

II

OCTOBER, 1854

(ÆT. 37)

Oct. 1. The young black birches about Walden, next the south shore, are now commonly clear pale-yellow, very distinct at distance, like bright-yellow white birches, so slender amid the dense growth of oaks and evergreens on the steep shores. The black birches and red maples are the conspicuous trees changed about the pond. Not yet the oaks.

Oct. 7. Went to Plymouth to lecture and survey Watson's grounds. Returned the 15th.

The *Decodon verticillatus* (swamp loosestrife) very abundant, forming isles in the pond on Town Brook on Watson's farm, now turned (methinks it was) a somewhat orange (?) scarlet. Measured a buckthorn on land of N. Russell & Co., bounding on Watson, close by the ruins of the cotton-factory, in five places from the ground to the first branching, or as high as my head. The diameters were 4 feet 8 inches, 4-6, 4-3, 4-2, 4-6. It was full of fruit now *quite* ripe, which Watson plants. The birds eat it.

Saw a small goldenrod in the woods with four very broad rays, a new kind to me. Saw also the English oak; leaf much like our white oak, but acorns large and long, with a long peduncle, and the bark of these

young trees, twenty or twenty-five feet high, quite smooth. Saw moon-seed, a climbing vine. Also the leaf of the ginkgo tree, of pine-needles run together.

Spooner's garden a wilderness of fruit trees.

Russell is not sure but Eaton has described my rare polygonum.

Oct. 16. In the streets the ash and most of the elm trees are bare of leaves; the red maples also for the most part, *apparently*, at a distance. The pines, too, have fallen.

Oct. 19. 7.15 A. M. — To Westminster by cars; thence on foot to Wachusett Mountain, four miles to Foster's, and two miles thence to mountain-top by road.

The country above Littleton (plowed ground) more or less sugared with snow, the first I have seen. We find a little on the mountain-top. The prevailing tree on this mountain, top and all, is apparently the red oak, which toward and on the top is very low and spreading. Other trees and shrubs which I remember on the top are beech, *Populus tremuliformis*, mountain-ash (looking somewhat like sumach), witch-hazel, white and yellow birch, white pine, black spruce, etc., etc. Most of the deciduous woods *look as if* dead. On the sides, beside red oak, are rock maple, yellow birch, lever-wood, beech, chestnut, shagbark, hemlock, striped maple, witch-hazel, etc., etc.

With a glass you can see vessels in Boston Harbor from the summit, just north of the Waltham hills.

Two white asters, the common ones, not yet quite out

of bloom, — *A. acuminatus* and perhaps *cordifolius* (hearted, with long sharp teeth). The *Geranium Robertianum* in bloom below the woods on the east side.

Oct. 20. Saw the sun rise from the mountain-top. This is the time to look westward. All the villages, steeples, and houses on that side were revealed; but on the east all the landscape was a misty and gilded obscurity. It was worth the while to see westward the countless hills and fields all apparently flat, now white with frost. A little white fog marked the site of many a lake and the course of the Nashua, and in the east horizon the great pond had its own fog mark in a long, low bank of cloud.

Soon after sunrise I saw the pyramidal shadow of the mountain reaching quite across the State, its apex resting on the Green or Hoosac Mountains, appearing as a deep-blue section of a cone there. It rapidly contracted, and its apex approached the mountain itself, and when about three miles distant the whole conical shadow was very distinct. The shadow of the mountain makes some minutes' difference in the time of sunrise to the inhabitants of Hubbardston, within a few miles west.

F. hyemalis, how long?

Saw some very tall and large dead chestnuts in the wood between Foster's and the mountain. Wachusett Pond appeared the best place from which to view the mountain (from a boat). Our host had picked thirty-four bushels of shagbarks last year. *For the most part*

they do not rattle out yet, but it is time to gather them. On account of squirrels now is the time.

Oct. 22. This and the last two days Indian-summer weather, following hard on that sprinkling of snow west of Concord.

Pretty hard frosts these nights. Many leaves fell last night, and the Assabet is covered with their fleets. Now they rustle as you walk through them in the woods. Bass trees are bare. The redness of huckleberry bushes is past its prime. I see a snapping turtle, not yet in winter quarters. The chickadees are picking the seeds out of pitch pine cones.

Oct. 25. On Assabet.

The maples being bare, the great hornet nests are exposed. A beautiful, calm Indian-summer afternoon, the withered reeds on the brink reflected in the water.

Oct. 26. P. M. — To Conantum.

As warm as summer. Cannot wear a thick coat. Sit with windows open. I see considerable gossamer on the causeway and elsewhere. Is it the tree sparrows whose jingles I hear? As the weather grows cooler and the woods more silent, I attend to the cheerful notes of chickadees on their sunny sides. Apple trees are generally bare, as well as bass, ash, elm, maple.

Oct. 28. *Saturday.* The woods begin to look bare, reflected in the water, and I look far in between the stems of the trees under the bank. Birches, which be-

gan to change and fall so early, are still in many places yellow.

Oct. 29. Sunday. Detected a large English cherry in Smith's woods beyond Saw Mill Brook by the peculiar *fresh* orange-scarlet color of its leaves, now that almost all leaves are quite dull or withered. The same in gardens. The gooseberry leaves in our garden and in fields are equally and peculiarly fresh scarlet.

Oct. 31. Rain; still warm.

Ever since October 27th we have had remarkably warm and pleasant Indian summer, with frequent frosts in the morning. Sat with open window for a week.