to the slope of the hill, as high from the ground on the upper side as on the lower.

On all sides now I see and smell the withering leaves of brush that has been cut to clear the land. I see some blackened tracts which have been burnt over. It is remarkable, for it is rare to see the surface of the earth black. And in the horizon I can see the smokes of several fires. The farmers improve this season, which is the driest, their haying being done and their harvest not begun, to do these jobs, — burn brush, build walls, dig ditches, cut turf. This is what I find them doing all over the country now; also topping corn and digging potatoes.

Saw quite a flock, for the first time, of goldfinches.

On the high, round hills in the east and southeast of Stow, — perchance they are called the Assabet Hills, — rising directly from the river. They are the highest I know rising thus. The rounded hills of Stow. A hill and valley country. Very different from Concord.

It had been a warm day, especially warm to the head. I do not perspire as in the early summer, but am sensible of the ripening heat, more as if by contact. Suddenly the wind changed to east, and the atmosphere grew more and more hazy and thick on that side, obstructing the view, while it was yet clear in the west. I thought it was the result of the cooler air from over the sea meeting and condensing the vapor in the warm air of the land. That was the haze, or thin, dry fog which some call smoke. It gradually moved westward and affected the prospect on that side somewhat. It was a very thin fog invading all the east. I felt the cool air from the ocean, and it was very refreshing. I opened my bosom

and my mouth to inhale it. Very delicious and invigorating.

We sat on the top of those hills looking down on the new brick ice-house. Where there are several hills near together, you cannot determine at once which is the highest, whether the one you are on or the next. So, when great men are assembled, each yields an uncertain respect to the other, as if it were not certain whose crown rose highest.

Under the nut trees on these hills, the grass is short and green as if grazed close by cattle who had stood there for shade, making a distinct circular yard. Yet, as there is no dung and the form corresponds so closely to the tree, I doubt if that can be the cause.

On hillside north of river above powder-mills the *Pycnanthemum incanum* (mountain mint, calamint) and the *Lespedeza violacea*.

Saw what I thought a small red dog in the road, which cantered along over the bridge this side the powder-mills and then turned into the woods. This decided me — this turning into the woods — that it was a fox. The dog of the woods, the dog that is more at home in the woods than in the roads and fields. I do not often see a dog turning into the woods.

Some large white (?) oak acorns this side the last-named bridge. A few oaks stand in the pastures still, great ornaments. I do not see any young ones springing up to supply their places. Will there be any a hundred years hence? These are the remnants of the primitive wood, methinks. We are a young people and have not learned by experience the consequence of cutting off the

forest. One day they will be planted, methinks, and nature reinstated to some extent.

I love to see the yellow knots and their lengthened stain on the dry, unpainted pitch [?] -pine boards on barns and other buildings, — the Dugan house, for instance. The indestructible yellow fat! it fats my eyes to see it; worthy for art to imitate, telling of branches in the forest once.

Sept. 5. No doubt, like plants, we are fed through the atmosphere, and the varying atmospheres of various seasons of the year feed us variously. How often we are sensible of being thus fed and invigorated! And all nature contributes to this aerial diet its food of finest quality. Methinks that in the fragrance of the fruits I get a finer flavor, and in beauty (which is appreciated by sight — the taste and smell of the eye) a finer still. As Wilkinson says, “the physical man himself is the builded aroma of the world. This then, at least, is the office of the lungs — to drink the atmosphere with the planet dissolved in it.” “What is the import of *change of air*, and how each pair of lungs has a *native air* under some one dome of the sky.”

Wilkinson's book to some extent realizes what I have dreamed of, — a return to the primitive analogical and derivative senses of words. His ability to trace analogies often leads him to a truer word than more remarkable writers have found; as when, in his chapter on the human skin, he describes the papillary cutis as “an encampment of small conical tents coextensive with the surface of the body.” The faith he puts in old and cur-

rent expressions as having sprung from an instinct wiser than science, and safely to be trusted if they can be interpreted. The man of science discovers no world for the mind of man with all its faculties to inhabit. Wilkinson finds a *home* for the imagination, and it is no longer outcast and homeless. All perception of truth is the detection of an analogy; we reason from our hands to our head.

It is remarkable that Kalm says in 1748 (being in Philadelphia): “Coals have not yet been found in Pennsylvania; but people pretend to have seen them higher up in the country among the natives. Many people however agree that they are met with in great quantity more to the north, near Cape Breton.”

As we grow old we live more coarsely, we relax a little in our disciplines, and, to some extent, cease to obey our finest instincts. We are more careless about our diet and our chastity. But we should be fastidious to the extreme of sanity.¹ All wisdom is the reward of a discipline, conscious or unconscious.

By moonlight at Potter's Field toward Bear Garden Hill, 8 P. M. The whip-poor-wills sing.

Cultivate reverence. It is as if you were so much more respectable yourself. By the quality of a man's writing, by the elevation of its tone, you may measure his self-respect. How shall a man continue his culture after manhood?

Moonlight on Fair Haven Pond seen from the Cliffs. A sheeny lake in the midst of a boundless forest, the

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 468; *Misc.*, Riv. 270.]

windy surf sounding freshly and wildly in the single pine behind you; the silence of hushed wolves in the wilderness, and, as you fancy, moose looking off from the shore of the lake. The stars of poetry and history and unexplored nature looking down on the scene. This is my world now, with a dull whitish mark curving northward through the forest marking the outlet to the lake. Fair Haven by moonlight lies there like a lake in the Maine wilderness in the midst of a primitive forest untrudged by man. This light and this hour take the civilization all out of the landscape. Even in villages dogs bay the moon; in forests like this we listen to hear wolves howl to Cynthia.

Even at this hour in the evening the crickets chirp, the small birds peep, the wind roars in the wood, as if it were just before dawn. The moonlight seems to linger as if it were giving way to the light of coming day.

The landscape seen from the slightest elevation by moonlight is seen remotely, and flattened, as it were, into mere light and shade, open field and forest, like the surface of the earth seen from the top of a mountain.

How much excited we are, how much recruited, by a great many particular fragrances! A field of ripening corn, now at night, that has been topped, with the stalks stacked up to dry, — an inexpressibly dry, rich, sweet, ripening scent.¹ I feel as if I were an ear of ripening corn myself. Is not the whole air then a compound of such odors undistinguishable? Drying corn-stalks in a field; what an herb-garden!²

¹ [See *Excursions*, p. 327; Riv. 403.]

² [Channing, pp. 251, 252.]

Sept. 6. The other afternoon I met Sam H—— walking on the railroad between the depot and the back road. It was something quite novel to see him there, though the railroad there is only a short thoroughfare to the public road. It then occurred to me that I had never met Mr. H. on the railroad, though he walks every day, and moreover that it would be quite impossible for him to walk on the railroad, such a formalist as he is, such strait-jackets we weave for ourselves. He could do nothing that was not sanctioned by the longest use of men, and as men had voted in all their assemblies from the first to travel on the public way, he would confine himself to that. It would no doubt seem to him very improper, not to say undignified, to walk on the railroad; and then, is it not forbidden by the railroad corporations? I was sure he could not keep the railroad, but was merely using the thoroughfare here which a thousand pioneers had prepared for him. I stood to see what he would do. He turned off the rails directly on to the back road and pursued his walk. A passing train will never meet him on the railroad causeway. How much of the life of certain men *goes* to sustain, to make respected, the institutions of society. They are the ones who pay the heaviest tax. Here are certain valuable institutions which can only be sustained by a wonderful strain which appears all to come upon certain Spartans who volunteer. Certain men are always to be found — especially the children of our present institutions — who are born with an instinct to perceive them. They are, in effect, supported by a fund which society possesses for that end, or they receive a pension and their life

seems to be a sinecure, — but it is not. The unwritten laws are the most stringent. They are required to wear a certain dress. What an array of gentlemen whose sole employment — and it is no sinecure — is to support their dignity, and with it the dignity of so many indispensable institutions!

The use of many vegetables — wild plants — for food, which botanists relate, such as Kalm at Cap aux Oyes on the St. Lawrence, *viz.* the sea plantain, sea-rocket, sweet-gale, etc., etc., making us feel the poorer at first because we never use them, really advertises us of our superior riches, and shows to what extremities men have been driven in times of scarcity. No people that fare as well as we will grub these weeds out of the seashore.

2 P. M. — To Hapgood's in Acton direct, returning *via* Strawberry Hill and Smith's Road.

The ripening grapes begin to fill the air with their fragrance. The vervain will hardly do for a clock, for I perceive that some later and smaller specimens have not much more than begun to blossom, while most have done. Saw a tall pear tree by the roadside beyond Harris's in front of Hapgood's. Saw the lambkill (*Kalmia angustifolia*) in blossom — a few fresh blossoms at the ends of the fresh twigs — on Strawberry Hill, beautiful bright flowers. Apparently a new spring with it, while seed vessels, apparently of this year, hung dry below.

From Strawberry Hill the first, but a very slight, glimpse of Nagog Pond by standing up on the wall. That is enough to relate of a hill, methinks, that its

elevation gives you the first sight of some distant lake. The horizon is remarkably blue with mist this afternoon. Looking from this hill over Acton, successive valleys filled with blue mist appear, and divided by darker lines of wooded hills. The shadows of the elms are deepened, as if the whole atmosphere were permeated by floods of ether. Annursnack never looked so well as now seen from this hill. The ether gives a velvet softness to the whole landscape. The hills float in it. A blue veil is drawn over the earth.

The elecampane (*Inula Helenium*), with its broad leaves wrinkled underneath and the remains of sunflower-like blossoms, in front of Nathan Brooks's, Acton, and near J. H. Wheeler's. *Prenanthes alba*; this Gray calls *Nabalus albus*, white lettuce or rattlesnake-root. Also I *seem* (?) to have found *Nabalus Fraseri*, or lion's-foot.

Every morning for a week there has been a fog which all disappeared by seven or eight o'clock.

A large field of sunflowers for hens now in full bloom at Temple's, surrounding the house, and now, at 6 o'clock P. M., facing the east.

The larches in the front yards, both Scotch and American, have turned red. Their fall has come.

Sept. 7. We sometimes experience a mere fullness of life, which does not find any channels to flow into. We are stimulated, but to no obvious purpose. I feel myself uncommonly prepared for *some* literary work, but I can select no work. I am prepared not so much for contemplation, as for forceful expression. I am braced

both physically and intellectually. It is not so much the music as the marching to the music that I feel. I feel that the juices of the fruits which I have eaten, the melons and apples, have ascended to my brain and are stimulating it. They give me a heady force. Now I can write nervously. Carlyle's writing is for the most part of this character.

Miss Martineau's last book is not so bad as the timidity which fears its influence. As if the popularity of this or that book would be so fatal, and man would not still be man in the world. Nothing is so much to be feared as fear. Atheism may comparatively be popular with God himself.¹

What shall we say of these timid folk who carry the principle of thinking nothing and doing nothing and being nothing to such an extreme? As if, in the absence of thought, that vast yearning of their natures for something to fill the vacuum made the least traditional expression and shadow of a thought to be clung to with instinctive tenacity. They atone for their producing nothing by a brutish respect for something. They are as simple as oxen, and as guiltless of thought and reflection. Their reflections are reflected from other minds. The creature of institutions, bigoted and a conservatist, can say nothing hearty. He cannot meet life with life, but only with words. He rebuts you by avoiding you. He is shocked like a woman.

Our ecstatic states, which appear to yield so little fruit, have this value at least: though in the seasons when our genius reigns we may be powerless for ex-

¹ [Channing, p. 90.]

pression, yet, in calmer seasons, when our talent is active, the memory of those rarer moods comes to color our picture and is the permanent paint-pot, as it were, into which we dip our brush. Thus no life or experience goes unreported at last; but if it be not solid gold it is gold-leaf, which gilds the furniture of the mind. It is an experience of infinite beauty on which we un-failingly draw, which enables us to exaggerate ever truly. Our moments of inspiration are not lost though we have no particular poem to show for them; for those experiences have left an indelible impression, and we are ever and anon reminded of them. Their truth subsides, and in cooler moments we can use them as paint to gild and adorn our prose. When I despair to sing them, I will remember that they will furnish me with paint with which to adorn and preserve the works of talent one day. They are like a pot of pure ether. They lend the writer when the moment comes a certain superfluity of wealth, making his expression to overrun and float itself. It is the difference between our river, now parched and dried up, exposing its unsightly and weedy bottom, and the same when, in the spring, it covers all the meads with a chain of placid lakes, reflecting the forests and the skies.

We are receiving our portion of the infinite. The art of life! Was there ever anything memorable written upon it? By what disciplines to secure the most life, with what care to watch our thoughts. To observe what transpires, not in the street, but in the mind and heart of me! I do not remember any page which will tell me how to spend this afternoon. I do not so much wish to

know how to economize time as how to spend it, by what means to grow rich, that the day may not have been in vain.

What if one moon has come and gone with its world of poetry, its weird teachings, its oracular suggestions? So divine a creature, freighted with hints for me, and I not use her! One moon gone by unnoticed!! Suppose you attend to the hints, to the suggestions, which the moon makes for one month, — commonly in vain, — will they not be very different from anything in literature or religion or philosophy?¹

The scenery, when it is truly seen, reacts on the life of the seer. How to live. How to get the most life. As if you were to teach the young hunter how to entrap his game. How to extract its honey from the flower of the world. That is my every-day business. I am as busy as a bee about it. I ramble over all fields on that errand, and am never so happy as when I feel myself heavy with honey and wax. I am like a bee searching the livelong day for the sweets of nature. Do I not impregnate and intermix the flowers, produce rare and finer varieties by transferring my eyes from one to another? I do as naturally and as joyfully, with my own humming music, seek honey all the day. With what honeyed thought any experience yields me I take a bee line to my cell. It is with flowers I would deal. Where is the flower, there is the honey, — which is perchance the nectareous portion of the fruit, — there is to be the fruit, and no doubt flowers are thus colored and painted to attract and guide the bee. So by the dawning or radi-

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 324; Riv. 398.]

ance of beauty are we advertised where is the honey and the fruit of thought, of discourse, and of action. We are first attracted by the beauty of the flower, before we discover the honey which is a foretaste of the future fruit. Did not the young Achilles (?) spend his youth learning how to hunt? The art of spending a day. If it is possible that we may be addressed, it behooves us to be attentive. If by watching all day and all night I may detect some trace of the Ineffable, then will it not be worth the while to watch? Watch and pray without ceasing, but not necessarily in sadness. Be of good cheer. Those Jews were too sad: to another people a still deeper revelation may suggest only joy. Don't I know what gladness is? Is it but the reflex of sadness, its back side? In the Hebrew gladness, I hear but too distinctly still the sound of sadness retreating. Give me a gladness which has never given place to sadness.

I am convinced that men are not well employed, that this is not the way to spend a day. If by patience, if by watching, I can secure one new ray of light, can feel myself elevated for an instant upon Pisgah, the world which was dead prose to me become living and divine, shall I not watch ever? shall I not be a watchman henceforth? If by watching a whole year on the city's walls I may obtain a communication from heaven, shall I not do well to shut up my shop and turn a watchman? Can a youth, a man, do more wisely than to go where his life is to [be] found? As if I had suffered that to be rumor which may be verified. We are surrounded by a rich and fertile mystery. May we not probe it, pry into it, employ ourselves about it, a little? To devote your life

to the discovery of the divinity in nature or to the eating of oysters, would they not be attended with very different results?

I cannot *easily* buy a blank-book to write thoughts in; they are all ruled for dollars and cents.¹

If the wine, the water, which will nourish me grows on the surface of the moon, I will do the best I can to go to the moon for it.

The discoveries which we make abroad are special and particular; those which we make at home are general and significant. The further off, the nearer the surface. The nearer home, the deeper. Go in search of the springs of life, and you will get exercise enough. Think of a man's swinging dumb-bells for his health, when those springs are bubbling in far-off pastures unsought by him! The seeming necessity of swinging dumb-bells proves that he has lost his way.²

To watch for, describe, all the divine features which I detect in Nature.

My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature, to know his lurking-places, to attend all the oratorios, the operas, in nature.

The mind may perchance be persuaded to act, to energize, by the action and energy of the body. Any kind of liquid will fetch the pump.

We all have our states of fullness and of emptiness, but we overflow at different points. One overflows through the sensual outlets, another through his heart, another through his head, and another perchance only

¹ [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 456; *Misc.*, Riv. 254, 255.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 209; Riv. 257.]

through the higher part of his head, or his poetic faculty. It depends on where each is tight and open. We can, perchance, then direct our nutriment to those organs we specially use.

How happens it that there are few men so well employed, — so much to their mind, — but that a little money or fame would buy them off from their present pursuits?

To Conantum *via* fields, Hubbard's Grove, and grain-field, to Tupelo Cliff and Conantum and returning over peak same way. 6 P. M.

I hear no larks sing at evening as in the spring, nor robins; only a few distressed notes from the robin. In Hubbard's grain-field beyond the brook, now the sun is down. The air is very still. There is a fine sound of crickets, not loud. The woods and single trees are heavier masses in the landscape than in the spring. Night has more allies. The heavy shadows of woods and trees are remarkable now. The meadows are green with their second crop. I hear only a tree-toad or song sparrow singing as in spring, at long intervals. The Roman wormwood is beginning to yellow-green my shoes, — intermingled with the blue-curls over the sand in this grain-field. Perchance some poet likened this yellow dust to the ambrosia of the gods. The birds are remarkably silent. At the bridge perceive the bats are out. And the yet silvery moon, not quite full, is reflected in the water. The water is perfectly still, and there is a red tinge from the evening sky in it.

The sky is singularly marked this evening. There are bars or rays of nebulous light springing from the

western horizon where the sun has disappeared, and alternating with beautiful blue rays, more blue by far than any other portion of the sky. These continue to diverge till they have reached the middle, and then converge to the eastern horizon, making a symmetrical figure like the divisions of a muskmelon, not very bright, yet distinct, though growing less and less bright toward the east. It was a quite remarkable phenomenon encompassing the heavens, as if you were to behold the divisions of a muskmelon thus alternately colored from within it. A proper vision, a colored mist. The most beautiful thing in nature is the sun reflected from a tearful cloud. These white and blue ribs embraced the earth. The two outer blues much the brightest and matching one another.

You hear the hum of mosquitoes.

Going up the road. The sound of the crickets is now much more universal and loud. Now in the fields I see the white streak of the neottia in the twilight. The whip-poor-wills sing far off. I smell burnt land somewhere. At Tupelo Cliff I hear the sound of singers on the river, young men and women, — which is unusual here, — returning from their row. Man's voice, thus uttered, fits well the spaces. It fills nature. And, after all, the singing of men is something far grander than any natural sound. It is wonderful that men do not oftener sing in the fields, by day and night. I bathe at the north side the Cliff, while the moon shines round the end of the rock. The opposite Cliff is reflected in the water. Then sit on the south side of the Cliff in the woods. One or two fireflies. Could it be a glow-worm?

I thought I saw one or two in the air. That is all in this walk. I hear a whip-poor-will uttering a cluck of suspicion in my rear. He is suspicious and inquisitive. The river stretches off southward from me. I see the sheeny portions of its western shore interruptedly for a quarter of a mile, where the moonlight is reflected from the pads, a strong, gleaming light while the water is lost in the obscurity. I hear the sound from time to time of a leaping fish, or a frog, or a muskrat, or turtle. It is even warmer, *methinks*, than it was in August, and it is perfectly clear, — the air. I know not how it is that this universal crickets' creak should sound thus regularly intermittent, as if for the most part they fell in with one another and creaked in time, making a certain pulsing sound, a sort of breathing or panting of all nature. You sit twenty feet above the still river; see the sheeny pads, and the moon, and some bare tree-tops in the distant horizon. Those bare tree-tops add greatly to the wildness.

Lower down I see the moon in the water as bright as in the heavens; only the water-bugs disturb its disk; and now I catch a faint glassy glare from the whole river surface, which before was simply dark. This is set in a frame of double darkness on the east, *i. e.* the reflected shore of woods and hills and the reality, the shadow and the substance, bipartite, answering to each.

I see the northern lights over my shoulder, to remind me of the Esquimaux and that they are still my contemporaries on this globe, that they too are taking their walks on another part of the planet, in pursuit

western horizon where the sun has disappeared, and alternating with beautiful blue rays, more blue by far than any other portion of the sky. These continue to diverge till they have reached the middle, and then converge to the eastern horizon, making a symmetrical figure like the divisions of a muskmelon, not very bright, yet distinct, though growing less and less bright toward the east. It was a quite remarkable phenomenon encompassing the heavens, as if you were to behold the divisions of a muskmelon thus alternately colored from within it. A proper vision, a colored mist. The most beautiful thing in nature is the sun reflected from a tearful cloud. These white and blue ribs embraced the earth. The two outer blues much the brightest and matching one another.

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of seals, perchance.¹ The stars are dimly reflected in the water. The path of water-bugs in the moon's rays is like ripples of light. It is only when you stand fronting the sun or moon that you see their light reflected in the water. I hear no frogs these nights, — bullfrogs or others, — as in the spring. It is not the season of sound.

At Conantum end, just under the wall. From this point and at this height I do not perceive any bright or yellowish light on Fair Haven, but an oily and glass-like smoothness on its southwestern bay, through a very slight mistiness. Two or three pines appear to stand in the moonlit air on this side of the pond, while the enlightened portion of the water is bounded by the heavy reflection of the wood on the east. It was so soft and velvety a light as contained a thousand placid days sweetly put to rest in the bosom of the water. So looked the North Twin Lake in the Maine woods. It reminds me of placid lakes in the mid-noon of Indian summer days, but yet more placid and civilized, suggesting a higher cultivation, as the wild ever does, which æons of summer days have gone to make. Like a summer day seen far away. All the effects of sunlight, with a softer tone; and all this stillness of the water and the air superadded, and the witchery of the hour. What gods are they that require so fair a vase of gleaming water to their prospect in the midst of the wild woods by night? Else why this beauty allotted to night, a gem to sparkle in the zone of night? They are strange gods now out; methinks their names are not in any

¹ [Channing, p. 115.]

mythology.¹ I can faintly trace its zigzag border of sheeny pads even here. If such is then to be seen in remotest wildernesses, does it not suggest its own nymphs and wood gods to enjoy it? As when, at middle of the placid noon in Indian-summer days, all the surface of a lake is as one cobweb gleaming in the sun, which heaves gently to the passing zephyr. There was the lake, its glassy surface just distinguishable, its sheeny shore of pads, with a few pines bathed in light on its hither shore, just as in the middle of a November day, except that this was the chaster light of the moon, the cooler temperature of the night, and there were the deep shades of night that fenced it round and imbosomed. It tells of a far-away, long-passed civilization, of an antiquity superior to time, unappreciable by time.

Is there such virtue in raking cranberries that those men's industry whom I now see on the meadow shall reprove my idleness? Can I not go over those same meadows after them, and rake still more valuable fruits? Can I not rake with my mind? Can I not rake a thought, perchance, which shall be worth a bushel of cranberries?

A certain refinement and civilization in nature which increases with the wildness. The civilization that consists with wildness, the light that is in night. A smile as in a dream on the face of the sleeping lake. There is light enough to show what we see, what *night* has to exhibit. Any more would obscure these objects. I am not advertised of any deficiency of light.² The actual

¹ [Channing, p. 116.]

² [Channing, p. 116.]

is fair as a vision or a dream. If ever we have attained to any nobleness, even in our imagination and intentions, that will surely ennoble the features of nature for us, that will clothe them with beauty. Of course no jeweller ever dealt with a gem so fair and suggestive as this actual lake, the scene, it may be, of so much noble and poetic life, and not merely [to] adorn some monarch's crown.

It is remarkably still at this hour and season. No sound of bird or beast for the most part. This has none of the reputed noxious qualities of night.

On the peak. The faint sounds of birds, dreaming aloud in the night, the fresh, cool air, and sound of the wind rushing over the rocks remind me of the tops of mountains. That is, all the earth is but the outside of the planet bordering on the hard-eyed sky. Equally withdrawn and near to heaven is this pasture as the summit of the White Mountains. All the earth's surface like a mountain-top, for I see its relation to heaven as simply, and am not imposed upon by a difference of a few feet in elevation. In this faint, hoary light, all fields are like a mossy rock and remote from the cultivated plains of day. All is equally savage, equally solitary and cool-aired, and the slight difference in elevation is felt to be unimportant. It is all one with Caucasus, the slightest hill pasture.

The basswood had a singularly solid look and sharply defined, as by a web or film, as if its leaves covered it like scales.

Scared up a whip-poor-will on the ground on the hill. Will not my townsmen consider me a benefactor if

I conquer some realms from the night, if I can show them that there is some beauty awake while they are asleep, if I add to the domains of poetry,¹ if I report to the gazettes anything transpiring in our midst worthy of man's attention? I will say nothing now to the disparagement of Day, for he is not here to defend himself.

The northern lights now, as I descend from the Conantum house, have become a crescent of light crowned with short, shooting flames, — or the shadows of flames, for sometimes they are dark as well as white. There is scarcely any dew even in the low lands.

Now the fire in the north increases wonderfully, not shooting up so much as creeping along, like a fire on the mountains of the north seen afar in the night. The Hyperborean gods are burning brush, and it spread, and all the hoes in heaven could n't stop it. It spread from west to east over the crescent hill. Like a vast fiery worm it lay across the northern sky, broken into many pieces; and each piece, with rainbow colors skirting it, strove to advance itself toward the east, worm-like, on its own annular muscles. It has spread into their choicest wood-lots. Now it shoots up like a single solitary watch-fire or burning bush, or where it ran up a pine tree like powder, and still it continues to gleam here and there like a fat stump in the burning, and is reflected in the water. And now I see the gods by great exertions have got it under, and the stars have come out without fear, in peace.

Though no birds sing, the crickets vibrate their shrill and stridulous cymbals, especially on the alders

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 323; Riv. 397, 398.]

of the causeway, those minstrels especially engaged for Night's quire.¹

It takes some time to wear off the trivial impression which the day has made, and thus the first hours of night are sometimes lost.

There were two hen-hawks soared and circled for our entertainment, when we were in the woods on that Boon Plain the other day, crossing each other's orbits from time to time, alternating like the squirrels of the morning, till, alarmed by our imitation of a hawk's shrill cry, they gradually inflated themselves, made themselves more aerial, and rose higher and higher into the heavens, and were at length lost to sight; yet all the while earnestly looking, scanning the surface of the earth for a stray mouse or rabbit.²

Sept. 8. No fog this morning. Shall I not have words as fresh as my thoughts? Shall I use any other man's word? A genuine thought or feeling can find expression for itself, if it have to invent hieroglyphics. It has the universe for type-metal. It is for want of original thought that one man's style is like another's.

Certainly the voice of no bird or beast can be compared with that of man for true melody. All other sounds seem to be hushed, as if their possessors were attending, when the voice of man is heard in melody. The air gladly bears the burden. It is infinitely significant. Man only sings in concert. The bird's song is a mere

¹ [Channing, pp. 116, 117.]

² *Vide* back [p. 458].

interjectional shout of joy; man's a glorious expression of the foundations of his joy.

Do not the song of birds and the fireflies go with the grass? While the grass is fresh, the earth is in its vigor. The greenness of the grass is the best symptom or evidence of the earth's youth or health. Perhaps it will be found that when the grass ceases to be fresh and green, or after June, the birds have ceased to sing, and that the fireflies, too, no longer in *myriads* sparkle in the meadows. Perhaps a history of the year would be a history of the grass, or of a leaf, regarding the grass-blades as leaves, for it is equally true that the leaves soon lose their freshness and soundness, and become the prey of insects and of drought. Plants commonly soon cease to grow for the year, unless they may have a fall growth, which is a kind of second spring. In the feelings of the man, too, the year is already past, and he looks forward to the coming winter. His occasional rejuvenescence and faith in the current time is like the aftermath, a scanty crop. The enterprise which he has not already undertaken cannot be undertaken this year. The period of youth is past. The year may be in its summer, in its manhood, but it is no longer in the flower of its age. It is a season of withering, of dust and heat, a season of small fruits and trivial experiences. Summer thus answers to manhood. But there is an aftermath in early autumn, and some spring flowers bloom again, followed by an Indian summer of finer atmosphere and of a pensive beauty. May my life be not destitute of its Indian summer, a season of fine and clear, mild weather in which I may prolong my hunting be-

fore the winter comes, when I may once more lie on the ground with faith, as in spring, and even with more serene confidence. And then I will [wrap the] drapery of summer about me and lie down to pleasant dreams. As one year passes into another through the medium of winter, so does this our life pass into another through the medium of death.

De Quincey and Dickens have not moderation enough. They never stutter; they flow too readily.

The tree-primrose and the dwarf ditto and epilobium still. Locust is heard. *Aster amplexicaulis*, beautiful blue, purplish blue (?), about twenty-four rayed. *Utricularia vulgaris*, bladderwort. Dandelion and houstonia.

Sept. 9. 2 A. M. — The moon not quite full. To Conantum *via* road.

There is a low vapor in the meadows beyond the depot, dense and white, though scarcely higher than a man's head, concealing the stems of the trees. I see that the oaks, which are so dark and distinctly outlined, are illumined by the moon on the opposite side. This as I go up the back road. A few thin, ineffectual clouds in the sky. I come out thus into the moonlit night, where men are not, as if into a scenery anciently deserted by men. The life of men is like a dream. It is three thousand years since night has had possession. Go forth and hear the crickets chirp at midnight. Hear if their dynasty is not an ancient one and well founded. I feel the antiquity of the night. She surely repossesses herself of her realms, as if her dynasty were uninter-

rupted, or she had underlain the day. No sounds but the steady creaking of crickets and the occasional crowing of cocks.

I go by the farmer's houses and barns, standing there in the dim light under the trees, as if they lay at an immense distance or under a veil. The farmer and his oxen now all asleep. Not even a watch-dog awake. The human slumbers. There is less of man in the world.

The fog in the lowlands on the Corner road is never still. It now advances and envelops me as I stand to write these words, then clears away, with ever noiseless step. It covers the meadows like a web. I hear the clock strike three.

Now at the clayey bank. The light of Orion's belt seems to show traces of the blue day through which it came to us. The sky at least is lighter on that side than in the west, even about the moon. Even by night the sky is blue and not black, for we see through the veil of night into the distant atmosphere of day. I see to the plains of the sun, where the sunbeams are revelling. The cricket's (?) song, on the alders of the causeway, not quite so loud at this hour as at evening. The moon is getting low. I hear a wagon cross one of the bridges leading into the town. I see the moonlight at this hour on a different side of objects. I smell the ripe apples many rods off beyond the bridge. A sultry night, a thin coat is enough.

On the first top of Conantum. I hear the farmer harnessing his horse and starting for the distant market, but no man harnesses himself, and starts for worthier

enterprises. One cock-crow tells the whole story of the farmer's life. The moon is now sinking into clouds in the horizon. I see the glow-worms deep in the grass by the little brookside in midst of Conantum. The moon shines dun and red. A solitary whip-poor-will sings.

The clock strikes four. A few dogs bark. A few more wagons start for market, their faint rattling heard in the distance. I hear my owl without a name; the murmur of the slow-approaching freight-train, as far off, perchance, as Waltham; and one early bird.

The round, red moon disappearing in the west. I detect a whiteness in the east. Some dark, massive clouds have come over from the west within the hour, as if attracted by the approaching sun, and have arranged themselves raywise about the eastern portal, as if to bar his coming. They have moved suddenly and almost unobservedly quite across the sky (which before was clear) from west to east. No trumpet was heard which marshalled and advanced these dark masses of the west's forces thus rapidly against the coming day. Column after column the mighty west sent forth across the sky while men slept, but all in vain.

The eastern horizon is now grown dun-colored, showing where the advanced guard of the night are already skirmishing with the vanguard of the sun, a lurid light tingeing the atmosphere there, while a dark-columned cloud hangs imminent over the broad portal, untouched by the glare. Some bird flies over, making a noise like the barking of a puppy.¹ It is yet so dark that I have dropped my pencil and cannot find it.

¹ It was a cuckoo.

The sound of the cars is like that of a rushing wind. They come on slowly. I thought at first a morning wind was rising. And now (perchance at half-past four) I hear the sound of some far-off factory-bell arousing the operatives to their early labors. It sounds very sweet here. It is very likely some factory which I have never seen, in some valley which I have never visited; yet now I hear this, which is its only matin bell, sweet and inspiring as if it summoned holy men and maids to worship and not factory girls and men to resume their trivial toil, as if it were the summons of some religious or even poetic community. My first impression is that it is the matin bell of some holy community who in a distant valley dwell, a band of spiritual knights, — thus scounding far and wide, sweet and sonorous, in harmony with their own morning thoughts. What else could I suppose fitting this earth and hour? Some man of high resolve, devoted soul, has touched the rope; and by its peals how many men and maids are waked from peaceful slumbers to fragrant morning thoughts! Why should I fear to tell that it is Knight's factory-bell at Assabet? A few melodious peals and all is still again.

The whip-poor-wills now begin to sing in earnest about half an hour before sunrise, as if making haste to improve the short time that is left them. As far as my observation goes, they sing for several hours in the early part of the night, are silent commonly at midnight, — though you may meet [them] then sitting on a rock or flitting silently about, — then sing again just before sunrise. It grows more and more red in the east — a

fine-grained red under the overhanging cloud — and lighter too, and the threatening clouds are falling off to southward of the sun's passage, shrunken and defeated, leaving his path comparatively clear. The increased light shows more distinctly the river and the fog.

5 o'clock. — The light now reveals a thin film of vapor like a gossamer veil cast over the lower hills beneath the Cliffs and stretching to the river, thicker in the ravines, thinnest on the even slopes. The distant meadows towards the north beyond Conant's Grove, full of fog, appear like a vast lake out of which rise Annursnack and Ponkawtasset like rounded islands. Nawshawtuct is a low and wooded isle, scarcely seen above the waves. The heavens are now clear again. The vapor, which was confined to the river and meadows, now rises and creeps up the sides of the hills. I see it in transparent columns advancing down the valley of the river, ghost-like, from Fair Haven, and investing some wooded or rocky promontory, before free. So ghosts are said to advance.

Annursnack is exactly like some round, steep, distant hill on the opposite shore of a large lake (and Tabor on the other side), with here and there some low Brush Island in middle of the waves (the tops of some oaks or elms). Oh, what a sail I could take, if I had the right kind of bark, over to Annursnack! for there she lies four miles from land as sailors say. And all the farms and houses of Concord are at bottom of that sea. So I forget them, and my thought sails triumphantly over them. As I looked down where the village of Concord lay buried in fog, I thought of nothing but the surface of

a lake, a summer sea over which to sail; no more than a voyager on the Dead Sea who had not read the Testament would think of Sodom and Gomorrah, once cities of the plain. I only wished to get off to one of the low isles I saw in midst of the [sea] (it may have been the top of Holbrook's elm), and spend the whole summer day there.

Meanwhile the redness in the east had diminished and was less deep. (The fog over some meadows looked green.) I went down to Tupelo Cliff to bathe. A great bittern, which I had scared, flew heavily across the stream. The redness had risen at length above the dark cloud, the sun approaching. And next the redness became a sort of yellowish or fawn-colored light, and the sun now set fire to the edges of the broken cloud which had hung over the horizon, and they glowed like burning turf.

Sept. 10. As I watch the groves on the meadow opposite our house, I see how differently they look at different hours of the day, *i. e.* in different lights, when the sun shines on them variously. In the morning, perchance, they seem one blended mass of light green. In the afternoon, distinct trees appear, separated by heavy shadows, and in some places I can see quite through the grove.

3 P. M. — To the Cliffs and the Grape Cliff beyond.

Hardhack and meadow-sweet are now all dry. I see the smoke of burning brush in the west horizon this dry and sultry afternoon, and wish to look off from some hill. It is a kind of work the farmer cannot do

without discovery. Sometimes I smell these smokes several miles off, and by the odor know it is not a burning building, but withered leaves and the rubbish of the woods and swamp. As I go through the woods, I see that the ferns have turned brown and give the woods an autumnal look. The boiling spring is almost completely dry. Nothing flows (I mean without the shed), but there are many hornets and yellow wasps apparently buzzing and circling about in jealousy of one another, either drinking the stagnant water, which is the most accessible this dry parching day, or it may be collecting something from the slime, — I think the former.

As I go up Fair Haven Hill, I see some signs of the approaching fall of the white pine. On some trees the old leaves are already somewhat reddish, though not enough to give the trees a parti-colored look, and they come off easily on being touched, — the old leaves on the lower part of the twigs.

Some farmers are sowing their winter rye? I see the fields smoothly rolled. (I hear the locust still.) I see others plowing steep rocky and bushy fields, apparently for the same purpose. How beautiful the sprout-land (burnt plain) seen from the Cliff! No more cheering and inspiring sight than a young wood springing up thus over a large tract, when you look down on it, the light green of the maples shaded off into the darker oaks; and here and there a maple blushes quite red, enlivening the scene yet more. Surely this earth is fit to be inhabited, and many enterprises may be undertaken with hope where so many young plants are pushing up. In the spring I burned over a hundred acres till the

earth was sere and black, and by midsummer this space was clad in a fresher and more luxuriant green than the surrounding even. Shall man then despair? Is he not a sprout-land too, after never so many searings and witherings? ¹ If you witness growth and luxuriance, it is all the same as if you grew luxuriantly.

I see three smokes in Stow. One sends up dark volumes of wreathed smoke, as if from the mouth of Erebus. It is remarkable what effects so thin and subtle a substance as smoke produces, even at a distance, — dark and heavy and powerful as rocks at a distance.

The woodbine is red on the rocks.

The poke is a very rich and striking plant. Some which stand under the Cliffs quite dazzled me with their now purple stems gracefully drooping each way, their rich, somewhat yellowish, purple-veined leaves, their bright purple racemes, — peduncles, and pedicels, and calyx-like petals from which the birds have picked the berries (these racemes, with their petals now turned to purple, are more brilliant than anything of the kind), — flower-buds, flowers, ripe berries and dark purple ones, and calyx-like petals which have lost their fruit, all on the same plant. I love to see any redness in the vegetation of the temperate zone. It is the richest color. I love to press these berries between my fingers and see their rich purple wine staining my hand. It asks a bright sun on it to make it show to best advantage, and it must be seen at this season of the year. It speaks to my blood. Every part of it is flower, such is its superfluity of color, — a feast of color. That is the richest flower which

¹ [Channing, p. 217]

most abounds in color. What need to taste the fruit, to drink the wine, to him who can thus taste and drink with his eyes? Its boughs, gracefully drooping, offering repasts to the birds. It is cardinal in its rank, as in its color. Nature here is full of blood and heat and luxuriance. What a triumph it appears in Nature to have produced and perfected such a plant, — as if this were enough for a summer.¹

The downy seeds of the groundsel are taking their flight here. The calyx has dismissed them and quite curled back, having done its part. *Lespedeza sessiliflora*, or reticulated lespedeza on the Cliffs now out of bloom. At the Grape Cliff, the few bright-red leaves of the tupelo contrast with the polished green ones. The tupelos with drooping branches.

The grape-vines overrunning and bending down the maples form little arching bowers over the meadow, five or six feet in diameter, like parasols held over the ladies of the harem, in the East. *Cuscuta Americana*, or dodder, in blossom still. The *Desmodium paniculatum* of De Candolle and Gray (*Hedysarum paniculatum* of Linnæus and Bigelow), tick-trefoil, with still one blossom, by the path-side up from the meadow. The rhomboidal joints of its laments adhere to my clothes. One of an interesting family that thus disperse themselves. The oak-ball of dirty drab now.²

Sept. 11. Every artisan learns positively something by his trade. Each craft is familiar with a few simple,

¹ [*Excursions*, pp. 253–255; Riv. 311, 312.]

² [Channing, pp. 216, 217.]

well-known, well-established facts, not requiring any genius to discover, but mere use and familiarity. You may go by the man at his work in the street every day of your life, and though he is there before you, carrying into practice certain essential information, you shall never be the wiser. Each trade is in fact a craft, a cunning, a covering an ability; and its methods are the result of a long experience. There sits a stone-mason, splitting Westford granite for fence-posts. Egypt has perchance taught New England something in this matter. His hammer, his chisels, his wedges, his shims or half-rounds, his iron spoon, — I suspect that these tools are hoary with age as with granite dust. He learns as easily where the best granite comes from as he learns how to erect that screen to keep off the sun. He knows that he can drill faster into a large stone than a small one, because there is less jar and yielding. He deals in stone as the carpenter in lumber. In many of his operations only the materials are different. His work is slow and expensive. Nature is here hard to be overcome. He wears up one or two drills in splitting a single stone. He must sharpen his tools oftener than the carpenter. He fights with granite. He knows the temper of the rocks. He grows stony himself. His tread is ponderous and steady like the fall of a rock. And yet by patience and art he splits a stone as surely as the carpenter or woodcutter a log. So much time and perseverance will accomplish. One would say that mankind had much less moral than physical energy, that any day you see men following the trade of splitting rocks, who yet shrink from undertaking apparently less

arduous moral labors, the solving of moral problems. See how surely he proceeds. He does not hesitate to drill a dozen holes, each one the labor of a day or two for a savage; he carefully takes out the dust with his iron spoon; he inserts his wedges, one in each hole, and protects the sides of the holes and gives resistance to his wedges by thin pieces of half-round iron (or shims); he marks the red line which he has drawn, with his chisel, carefully cutting it straight; and then how carefully he drives each wedge in succession, fearful lest he should not have a good split!

The habit of looking at men in the gross makes their lives have less of human interest for us. But though there are crowds of laborers before us, yet each one leads his little epic life each day. There is the stonemason, who, methought, was simply a stony man that hammered stone from breakfast to dinner, and dinner to supper, and then went to his slumbers. But he, I find, is even a man like myself, for he feels the heat of the sun and has raised some boards on a frame to protect him. And now, at mid-forenoon, I see his wife and child have come and brought him drink and meat for his lunch and to assuage the stoniness of his labor, and sit to chat with him.

There are many rocks lying there for him to split from end to end, and he will surely do it. This only at the command of luxury, since stone posts are preferred to wood. But how many moral blocks are lying there in every man's yard, which he surely will not split nor earnestly endeavor to split. There lie the blocks which will surely get split, but here lie the blocks which will

surely not get split. Do we say it is too hard for human faculties? But does not the mason dull a basketful of steel chisels in a day, and yet, by sharpening them again and tempering them aright, succeed? Moral effort! Difficulty to be overcome!!! Why, men work in stone, and sharpen their drills when they go home to dinner!

Why should Canada, wild and unsettled as it is, impress one as an older country than the States, except that her institutions are old. All things seem to contend there with a certain rust of antiquity, such as forms on old armor and iron guns, the rust of conventions and formalities. If the rust was not on the tinned roofs and spires, it was on the inhabitants.¹

2 P. M. — To Hubbard's Meadow Grove.

The skunk-cabbage's checkered fruit (spadix), one three inches long; all parts of the flower but the anthers left and enlarged. *Bidens cernua*, or nodding bur-marigold, like a small sunflower (with rays) in Heywood Brook, *i. e.* beggar-tick. *Bidens connata* (?), without rays, in Hubbard's Meadow. Blue-eyed grass still. Drooping *neottia* very common. I see some yellow butterflies and others occasionally and singly only. The smilax berries are mostly turned dark. I started a great bittern from the weeds at the swimming-place.

It is very hot and dry weather. We have had no rain for a week, and yet the pitcher-plants have water in them. Are they ever quite dry? Are they not replenished by the dews always, and, being shaded by the

¹ [Excursions, pp. 80, 81; Riv. 100.]

grass, saved from evaporation? What wells for the birds!

The white-red-purple-berried bush in Hubbard's Meadow, whose berries were fairest a fortnight ago, appears to be the *Viburnum nudum*, or withe-rod. Our cornel (the common) with berries blue one side, whitish the other, appears to be either the *Cornus sericea* or *C. stolonifera* of Gray, *i. e.* the silky, or the red-osier cornel (*osier rouge*), though its leaves are neither silky nor downy nor rough.

This and the last four or five nights have been perhaps the most sultry in the year thus far.

Sept. 12. Not till after 8 A. M. does the fog clear off so much that I see the sun shining in patches on Nawsawtuct. This is the season of fogs.

Like knight, like esquire. When Benvenuto Cellini was attacked by the constables in Rome, his boy Cencio assisted him, or at least stood by, and afterward related his master's exploits; "and as they asked him several times whether he had been afraid, he answered that they should propose the question to me, for he had been affected upon the occasion just in the same manner that I was."

Benvenuto Cellini relates in his memoirs that, during his confinement in the castle of St. Angelo in Rome, he had a terrible dream or vision in which certain events were communicated to him which afterward came to pass, and he adds: "From the very moment that I beheld the phenomenon, there appeared (strange to relate!) a resplendent light over my head, which has dis-

played itself conspicuously to all that I have thought proper to show it to, but those were very few. This shining light is to be seen in the morning over my shadow till two o'clock in the afternoon, and it appears to the greatest advantage when the grass is moist with dew: it is likewise visible in the evening at sunset. This phenomenon I took notice of when I was at Paris, because the air is exceedingly clear in that climate, so that I could distinguish it there much plainer than in Italy, where mists are much more frequent; but I can still see it even here, and show it to others, though not to the same advantage as in France." This reminds me of the halo around my shadow which I notice from the cause-way in the morning, — also by moonlight, — as if, in the case of a man of an excitable imagination, this were basis enough for his superstition.¹

After I have spent the greater part of a night abroad in the moonlight, I am obliged to sleep enough more the next night to make up for it, — *Endymionis somnum dormire* (to sleep an Endymion sleep), as the ancients expressed it.² And there is something gained still by thus turning the day into night. Endymion is said to have obtained of Jupiter the privilege of sleeping as much as he would. Let no man be afraid of sleep, if his weariness comes of obeying his Genius. He who has spent the night with the gods sleeps more innocently by day than the sluggard who has spent the day with the satyrs sleeps by night. He who has travelled to fairyland in the night sleeps by day more innocently

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 224, 225; Riv. 316, 317.]

² [*Excursions*, p. 331; Riv. 407.]

than he who is fatigued by the merely trivial labors of the day sleeps by night. That kind of life which, sleeping, we dream that we live awake, in our walks by night, we, waking, live, while our daily life appears as a dream.

2 P. M. — To the Three Friends' Hill beyond Flint's Pond, *via* railroad, R. W. E.'s wood-path south side Walden, George Heywood's cleared lot, and Smith's orchard; return *via* east of Flint's Pond, *via* Goose Pond and my old home to railroad.

I go to Flint's Pond for the sake of the mountain view from the hill beyond, looking over Concord. I have thought it the best, especially in the winter, which I can get in this neighborhood. It is worth the while to see the mountains in the horizon once a day. I have thus seen some earth which corresponds to my least earthly and trivial, to my most heavenward-looking, thoughts. The earth seen through an azure, an ethereal, veil. They are the natural *temples*, elevated brows, of the earth, looking at which, the thoughts of the beholder are naturally elevated and sublimed, — etherealized. I wish to see the earth through the medium of much air or heaven, for there is no paint like the air. Mountains thus seen are worthy of worship. I go to Flint's Pond also to see a rippling lake and a reedy island in its midst, — Reed Island. A man should feed his senses with the best that the land affords.¹

At the entrance to the Deep Cut, I heard the telegraph-wire vibrating like an æolian harp. It reminded me suddenly, — reservedly, with a beautiful paucity

¹ [Channing, p. 163.]

of communication, even silently, such was its effect on my thoughts, — it reminded me, I say, with a certain pathetic moderation, of what finer and deeper stirrings I was susceptible, which grandly set all argument and dispute aside, a triumphant though transient exhibition of the truth. It told me by the faintest imaginable strain, it told me by the finest strain that a human ear can hear, yet conclusively and past all refutation, that there were higher, infinitely higher, planes of life which it behooved me never to forget. As I was entering the Deep Cut, the wind, which was conveying a message to me from heaven, dropped it on the wire of the telegraph which it vibrated as it passed. I instantly sat down on a stone at the foot of the telegraph-pole, and attended to the communication. It merely said: "Bear in mind, Child, and never for an instant forget, that there are higher planes, infinitely higher planes, of life than this thou art now travelling on. Know that the goal is distant, and is upward, and is worthy all your life's efforts to attain to." And then it ceased, and though I sat some minutes longer I heard nothing more.

There is every variety and degree of inspiration from mere fullness of life to the most rapt mood. A human soul is played on even as this wire, which now vibrates slowly and gently so that the passer can hardly hear it, and anon the sound swells and vibrates with such intensity as if it would rend the wire, as far as the elasticity and tension of the wire permits, and now it dies away and is silent, and though the breeze continues to sweep over it, no strain comes from it, and the traveller hearkens in vain. It is no small gain to have

this wire stretched through Concord, though there may be no office here. Thus I make my own use of the telegraph, without consulting the directors, like the sparrows, which I perceive use it extensively for a perch. Shall I not go to this office to hear if there is any communication for me, as steadily as to the post-office in the village? ¹

I can hardly believe that there is so great a difference between one year and another as my journal shows. The 11th of this month last year, the river was as high as it commonly is in the spring, over the causeway on the Corner road. It is now quite low. Last year, October 9th, the huckleberries were fresh and abundant on Conantum. They are now already dried up.

We yearn to see the mountains daily, as the Israelites yearned for the promised land, and we daily live the fate of Moses, who only looked into the promised land from Pisgah before he died.

On Monday, the 15th instant, I am going to perambulate the bounds of the town. As I am partial to across-lot routes, this appears to be a very proper duty for me to perform, for certainly no route can well be chosen which shall be more across-lot, since the roads in no case run round the town but ray out from its centre, and my course will lie across each one. It is almost as if I had undertaken to walk round the town at the greatest distance from its centre and at the same time from the surrounding villages. There is no public house near the line. It is a sort of reconnoissance of its frontiers authorized by the central government of the town,

¹ [Channing, pp. 199, 200.]

which will bring the surveyor in contact with whatever wild inhabitant or wilderness its territory embraces.

This appears to be a very ancient custom, and I find that this word "perambulation" has exactly the same meaning that it has at present in Johnson and Walker's dictionary. A hundred years ago they went round the towns of this State every three years. And the old selectmen tell me that, before the present split stones were set up in 1829, the bounds were marked by a heap of stones, and it was customary for each selectman to add a stone to the heap.

Saw a pigeon-place on George Heywood's cleared lot, — the six dead trees set up for the pigeons to alight on, and the brush house close by to conceal the man. I was rather startled to find such a thing going now in Concord. The pigeons on the trees looked like fabulous birds with their long tails and their pointed breasts. I could hardly believe they were alive and not some wooden birds used for decoys, they sat so still; and, even when they moved their necks, I thought it was the effect of art. As they were not catching then, I approached and scared away a dozen birds who were perched on the trees, and found that they were freshly baited there, though the net was carried away, perchance to some other bed. The smooth sandy bed was covered with buckwheat, wheat or rye, and acorns. Sometimes they use corn, shaved off the ear in its present state with a knife. There were left the sticks with which they fastened the nets. As I stood there, I heard a rushing sound and, looking up, saw a flock of thirty or forty pigeons dashing toward the *trees*, who suddenly

whirled on seeing me and circled round and made a new dash toward the bed, as if they would fain alight if I had not been there, then steered off. I crawled into the bough house and lay awhile looking through the leaves, hoping to see them come again and feed, but they did not while I stayed. This net and bed belong to one Harrington of Weston, as I hear. Several men still take pigeons in Concord every year; by a method, methinks, extremely old and which I seem to have seen pictured in some old book of fables or symbols, and yet few in Concord know exactly how it is done. And yet it is all done for money and because the birds fetch a good price, just as the farmers raise corn and potatoes. I am always expecting that those engaged in such a pursuit will be somewhat less grovelling and mercenary than the regular trader or farmer, but I fear that it is not so.

Found a violet, apparently *Viola cucullata*, or hood-leaved violet, in bloom in Baker's Meadow beyond Pine Hill; also the *Bidens cernua*, nodding burr-marigold, with five petals, in same place. Went through the old corn-field on the hillside beyond, now grown up to birches and hickories, — woods where you feel the old corn-hills under your feet; for these, not being disturbed or levelled in getting the crop, like potato-hills, last an indefinite while; and by some they are called Indian corn-fields, though I think erroneously, not only from their position in rocky soil frequently, but because the squaws probably, with their clamshells or thin stones or wooden hoes, did not hill their corn more than many now recommend.

What we call woodbine is the *Vitis hederacea*, or common creeper, or American ivy.

When I got into the Lincoln road, I perceived a singular sweet scent in the air, which I suspected arose from some plant now in a peculiar state owing to the season, but though I smelled everything around, I could not detect it, but the more eagerly I smelled, the further I seemed to be from finding it; but when I gave up the search, again it would be wafted to me. It was one of the sweet scents which go to make the autumn air, which fed my sense of smell rarely and dilated my nostrils. I felt the better for it. Methinks that I possess the sense of smell in greater perfection than usual, and have the habit of smelling of every plant I pluck. How autumnal is the scent of ripe grapes now by the roadside!¹

From the pond-side hill I perceive that the forest leaves begin to look rather rusty or brown. The pendulous, drooping barberries are pretty well reddened. I am glad when the berries look fair and plump. I love to gaze at the low island in the pond, — at any island or inaccessible land. The isle at which you look always seems fairer than the mainland on which you stand.

I had already bathed in Walden as I passed, but now I forgot that I had been wetted, and wanted to embrace and mingle myself with the water of Flint's Pond this warm afternoon, to get wet inwardly and deeply.

Found on the shore of the pond that singular willow-like herb in blossom, though its petals were gone. It grows up two feet from a large woody horizontal root,

¹ [Channing, p. 217.]

and droops over to the sand again, meeting which, it puts out a myriad rootlets from the side of its stem, fastens itself, and curves upward again to the air, thus spanning or looping itself along. The bark just above the ground thickens into a singular cellular or spongy substance, which at length appears to crack nearer the earth, giving that part of the plant a winged and somewhat four-sided appearance. It appears to be the cellular tissue, or what is commonly called the green bark, and likewise invests the root to a great thickness, somewhat like a fungus, and is of a fawn-color. The *Lythrum verticillatum*, or swamp loosestrife, or grass poly, but I think better named, as in Dewey, swamp-willow-herb.

The prinoid berries are pretty red. Any redness like cardinal-flowers, or poke, or the evening sky, or chironæa, excites us as a red flag does cows and turkeys.

Sept. 13. Railroad causeway, before sunrise.

Here is a morning after a warm, clear, moonlight night almost entirely without dew or fog. It has been a little breezy through the night, it is true; but why so great a difference between this and other mornings of late? I can walk in any direction in the fields without wetting my feet.

I see the same rays in the dun, buff, or fawn-colored sky now, just twenty minutes before sunrise, though they do not extend quite so far as at sundown the other night. Why these rays? What is it divides the light of the sun? Is it thus divided by distant inequalities in the surface of the earth, behind which the other parts are concealed, and since the morning atmosphere is

clearer they do not reach so far? Some small island clouds are the first to look red.

The cross-leaved polygala emits its fragrance as if at will. You are quite sure you smelled it and are ravished with its sweet fragrance, but now it has no smell. You must not hold it too near, but hold it on all sides and at all distances, and there will perchance be wafted to you sooner or later a very sweet and penetrating fragrance. What it is like you cannot surely tell, for you do not enjoy it long enough nor in volume enough to compare it. It is very likely that you will not discover any fragrance while you are rudely smelling at it; you can only remember that you once perceived it. Both this and the caducous polygala are now somewhat faded.

Now the sun is risen. The sky is almost perfectly clear this morning; not a cloud in the horizon. The morning is not pensive like the evening, but joyous and youthful, and its blush is soon gone. It is unfallen day. The Bedford sunrise bell rings sweetly and musically at this hour, when there is no bustle in the village to drown it. Bedford deserves a vote of thanks from Concord for it. It is a great good at these still and sacred hours, when towns can hear each other. It would be nought at noon.

Sept. 14. A great change in the weather from sultry to cold, from one thin coat to a thick coat or two thin ones.

2 P. M. — To Cliffs.

The dry grass yields a crisped sound to my feet. The

white oak which appears to have made part of a hedge fence once, now standing in Hubbard's fence near the Corner road, where it stretches along horizontally, is (one of its arms, for it has one running each way) two and a half feet thick, with a sprout growing perpendicularly out of it eighteen inches in diameter. The corn-stalks standing in stacks, in long rows along the edges of the corn-fields, remind me of stacks of muskets.

As soon as berries are gone, grapes come. The chalices of the *Rhexia Virginica*, deer-grass or meadow-beauty, are literally little reddish chalices now, though many still have petals, —  little cream pitchers.¹ The caducous polygala in  cool places is faded almost white. I see the river at the foot of Fair Haven Hill running up-stream before the strong cool wind, which here strikes it from the north. The cold wind makes me shudder after my bath, before I get dressed.

Polygonum aviculare — knot-grass, goose-grass, or door-grass — still in bloom.

Sept. 15. Monday. Ice in the pail under the pump, and quite a frost.

Commenced perambulating the town bounds. At 7.30 A. M. rode in company with — and Mr. — to the bound between Acton and Concord near Paul Dudley's. Mr. — told a story of his wife walking in the fields somewhere, and, to keep the rain off, throwing her gown over her head and holding it in her mouth, and so being poisoned about her mouth from the skirts of her dress having come in contact with poisonous plants.

¹ [Channing, p. 222.]

At Dudley's, which house is handsomely situated, with five large elms in front, we met the selectmen of Acton, — — and — —. Here were five of us. It appeared that we weighed, — — I think about 160, — — 155, — — about 140, — — 130, myself 127. — — described the wall about or at Forest Hills Cemetery in Roxbury as being made of stones upon which they were careful to preserve the moss, so that it cannot be distinguished from a very old wall.

Found one intermediate bound-stone near the powder-mill drying-house on the bank of the river. The workmen there wore shoes without iron tacks. He said that the kernel-house was the most dangerous, the drying-house next, the press-house next. One of the powder-mill buildings in Concord? The potato vines and the beans which were still green are now blackened and flattened by the frost.