

VI

OCTOBER, 1852

(ET. 35)

Oct. 1. *Friday*. Surveying in Lincoln. A severer frost last night. The young and tender trees begin to assume the autumnal tints more generally, plainly in consequence of the frost the last two mornings. The sides of the bushy hills present a rich variety of colors like rug work, but the forest generally is not yet changed.

Oct. 2. P. M. — To Cliffs.

The beggar-ticks (*Bidens*) now adhere to my clothes. I also find the desmodium sooner thus — as a magnet discovers the steel filings in a heap of ashes — than if I used my eyes alone. The river is as low, within an inch or two, as when I made my mark. A very warm day after the frosts, so that I wish — though I am afraid to wear — a thin coat. From Cliffs the shrub oak plain has now a bright-red ground, perhaps of maples. How much more beautiful the lakes now, like Fair Haven, surrounded by the autumn-tinted woods and hills, as in an ornamented frame! Some maples in sprout-lands are of a delicate, pure, clear, unspotted red, inclining to crimson, surpassing most flowers. I would fain pluck the whole tree and carry it home for a nosegay. The veiny-leaved hawkweed in blossom (again?)

1852]

GRASS BALLS

377

Oct. 3. P. M. — To Flint's Pond.

I hear a hylodes (?) from time to time. Shrub oaks are red, some of them. Hear the loud laughing of a loon on Flint's, apparently alone in the middle. A wild sound, heard far and suited to the wildest lake. Many acorns strew the ground, and have fallen into the water.

Collected a parcel of grass (?) balls, some washed up high and dry, — part of the shore-line consists of the same material, — from a half-inch to four inches diameter. The sand indicates that they are formed on the sandy shore. The partly decomposed rushes composed of similar fibres.¹

From Heywood's Peak at Walden, the shore is now more beautifully painted. The most prominent are the red maples and the yellowish aspens. The *Aster undulatus* is common and fresh, also the *Solidago nemoralis* of Gray.

The pine fall, *i. e.* change, is commenced, and the trees are mottled green and yellowish.

Oct. 5. Was told at Bunker Hill Monument to-day that Mr. Savage saw the White Mountains several times while working on the monument. It required very clear weather in the northwest and a storm clearing up here.

Oct. 7. P. M. — To Great Meadows.

I find no fringed gentian. Perhaps the autumnal tints are as bright and interesting now as they will be. Now is the time to behold the maple swamps, one mass of red and yellow, all on fire, as it were; these and the

¹ A *Scirpus*?

blood-red huckleberries are the most conspicuous; and then, in the village, the warm brownish-yellow elms, and there and elsewhere the dark-red ashes. The green pines springing out of huckleberries on the hillsides look as if surrounded by red or vermilion paint. I notice the *Viola ovata*, houstonia, *Ranunculus repens*, caducous polygala, small scratch-grass polygonum, autumnal dandelion (very abundant, yellowing the low turf ground and hills), small bushy white aster, a few goldenrods, *Polygonum hydropiperoides* and the unknown flowerless bidens, soapwort gentian (now turned dark purple), yarrow, the white erigeron, red clover, hedge-mustard. The muskrats have begun to erect their cabins. They begin soon after the pontederias are dead (??). Saw one done. Do they build them in the night? Hear and see larks, bluebirds, robins, song sparrows. Also see painted tortoises and shad frogs. There must be an abundance of mast this year. I could gather up nearly a bushel of acorns under one white oak, out of their cups, and, I think, quite good to eat. They are earlier to fall than the walnuts. It is encouraging to see a large crop of acorns, though we do not use them. The white maples turn yellowish, though some boughs are red.

I sit on Poplar Hill. It is a warm Indian-summerish afternoon. The sun comes out of clouds, and lights up and warms the whole scene. It is perfect autumn. I see a hundred smokes arising through the yellow elm-tops in the village, where the villagers are preparing for tea. It is the mellowing year. The sunshine harmonizes with the imbrowned and fiery foliage.

Did Russell call my red globular fungus *geiropodium* [?], etc.?

Oct. 8. P. M. — Walden.

Canada snapdragon, a few flowers at top. Everlastings, field trefoil, shepherd's-purse, door-grass, white goldenrod, fresh tansy, veiny-leaved hawkweed, also that which seems to run from this into *Gronovii* (probably the former). *Aster undulatus* (?), with delicate purplish or lilac-tinted flowers, has those heart-shaped, crenate leaves with a claret under surface. Bushy *gerardia* budded still.

The autumnal tints about the pond are now perfect. Nothing can exceed the brilliancy of some of the maples which stand by the shore and extend their red banners over the water. Why should so many be yellow? I see the browner yellow of the chestnuts on Pine Hill. The maples and hickories are a clearer yellow. Some white oaks are red. The shrub oaks are bloody enough for a ground. The red and black oaks are yet green.

As I was paddling along the north shore, after having looked in vain over the pond for a loon, suddenly a loon, sailing toward the middle, a few rods in front, set up his wild laugh and betrayed himself. I pursued with a paddle and he dived, but when he came up I was nearer than before. He dived again, but I miscalculated the direction he would take, and we were fifty rods apart when he came up, and again he laughed long and loud. He managed very cunningly, and I could not get within half a dozen rods of him. Some-

times he would come up unexpectedly on the opposite side of me, as if he had passed directly under the boat. So long-winded was he, so unwearable, that he would immediately plunge again, and then no wit could divine where in the deep pond, beneath the smooth surface, he might be speeding his way like a fish, perchance passing under the boat. He had time and ability to visit the bottom of the pond in its deepest part. A newspaper authority says a fisherman — giving his name — has caught loon in Seneca Lake, N. Y., eighty feet beneath the surface, with hooks set for trout. Miss Cooper has said the same. Yet he appeared to know his course as surely under water as on the surface, and swam much faster there than he sailed on the surface. It was surprising how serenely he sailed off with unruffled bosom when he came to the surface. It was as well for me to rest on my oars and await his reappearing as to endeavor to calculate where he would come up. When I was straining my eyes over the surface, I would suddenly be startled by his unearthly laugh behind me. But why, after displaying so much cunning, did he betray himself the moment he came to the surface with that loud laugh? His white breast enough betrayed him. He was indeed a silly loon, I thought. Though he took all this pains to avoid me, he never failed to give notice of his whereabouts the moment he came to the surface. After an hour he seemed as fresh as ever, dived as willingly, and swam yet farther than at first. Once or twice I saw a ripple where he approached the surface, just put his head out to reconnoitre, and instantly dived again. I could commonly

hear the plash of the water when he came up, and so also detected him. It was commonly a demoniac laughter, yet somewhat like a water-bird, but occasionally, when he had balked me most successfully and come up a long way off, he uttered a long-drawn unearthly howl, probably more like a wolf than any other bird. This was his looning. As when a beast puts his muzzle to the ground and deliberately howls; perhaps the wildest sound I ever heard, making the woods ring; and I concluded that he laughed in derision of my efforts, confident of his own resources. Though the sky was overcast, the pond was so smooth that I could see where he broke the surface if I did not hear him. His white breast, the stillness of the air, the smoothness of the water, were all against [him]. At length, having come up fifty rods off, he uttered one of those prolonged unearthly howls, as if calling on the god of loons to aid him, and immediately there came a wind from the east and rippled the surface, and filled the whole air with misty rain. I was impressed as if it were the prayer of the loon and his god was angry with me. How surprised must be the fishes to see this ungainly visitant from another sphere speeding his way amid their schools!¹

I have never seen more than one at a time in our pond, and I believe that that is always a male.²

Oct. 9. Touch-me-not, self-heal, *Bidens cernua*, ladies'-tresses, cerastium, dwarf tree-primrose, butter-

¹ [*Walden*, pp. 259-262; Riv. 364-368.]

² *Vide* Oct. 11 [p. 382].

and-eggs (abundant), prenanthes, sium, silvery cinquefoil, mayweed. My rainbow rush must be the *Juncus militaris*, not yet colored.

Oct. 10. Burdock, *Ranunculus acris*, rough hawkweed. A drizzling rain to-day. The air is full of falling leaves. The streets are strewn with elm leaves. The trees begin to look thin. The butternut is perhaps the first on the street to lose its leaves. Rain, more than wind, makes the leaves fall. Glow-worms in the evening.

Oct. 11. Monday. Most leaves are already somewhat faded and withered. Their tints are not so bright. The chestnut leaves already rustle with a great noise as you walk through the woods, as they lie light, firm, and crisp. Now the chestnuts are rattling out. The burs are gaping and showing the plump nuts. They fill the ruts in the road, and are abundant amid the fallen leaves in the midst of the wood. The jays scream, and the red squirrels scold, while you are clubbing and shaking the trees. Now it is true autumn; all things are crisp and ripe.

I observed the other day (October 8) that those insects whose ripple I could see from the Peak were water-bugs. I could detect the progress of a water-bug over the smooth surface in almost any part of the pond, for they furrow the water slightly, making a conspicuous ripple bounded by two diverging lines, but the skaters slide over it without producing a perceptible ripple. In this clear air and with this glassy surface the motion of every water-bug, ceaselessly progressing

over the pond, was perceptible.¹ Here and there amid the skaters.'

Oct. 12. I am struck by the superfluity of light in the atmosphere in the autumn, as if the earth absorbed none, and out of this profusion of dazzling light came the autumnal tints. Can it be because there is less vapor? The delicacy of the stratification in the white sand by the railroad, where they have been getting out sand for the brick-yards, the delicate stratification of this great globe like the leaves of the choicest volume just shut on a lady's table. The piled-up history! I am struck by the slow and delicate process by which the globe was formed.

Paddled on Walden. A rippled surface. Scared up ducks. Saw them first far over the surface, just risen,—two smaller, white-bellied, one larger, black. They circled round as usual, and the first went off, but the black one went round and round and over the pond five or six times at a considerable height and distance, when I thought several times he had gone to the river, and at length settled down by a slanting flight of a quarter of a mile into a distant part of the pond which I had left free; but what beside safety these ducks get by sailing in the middle of Walden I don't know.² That black rolling-pin with wings, circling round you half a mile off for a quarter of an hour, at that height, from which he sees the river and Fair Haven all the while, from which he sees so many things, while I see

¹ [Walden, p. 208; Riv. 294.]

² [Walden, p. 262; Riv. 368.]

almost him alone. Their wings set so far back. They are not handsome, but wild.

What an ample share of the light of heaven each pond and lake on the surface of the globe enjoys! No woods are so dark and deep but it is light above the pond. Its window or skylight is as broad as its surface. It lies out patent to the sky. From the mountain-top you may not be able to see out because of the woods, but on the lake you are bathed in light.

I can discern no skaters nor water-bugs on the surface of the pond, which is now rippled. Do they, then, glide forth to the middle in calm days only, by short impulses, till they have completely covered it?¹

A new carpet of pine leaves is forming in the woods. The forest is laying down her carpet for the winter. The elms in the village, losing their leaves, reveal the birds' nests.

I dug some ground-nuts in the railroad bank with my hands this afternoon, the vine being now dead. They were nearly as large as hen's eggs, six inches or a foot beneath the surface, on the end of a root or strung along on it. I had them roasted and boiled at supper time. The skin came readily off like a potato. Roasted, they have an agreeable taste very much like a potato, though somewhat fibrous in texture. With my eyes shut, I should not know but I was eating a rather soggy potato. Boiled, they were unexpectedly quite dry, and though in this instance a little strong, had a more nutty flavor. With a little salt, a hungry man would make a very palatable meal on them. It

¹ [*Walden*, p. 208; Riv. 294.]

would not be easy to find them, especially now that the vines are dead, unless you knew beforehand where they grew.¹

Oct. 13. P. M. — To Cliffs.

Many maples have lost all their leaves and are shrunk all at once to handsome clean gray wisps on the edge of the meadows, where, crowded together, at a distance they look like smoke. This is a sudden and important change, produced mainly, I suppose, by the rain of Sunday, 10th. The autumnal tints have commonly already lost their brightness. It lasts but a day or two. Corn-spurry and spotted polygoum and polygala.

Fair Haven Pond, methinks, never looks so handsome as at this season. It is a sufficiently clear and warm, rather Indian-summer day, and they are gathering the apples in the orchard. The warmth is more required, and we welcome and appreciate it all. The shrub oak plain is now a deep red, with grayish, withered, apparently white oak leaves intermixed. The chickadees take heart, too, and sing above these warm rocks. Birches, hickories, aspens, etc., in the distance, are like innumerable small flames on the hillsides about the pond. The pond is now most beautifully framed with the autumn-tinted woods and hills. The water or lake, from however distant a point seen, is always the centre of the landscape. Fair Haven lies more open and can be seen from more distant points than any of our ponds. The air is singularly fine-grained; the sward looks short and firm. The mountains are more

¹ [*Walden*, p. 264; Riv. 371.]

distinct from the rest of the earth and slightly impurpled. Seeming to lie up more. How peaceful great nature! There is no disturbing sound, but far amid the western hills there rises a pure white smoke in constant volumes.

That handsome kind of sedge (?) which lasts through the winter must be the *Scirpus Eriophorum*, red cotton-grass of Bigelow, and wool-grass (under bulrush and club-rush) of Gray.

Oct. 14. That coarse yellowish fungus is very common in the paths in woods of late, for a month, often picked by birds, often decayed, often mashed by the foot like a piece of pumpkin, defiling and yellowing the grass, as if a liquor (or dust) distilled from them. The pines are now two-colored, green and yellow, — the latter just below the ends of the boughs. The woods have lost so many leaves they begin to look bare, — maples, poplars, etc., chestnuts. Flowers are fast disappearing. Winter may be anticipated. But few crickets are heard. Jays and chickadees are oftener heard in the fall than in summer. It is apparently the *Eriophorum Virginicum*, Virginian cotton-grass, now nodding or waving with its white woolly heads over the greenish andromeda and amid the red isolated blueberry bushes in Beck Stow's Swamp. A thousand white woolly heads, one to two inches in diameter, suggesting winter. The lower or older leaves of the andromeda begin to redden. This plant forms extensive solid beds with a definite surface, level or undulating, like a moss bed. Not, like the huckleberry, irregular and independent each of the

other, but regular and in community, as if covered by a film.

Oct. 15. 9 A. M. — The first snow is falling (after not very cool weather), in large flakes, filling the air and obscuring the distant woods and houses, as if the inhabitants above were emptying their pillow-cases. Like a mist it divides the uneven landscape at a little distance into ridges and vales. The ground begins to whiten, and our thoughts begin to prepare for winter. Whiteweed. The Canada snapdragon is one of the latest flowers noticed, a few buds being still left to blossom at the tops of its spike or raceme. The snow lasted but half an hour. Ice a week or two ago.

P. M. — Walden.

The water of Walden is a light green next the shore, apparently because of the light rays reflected from the sandy bottom mingling with the rays which the water reflects. Just this portion it is which in the spring, being warmed by the heat reflected from the bottom and transmitted through the earth, melts first and forms a narrow canal about the still frozen pond.¹ The water appears blue when the surface is much disturbed, also in a single cake of ice; that is, perhaps, when enough light is mixed with it.

The flight of a partridge, leaving her lair (?) on the hillside only a few rods distant, with a gentle whirring sound, is like the blowing of rocks at a great distance. Perhaps it produces the same kind of undulations in the air.

¹ [Walden, p. 196; Riv. 277.]

The rain of the night and morning, together with the wind, had strewn the ground with chestnuts. The burs, generally empty, come down with a loud sound, while I am picking the nuts in the woods. I have come out before the rain is fairly over, before there are any fresh tracks on the Lincoln road by Britton's shanty, and I find the nuts abundant in the road itself. It is a pleasure to detect them in the woods amid the firm, crispy, crackling chestnut leaves. There is somewhat singularly refreshing in the color of this nut, the chestnut color. No wonder it gives a name to a color. One man tells me he has bought a wood-lot in Hollis to cut, and has let out the picking of the chestnuts to women at the halves. As the trees will probably be cut for them, they will make rapid work of it.

How Father Le Jeune pestered the poor Indians with his God at every turn (they must have thought it his one idea), only getting their attention when they required some external aid to save them from starving! Then, indeed, they were good Christians.

Oct. 16. Saturday. The sidewalks are covered with the impressions of leaves which fell yesterday and were pressed into the soil by the feet of the passers, leaving a myriad dark spots — like bird-tracks or hieroglyphics to a casual observer.

What are the sparrow-like birds with striped breasts and two triangular chestnut-colored spots on the breasts which I have seen some time, picking the seeds of the weeds in the garden?

Oct. 18. Up river to Bittern Cliff.

A mild, still, but cloudy, or rather misty, afternoon. The water is at present perfectly smooth and calm, but covered with a kind of smoky or hazy film. Nevertheless, the reflections of distant woods, though less distinct, are softer, seen through this smoky and darkened atmosphere. I speak only of the reflections as seen in the broader bays and longer reaches of the river, as at the Willow End. The general impression made by the river landscape now is that of bareness and bleakness, the black willow (not yet the golden) and the button-bush having lost almost all their leaves (the latter perhaps all), and the last is covered with the fuzzy mikania blossoms gone to seed, a dirty white. There are a very few polygonums, *hydropiperoides* and perhaps the unknown rose-tinted one, but most have withered before the frosts. The vegetation of the immediate shore and the water is for the most part black and withered. A few muskrat-houses are going up, abrupt and precipitous on one side, sloped on the other. I distinguish the dark moist layer of weeds deposited last night on what had dried in the sun. The tall bulrush and the wool-grass are dry and yellow, except a few in deep water, but the rainbow rush (*Juncus militaris*) is still green. The autumnal tints, though less brilliant and striking, are perhaps quite as agreeable, now that the frosts have somewhat dulled and softened [them]. Now that the forest is universally imbrowned, they make a more harmonious impression. Wooded hillsides reflected in the water are particularly agreeable. The undulation which the boat creates gives

them the appearance of being terraced. Chickadees and jays are heard from the shore as in winter. Saw two or three ducks, which fly up before and alight far behind.

Oct. 19. I see the dandelion blossoms in the path. The buds of the skunk-cabbage already show themselves in the meadow, the pointed involucre (?).

At 5 P. M. I found the fringed gentian now somewhat stale and touched by frost, being in the meadow toward Peter's. (*Gentiana crinita* in September, Bigelow and Gray.) Probably on high, moist ground it is fresher. It may have been in bloom a month. It has been cut off by the mower, and apparently has put out in consequence a mass of short branches full of flowers. This may make it later. I doubt if I can find one naturally grown. At this hour the blossoms are tightly rolled and twisted, and I see that the bees have gnawed round holes in their sides to come at the nectar. They have found them, though I had not. "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen" by man. An hour ago I doubted if fringed gentians were in Concord now, but, having found these, they as it were surrender, and I hear of them at the bottom of N. Barrett's orchard toward the river, and by Tuttle's (?). They are now, at 8 A. M., opening a little in a pitcher. It is too remarkable a flower not to be sought out and admired each year, however rare. It is one of the errands of the walker, as well as of the bees, for it yields him a more celestial nectar still. It is a very singular and agreeable surprise to come upon this conspicuous

and handsome and withal blue flower at this season, when flowers have passed out of our minds and memories; the latest of all to begin to bloom, unless it be the witch-hazel, when, excepting the latter, flowers are reduced to that small Spartan cohort, hardy, but for the most part unobserved, which linger till the snow buries them, and those interesting reappearing flowers which, though fair and fresh and tender, hardly delude us with the prospect of a new spring, and which we pass by indifferent, as if they only bloomed to die. *Vide* Bryant's verses on the Fringed Gentian.

There are a few bulrushes, lances of the pigmies or the cranes, still green in the brooks. I brought home one big as my finger and almost six feet high. Most are now yellowed and dry.

It is remarkable how tightly the gentians roll and twist up at night, as if that were their constant state. Probably those bees were working late that found it necessary to perforate the flower.

Oct. 20. Canada snapdragon, tansy, white golden-rod, blue-stemmed ditto. *Aster undulatus*, autumnal dandelion, tall buttercup, yarrow, mayweed. Picking chestnuts on Pine Hill. A rather cold and windy, somewhat wintry afternoon, the heavens overcast. The clouds have lifted in the northwest, and I see the mountains in sunshine, all the more attractive from the cold I feel here, with a tinge of purple on them, a cold but memorable and glorious outline. This is an advantage of mountains in the horizon: they show you fair weather from the midst of foul. The small red Solomon's-seal

berries spot the ground here and there amid the dry leaves. The witch-hazel is bare of all but flowers.

Many a man, when I tell him that I have been on to a mountain, asks if I took a glass with me. No doubt, I could have seen further with a glass, and particular objects more distinctly,—could have counted more meeting-houses; but this has nothing to do with the peculiar beauty and grandeur of the view which an elevated position affords. It was not to see a few particular objects, as if they were near at hand, as I had been accustomed to see them, that I ascended the mountain, but to see an infinite variety far and near in their relation to each other, thus reduced to a single picture. The facts of science, in comparison with poetry, are wont to be as vulgar as looking from the mountain with a telescope. It is a counting of meeting-houses. At the public house, the mountain-house, they keep a glass to let, and think the journey to the mountain-top is lost, that you have got but half the view, if you have not taken a glass with you.

Oct. 21. *Thursday*. P. M.—To Second Division Brook and Ministerial Swamp.

Cerastium. Apparently some flowers yield to the frosts; others linger here and there till the snow buries them. Saw that the side-flowering skull-cap was killed by the frost. If they grow in some nook out of the way of frosts, they last so much the longer. Methinks the frost puts a period to a large class. The goldenrods, being dead, are now a dingy white along the brooks (white fuzz, dark-brown leaves), together with rusty,

fuzzy trumpet-weeds and asters in the same condition. This is a remarkable feature in the landscape now, the abundance of dead weeds. The frosts have done it. Winter comes on gradually. The red maples have lost their leaves before the rock maple, which is now losing its leaves at top first. All the country over, the frosts have come and seared the tenderer herbs along all brook-sides. How unobserved this change until it has taken place! The birds that fly at the approach of winter are come from the north. Some time since I might have said some birds are leaving us, others, like ducks, are just arriving from the north, the herbs are withering along the brooks, the humming insects are going into winter quarters.

The deciduous trees are green but about four months in the year,—from June 1st to October 1st, perhaps.

Polygonum articulatum lingers still.¹ Silvery cinquefoil, hedge-mustard, and clover. I find caddis-cases with worms in Second Division Brook. And what mean those little piles of yellow sand on dark-colored stones at the bottom of the swift-running water, kept together and in place by some kind of gluten and looking as if sprinkled on the stones, one eighteenth of an inch in diameter? These caddis-worms just build a little case around themselves, and sometimes attach a few dead leaves to disguise it, and then fasten it(?) slightly to some swaying grass stem or blade at the bottom in swift water, and these are their quarters till next spring. This reminds me that winter does not put his rude fin-

¹ [An interrogation-point in the margin.]

gers in the bottom of the brooks. When you look into the brooks you see various dead leaves floating or resting on the bottom, and you do not suspect that some are the disguises which the caddis-worms have borrowed. Fresh *Baomyces roseus* near Tommy Wheeler's. The cotton-woolly aphides on the alders.

Gilpin speaks of "floats of timber" on the river Wey, in 1775, as picturesque objects. Thus in the oldest settled and civilized country there is a resemblance or reminiscence still of the primitive new country, and more or less timber never ceases to grow on the head waters of its streams, and perchance the wild muskrat still perforates its banks. England may endure as long as she grows oaks for her navy.¹ Timber rafts still (?) annually come down the Rhine, like the Mississippi and St. Lawrence. But the forests of England are thin, for Gilpin says of the Isle of Wight in Charles II's time, "There were woods in the island so complete and extensive, that it is said a squirrel might have travelled in several parts, many leagues together, on the tops of the trees."

Oct. 22. To Walden.

Ebby Hubbard's oaks, now turned a sober and warm red and yellow, have a very rich crisp and curled look, especially against the green pines. This is when the ripe high-colored leaves have begun to curl and wither. Then they have a warm and harmonious tint. First they are ripened by the progress of the year, and the character of each appears in distinct colors. Then

¹ Vide London on the extent of oak forest there.

come the severe frosts and, dulling the brilliancy of most, produce a harmony of warm brown or red and yellow tinges throughout the forest, something like marbling and painting over it, making one shade run into another. The forest is the more rug-like.

When I approached the pond over Heywood's Peak, I disturbed a hawk (a fish hawk?) on a white pine by the water watching for his prey, with long, narrow, sharp wings and a white belly. He flew slowly across the pond somewhat like a gull. He is the more picturesque object against the woods or water for being white beneath.

Now and for some time past, northwest winds prevail, wafting the air cooled by the snows that way, perhaps. This being the direction of the wind, I see again the clouds lifted in the northwest horizon. And methinks this phenomenon is very often repeated during the winter. The blue-stemmed goldenrod. *Aster undulatus* with a pinkish or lilac tinge, and humblebees on it. *Solidago altissima*. The bushy gerardia still with sticky stem and wrinkled radical leaves. Scarcely a skater insect to be seen. I see no water-bugs. It is getting too cool for them.

In consequence of the above winds and clouds, we have to-night a bright warm sunset (to me on the water) after a cool gray afternoon, lighting up the green pines at the northeast end of the pond; every yellow leaf of birch or aspen or hickory is doubly bright, and, looking over the forest on Pine Hill, I can hardly tell which trees are lit up by the sunshine and which are the yellow chestnut-tops. Thus both the spring and autumn

tints or aspect of the woods reminds me of the sunshine. The forest has never so good a setting and foreground as seen from the middle of a lake, rising from the water's edge. The water's edge makes the best frame for the picture and natural boundary to the forest.¹

Oct. 23. P. M. — To Conantum.

This may be called an Indian-summer day. It is quite hazy withal, and the mountains invisible. I see a horehound turned lake or steel-claret color. The yellow lily pads in Hubbard's ditch are fresh, as if recently expanded. There are some white lily pads in river still, but very few indeed of the yellow lily. A pasture thistle on Conantum just budded, but flat with the ground. The fields generally wear a russet hue. A striped snake out. The milkweed (*Syriaca*) now rapidly discounting. The lanceolate pods having opened, the seeds spring out on the least jar, or when dried by the sun, and form a little fluctuating white silky mass or tuft, each held by the extremities of the fine threads, until a stronger puff of wind sets them free. It is a pleasant sight to see it dispersing its seeds. The bass has lost its leaves. I see where boys have gathered the mockernut, though it has not fallen out of its shells. The red squirrel chirrup in the walnut grove. The chickadees flit along, following me inquisitively a few rods with lispig, tinkling note, — flit within a few feet of me from curiosity, head downward on the pines. The white pines have shed their leaves, making a yellow carpet on the grass,

¹ [Walden, p. 291.]

but the pitch pines are yet parti-colored. Is it the procumbent speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*) still in flower on Lec's Cliff? But its leaves are neither heart-ovate nor shorter than the peduncles. The sprays of the witch-hazel are sprinkled on the air, and recurved. The pennyroyal stands brown and sere, though fragrant still, on the shelves of the Cliff. The elms in the street have nearly lost their leaves.

October has been the month of autumnal tints. The first of the month the tints began to be more general, at which time the frosts began, though there were scattered bright tints long before; but not till then did the forest begin to be painted. By the end of the month the leaves will either have fallen or be sere and turned brown by the frosts for the most part. Also the month of barberries and chestnuts.

My friend is one whom I meet, who takes me for what I am. A stranger takes me for something else than I am. We do not speak, we cannot communicate, till we find that we are recognized. The stranger supposes in our stead a third person whom we do not know, and we leave him to converse with that one. It is suicide for us to become abettors in misapprehending ourselves. Suspicion creates the stranger and substitutes him for the friend. I cannot abet any man in misapprehending myself.

What men call social virtues, good fellowship, is commonly but the virtue of pigs in a litter, which lie close together to keep each other warm. It brings men together in crowds and mobs in barrooms and elsewhere, but it does not deserve the name of virtue.

Oct. 24. Another Indian-summer day.

P. M. — Rode to Stow *via* powder-mills with W. E. C., returning *via* the fir tree house, Vose's Hill, and Corner.

The road through the woods this side the powder-mills was very gorgeous with the sun shining endwise through it, and the red tints of the deciduous trees, now somewhat imbrowned, mingled with the liquid green of the pines. The andromeda is already browned, has a grayish-brown speckled look. I see, far over the river, boys gathering walnuts. At the fall on the river at Parker's paper-mill, there is a bright sparkle on the water long before we get to it.

I saw in Stow some trees fuller of apples still than I remember to have ever seen. Small yellow apples hanging over the road. The branches were gracefully drooping with the weight of the fruit like a barberry bush, so that the whole tree acquired a new character. The topmost branches, instead of standing erect, spread and drooped in all directions.¹

The larches in the swamps are now conspicuously yellow and ready for their fall. They can now be distinguished at a distance. There is an agreeable prospect from near the post-office in the northwest of Sudbury. The southeast (?) horizon is very distant, —but what perhaps makes it more agreeable, it is a low distance, —extending to the Weston elm in the horizon. You are more impressed with the extent of earth overlooked than if the view were bounded by mountains.

¹ [*Excursions*, p. 296; Riv. 364.]

Oct. 25. Monday. P. M. — Down river to Ball's Hill in boat.

Another perfect Indian-summer day. One of my oars makes a creaking sound like a block in a harbor, such a sound as would bring tears into an old sailor's eyes. It suggests to me adventure and seeking one's fortune. Turtles are still seen dropping into the water (*Emys picta*). The white maples have mostly shed their leaves, but those which are beneath the level of the bank, protected by it, still hold on. This leafy stratum rises exactly to a level with the bank. The water for some time has been clear of weeds mostly, but looks cool for fishes. We get into the lee of the hill near Abner Buttrick's (?), where is smooth water, and here it is very warm and sunny under the pitch pines, and some small bushy white asters still survive.

The autumnal tints grow gradually darker and duller, but not less rich to my eye. And now a hillside near the river exhibits the darkest, crispy reds and browns of every hue, all agreeably blended. At the foot, next the meadow, stands a front rank of smoke-like maples bare of leaves, intermixed with yellow birches. Higher up, red oaks of various shades of dull red, with yellowish, perhaps black oaks intermixed, and walnuts, now brown, and near the hilltop, or rising above the rest, perhaps, a still yellowish oak, and here and there amid the rest or in the foreground on the meadow, dull ashy salmon-colored white oaks large and small, all these contrasting with the clear liquid, semipiternal green of pines.

The sheen on the water blinds my eyes. The zizania stands still, with its slender spires empty of grain, by the water's edge. The *Polygonum hydropiperoides* is now all crisp and brown with frost. Mint is still green and wonderfully recreating to smell. I had put such things behind me. It is hard to remember lilies now. The savory-leaved aster in a sheltered place, and caducous polygala. Where large chestnuts were sawed down last winter by Walden, sprouts have come up six feet high on every side of the stump, very thick, so as to form perfect bowers in which a man might be concealed. Where a fire has run over such ground, I have noticed such shoots all dead and drawn or shrunk together at top.

The constitution of the Indian mind appears to be the very opposite to that of the white man. He is acquainted with a different side of nature. He measures his life by winters, not summers. His year is not measured by the sun, but consists of a certain number of moons, and his moons are measured not by days, but by nights. He has taken hold of the dark side of nature; the white man, the bright side.

Oct. 26. P. M. — Walden and Cliffs.

There are no skaters on the pond now. It is cool today and windier. The water is rippled considerably. As I stand in the boat, the farther off the water, the bluer it is. Looking straight down, it is a dark green. Hence, apparently, the celestial blueness of those distant river-reaches, when the water is agitated, so that their surfaces reflect the sky at the right angle. It is a

darker blue than that of the sky itself.¹ When I look down on the pond from the Peak, it is far less blue.

The blue-stemmed and white goldenrod apparently survive till winter, — push up and blossom anew. And a few oak leaves in sheltered nooks do not wither. *Aster undulatus*. Very few crickets for a long time. At this season we seek warm sunny lees and hillsides, as that under the pitch pines by Walden shore, where we cuddle and warm ourselves in the sun as by a fire, where we may get some of its reflected as well as direct heat.

Coming by Hayden's, I see that, the sun setting, its rays, which yet find some vapor to lodge on in the clear cold air, impart a purple tinge to the mountains in the northwest. Methinks it is only in cold weather I see this.

Richard Harlan, M. D., in his "Fauna Americana" (1825), says of man that those parts are "most hairy, which in animals are most bare, viz. the axillæ and pubes."

Harlan says the vespertilio catch insects during the crepusculum.

Harlan says that when white is associated with another color on a dog's tail it is always terminal, and that the observations of Desmarest confirm it.

Oct. 28. Sunset from the Poplar Hill. A warm, moist afternoon. The clouds lift in the west, — indeed the horizon is now clear all around, — and suddenly the light of the setting sun yellows and warms all the

¹ [Walden, p. 196; Riv. 277.]

landscape. The air is filled with a remarkably vaporous haze. The shadows of the trees on the river's edge stretch straight a quarter of a mile into the level russet Great Meadows. The boys are gathering walnuts. Their leaves are a yellowish brown.

8 P. M. — To Cliffs.

The moon beginning to wane. It is a quite warm but moist night. As I cross the railroad I hear the telegraph harp again, the undecayed oracle. Its vibrations are communicated through the tall pole to the surrounding earth for a considerable distance, so that I feel them when I stand near. And when I put my ear to a fence-rail, it is all alive with them, though the post with which it is connected is planted two feet from the telegraph-post; yet the rail resounded with the harp music so that a deaf man might have heard it. I hear no sound of a bird as I go up the back road; only a few faint crickets to be heard, — these the birds we are reduced to. What a puny sound this for the great globe to make!

After whatever revolutions in my moods and experiences, when I come forth at evening, as if from years of confinement to the house, I see the few stars which make the constellation of the Lesser Bear in the same relative position, — the everlasting geometry of the stars. How incredible to be described are these bright points which appear in the blue sky as the darkness increases, said to be other worlds, like the berries on the hills when the summer is ripe! Even the ocean of birds, even the regions of the ether, are studded with isles. Far in this ethereal sea lie the Hesperian isles, unseen

by day, but when the darkness comes their fires are seen from this shore, as Columbus saw the fires of San Salvador (?). The dew in the withered grass reflects the moonlight like glow-worms. That star which accompanies the moon will not be her companion tomorrow.

The forest has lost so many leaves that its floor and paths are much more checkered with light. I hear no sound but the rustling of the withered leaves, which lulls the few and silent birds to sleep, and, on the wooded hilltops, the roar of the wind. Each tree is a harp which resounds all night, though some have but a few leaves left to flutter and hum. From the Cliffs, the river and pond are exactly the color of the sky. Though the latter is slightly veiled with a thin mist, the outline of the peninsula in it is quite distinct. Even the distant fields across the river are seen to be russet by moonlight as by day, and the young pines near by are green. The ground in the woods is light with fallen leaves. There is a certain tameness or civilization in the rounded lobe of the white oak leaf, very different from the wild, pointed black and red oak leaves, and in its uses and qualities the former is nearer to man. Those trees are comparatively wild whose bark alone is extensively used by man. Returning through Abiel Wheeler's hillside field toward the railroad, I see the springing mullein leaves more distinct than by day. Their leaves are remarkably warm to my hand, compared with the earth or a stone. I should be glad to make my bed of them some time.

Four months of the green leaf make all our summer,

if I reckon from June 1st to October 1st, the growing season, and methinks there are about four months when the ground is white with snow. That would leave two months for spring and two for autumn. October the month of ripe or painted leaves; November the month of withered leaves and bare twigs and limbs.

As I was eating my dinner of rice to-day, with an open window, a small species of wild bee, with many yellow rings about the abdomen, came in and alighted on the molasses pitcher. It took up the molasses quite fast, and soon made quite bare and white a considerable space on the nose of the pitcher which was smeared with molasses; then, having loaded itself, it circled round the pitcher a few times, while I was helping myself to some molasses, and flew against a closed window, but ere long, finding the open one by which it had entered, it winged its way to its nest. Probably if I had been willing to leave the window open and wait awhile, it would have returned.

I heard one boy say to another in the street to-day, "You don't know much more than a piece of putty."