XIV

OCTOBER, 1855

(ÆT. 38)

Oct. 1. Among R.'s books is Bewick's "Æsop's Fables." On a leaf succeeding the title-page is engraved a facsimile of B.'s handwriting to the following effect:

"Newcastle, January, 1824.

To Thomas Bewick & Son Dr.

	£	s	d
To a Demy Copy of Æsop's Fables	"	18	"

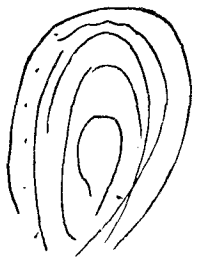
Received the above with thanks

Thomas Bewick Robert Elliot Bewick."

Then there was some fine red sea-moss adhering to the page just over the view of a distant church and windmill (probably Newcastle) by moonlight, and at the bottom of the page: —

"No. 809

Thomas Bewick

his  mark"

It being the impression of his thumb.[1]

[1] [An inky thumb-mark, doubtless Thoreau's own, precedes this rude sketch.]

A cloudy, somewhat rainy day. Mr. R. brought me a snail, apparently *Helix albolabris*, or possibly *thyroidus*, which he picked from under a rock where he was having a wall built. It had put its stag- or rather giraffe-like head and neck out about two inches, the whole length to the point behind being about three, — mainly a neck of a somewhat buffish-white or grayish-buff color or buff-brown, shining with moisture, with a short head, deer-like, and giraffe-like horns or tentacula on its top black at tip, five eighths of an inch long, and apparently two short horns on snout. Its neck, etc., flat beneath, by which surface it draws or slides itself along in a chair. It is surprisingly long and large to be contained in that shell, which moves atop of it. It moves at the rate of an inch or half an inch a minute over a level surface, whether horizontal or perpendicular, and holds quite tight to it, the shell like a whorled dome to a portion of a building. Its foot (?) extends to a point behind. It *commonly* touches by an inch of its flat under side, flatting out by as much of its length as it touches. Shell rather darker mottled (?) than body. The tentacula become all dark as they are drawn in, and it can draw them or contract them straight back to naught. No *obvious* eyes (?) or mouth.

P. M. — Rode to New Bedford and called on Mr. Green, a botanist, but had no interview with him. Walked through Mrs. Arnold's arboretum. Rode to the beach at Clark's Cove where General Gray landed his four thousand troops in the Revolution. Found there in abundance *Anomia ephippium* (?), their ir-

regular golden-colored shells; *Modiola plicatula* (rayed mussel); *Crepidula fornicata* (?), worn; *Pecten concentricus*, alive; and one or two more.

Returned by the new Point road, four miles long, and R. said eighty feet wide (I should think from recollection more), and cost $50,000. A magnificent road, by which New Bedford has appropriated the sea. Passed salt works still in active operation, windmills going; a series of frames, with layers of bushes one above another to a great height, apparently for filtering. Went into a spermaceti candle and oil factory.

Arthur R. has a soapstone pot (Indian), about nine inches long, more than an inch thick, with a kind of handle at the ends, — or protuberances.[1] A. says he uses fresh-water clams for bait for perch, etc., in ponds. I think it was to-day some one saw geese go over here, so they said.

Oct. 2. A cloudy day. Rode to "Sampson's" in Middleborough, thirteen miles. Many quails in road. Passed over a narrow neck between the two Quitticus ponds, after first visiting Great Quitticus on right of road and gathering clamshells there, as I had done at Long Pond and intend to do at Assawampsett. These shells labelled will be good mementos of the ponds. It was a great, wild pond with large islands in it.

Saw a loon on Little or West Quitticus from road, an old bird with a black bill. The bayonet or rainbow rush was common along the shore there.

[1] [*Daniel Ricketson and his Friends*, pp. 341, 342.]

In Backus's Account of Middleborough, Historical Collections, vol. iii, First Series: "Philip once sent an army to waylay Capt. Church in Assowamset Neck; which is in the south part of Middleborough." Perhaps this was it.

Just beyond this neck, by the roadside, between the road and West Quitticus Pond, is an old Indian burying-ground. R. thought it was used before the whites came, though of late by the "praying Indians." This was the old stage road from New Bedford to Boston. It occupies a narrow strip between the road and the pond, about a dozen rods wide at the north end, and narrower at the south, and is thirty or forty feet above the water. Now covered with a middling growth of oak, birch, hickory, etc. Chestnut oaks (perhaps *Quercus montana*) grow near there. I gathered some leaves and one large acorn, from the buggy.

There were two stones with inscriptions. R. copied one as follows: —

In memory of Jean Squeen
who died April 13th 1794 in
her 23 year. Also of Benj^{a}
who died at sea April 22 1799
in his 26th year children of
Lydia Squeen a native[1]
When earth was made when time began
Death was decreed the fate of man

The purport of the other was that Lydia Squeen died in 1812, aged seventy-five. The other graves were only faintly marked with rough head and foot stones. All amid the thick wood. There were one or

[1] [*Daniel Ricketson and his Friends*, pp. 343, 344.]

two graves without any stones, apparently not more than five or six years old.

We soon left the main road and turned into a path on the right, leading to Assawampsett Pond, a mile distant. There, too, was a fine sandy beach, the south shore of the pond, three or four rods wide. We walked along the part called Betty's Neck. This pond is, by the map of Middleborough, a little more than three miles long in a straight line northwest and southeast across Pocksha, and nearly two wide. We saw the village of Middleborough Four Corners far across it, yet no village on the shore. As we walked easterly, the shore became stony. On one large slate (?) rock with a smooth surface, sloping toward the pond at high-water mark, were some inscriptions or sculptures which R. had copied about ten years since, thus: —

1749 B. Hill Israel felix

The "B. Hill" is comparatively modern. R. said that Israel Felix was an old Indian preacher. According to Backus in Historical Collections, vol. iii, First Series, Thomas Felix was an Indian teacher in Middleborough once. The foot appeared very ancient, though pecked in only half an inch. It has squarish form and broad at the toes, like the representation of some sculptured in rocks at the West. For a long time we could discern only 1749 and B. Hill. At length we detected the foot, and after my companion had given up, concluding that the water and the ice had obliterated the rest within ten years, I at last rather felt with my fingers

than saw with my eyes the faintly graven and lichen-covered letters of Israel Felix's name. We had looked on that surface full fifteen minutes in vain, yet I felt out the letters after all with certainty.

In a description of Middleborough in the Historical Collections, vol. iii, 1810, signed "Nehemiah Bennet, Middleborough, 1793," it is said, "There is on the easterly shore of Assawampsitt Pond, on the shore of Betty's-neck, two rocks which have curious marks thereon (supposed to be done by the Indians) which appear like the steppings of a person with naked feet, which settled into the rocks; likewise the prints of a hand on several places, with a number of other marks; also, there is a rock on a high hill, a little to the eastward of the old stone fishing wear, where there is the print of a person's hand in said rock." [1]

Perhaps we might have detected more on these same rocks, had we read this before, for we saw that there was something on the next rock. We did not know of the "wear."

The same writer speaks of a settlement of Indians at "Betty's-neck (which place took its name from an ancient Indian woman by the name of Betty Sasemore, who owned that neck) where there is now eight Indian houses and eight families," between thirty and forty souls.

I was interested by some masses of pudding-stone further along the shore. There were also a few large flat, sloping slate (?) rocks. I saw a small *Emys picta;* and a young snapping turtle, apparently hatched this

[1] [*Familiar Letters*, pp. 264, 265; Riv. 313.]

summer, the *whole* length when swimming about three inches. It was larger than mine last April and had ten very distinct points to its shell behind. I first saw it in the water next the shore. The same Bennet quoted above adds in a postscript: —

"In the year 1763, Mr. Shubael Thompson found a land turtle in the north-east part of Middleborough, which by some misfortune had lost one of its feet, and found the following marks on its shell, viz. I. W. 1747. He marked it S. T. 1763, and let it go. It was found again in the year 1773, by Elijah Clap, who marked it E. C. 1773, and let it go. It was found again in the year 1775, by Captain William Shaw, in the month of May, who marked it W. S. 1775. It was found again by said Shaw the same year, in September, about one hundred rods distance from the place where he let it go.

"It was found again in the year 1784, by Jonathan Soule, who marked it J. S. 1784, and let it go. It was found again in the year 1790, by Joseph Soule, who marked it J. S. 1790, and let it go. It was found again in the year 1791, by Zenas Smith, who marked it Z. S. 1791, and let it go; it being the last time it was found; 44 years from the time the first marks were put on."

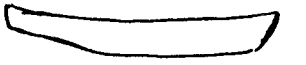
We saw five loons diving near the shore of Betty's Neck, which, instead of swimming off, approached within ten rods as if to reconnoitre us. Only one had a black bill, and that not entirely so; another's was turning. Their throats were all very white. I was surprised to see the usnea hanging *thick* on many apple

trees and some pears in the neighborhood of this and the other ponds, as on spruce. Sheep are pastured hereabouts.

Returning along the shore, we saw a man and woman putting off in a small boat, the first we had seen. The man was black. He rowed, and the woman steered. R. called to them. They approached within a couple of rods in the shallow water. "Come nearer," said R. "Don't be afraid; I ain't a-going to hurt you." The woman answered, "I never saw the man yet that I was afraid of." The man's name was Thomas Smith, and, in answer to R.'s very direct questions as to how much he was of the native stock, said that he was one-fourth Indian. He then asked the woman, who sat unmoved in the stern with a brown dirt-colored dress on, a regular countrywoman with half an acre of face (squaw-like), having first inquired of Tom if she was his woman, how much Indian blood she had in her. She did not answer directly so home a question, yet at length as good as acknowledged to one-half Indian, and said that she came from Carver, where she had a sister; the only half-breeds about here. Said her name was Sepit, but could not spell it. R. said, "Your nose looks rather Indiany." Where will you find a Yankee and his wife going a-fishing thus? They lived on the shore. Tom said he had seen turtles in the pond that weighed between fifty and sixty; had caught a pickerel that morning that weighed four or five pounds; had also seen them washed up with another in their mouths.

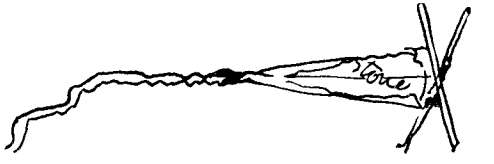
Their boat was of peculiar construction, and T. said

it was called a sharper [*sic*]; [1] with very high sides and a remarkable run on the bottom aft, and the bottom boards were laid across, coming out flush, and the sides set on them. An ugly model.[2]



Tom said that Assawampsett was fifteen to twenty feet deep in deepest part. A Mr. Sampson, good authority, told me nine or ten on an average, and the deepest place said to be thirty or more.

R. told the squaw that we were interested in those of the old stock, now they were so few. "Yes," said she, "and you'd be glad if they were all gone." This boat had a singular "wooden grapple," as Tom called it, made in form of a cross, thus: with a stone within.



The stones on which we walked about all the ponds were covered, now the water was low, with a hoary sort of moss which I do not remember to have seen in Concord; very fine and close to the rock.

Great shallow lakes, the surrounding country hardly rising anywhere to more than a hundred feet above them. According to Bourne's map there are in Middleborough: —

[1] [Probably a sharp, or sharpie, a boat used by oystermen.]

[2] [*Daniel Ricketson and his Friends*, pp. 344-348.]

57,937½ acres of land
5,250 " " water
63,187½ total

Backus says that iron was discovered at the bottom of Assawampsett Pond about 1747. (Historical Collections, vol. iii, First Series.) "Men go out with boats, and make use of instruments much like those with which oysters are taken, to get up the ore from the bottom of the pond." "It became the main ore that was used in the town." Once one man got two tons a day; in 1794, half a ton. Yet there was then (in 1794) plenty of it in an adjacent pond which was twenty feet deep. Much of it was better than the bog ore they had been using. Dr. Thatcher says that Assawampsett Pond once afforded annually six hundred tons of ore. A man afterward discovered it in a pond in Carver, by drawing up some with a fish-line accidentally, and it was extensively used. I did not hear of any being obtained now.

There were three Praying Indian villages in Middleborough — Namassekett, Assawomsit, and Ketchiquut (Titicut), — the last in the northwest part, on Taunton River, where was an Indian weir. Winslow and company on a visit to Massasoit in June, 1621, stopped at Nemasket, fifteen miles, the first night before "conceived by us to be very near, because the inhabitants flocked so thick upon every slight occasion amongst us," etc., etc., *q. v.*

R. is a man of feeling. As we were riding by a field in which a man was shackling a sheep, which struggled,

R. involuntarily shouted to him and asked, "What would you do?"

We left our horse and buggy at John Kingman's and walked by Sampson's to a hill called King Philip's Lookout, from which we got a good view of Assawampsett and Long Ponds. There was a good-sized sailboat at Sampson's house, now kept by a Barrows. The shores were now surrounded with pale wine-colored foliage, of maples, etc., and inland were seen the very *fresh* green and yellow of pines, contrasting with the red (*Rubus*) blackberry. The highest land appears to be about the northwest end of the ponds.

I saw at Kingman's long-handled but small scoop nets for taking young alewives for pickerel bait. They think the white perch one of the best fish, like a cod.

Elder's Pond, a little further north, is said to be the deepest and clearest.[1] Walking along the north end of Long Pond, while R. bathed, I found amid the rainbow rush, pipewort (*Eriocaulon*), etc., on the now broad flat shore, a very beautiful flower, pinkish rose-color, new to me, and still quite fresh, the *Sabbatia chloroides*, referred to Plymouth; ten stamens and petal divisions, about one foot high. I also observed there the very broad and distinct trail of an otter in the wet sand, to and from the water, with the mark of its tail, though Kingman did not know of any now hereabouts.

The arrowheads hereabouts are commonly white quartz.

R. says "gamble-roof." This should be "gambrel,"

[1] Not so deep as said.

apparently from the hind leg of a horse, — crooked like it.

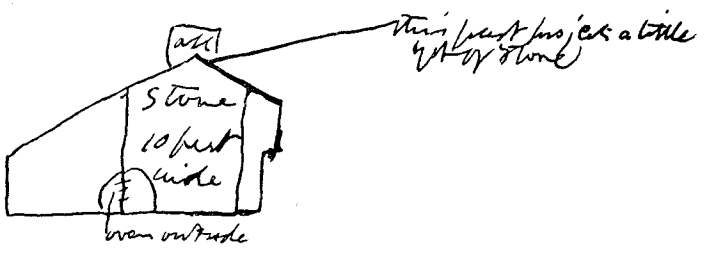
Oct. 3. Copied the map of Middleborough.

Somewhat rainy. Walked along shore of Acushnet looking for shells. R. pointed out to me the edible mushroom, which he says he loves raw even. It is common. The shore was all alive with fiddler crabs, carrying their fiddles on one side, and their holes, nearly an inch over, were very common and earth heaped up. The samphire was turned red in many places, yielding to the autumn. Atkinson, in his Siberian and steppe travels, speaks of the "Salsola plant" turned a bright crimson. On the Kirghis Steppes, he says, "in the distance I could see salt lakes: I knew them to be salt by the crimson margins which encircled them." (Page 425.)

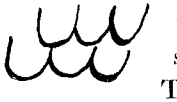
Got some quahogs and *Modiola plicatula* (rayed mussel); the last was very abundant; also some pyrulas, which are dug up alive by sand [?]-diggers. Gathered there apparently wild germander (*Teucrium*), out of bloom, and *Iva frutescens*, or high-water shrub, ditto. Sailed back up the river in Arthur's whale-boat with three sails. Her side drank water through a crack. He gave three dollars for her and spent ten more in repairs. Twenty feet long, and worth originally perhaps $75. If I had stayed longer we should probably have gone to Cuttyhunk in this.

P. M. — Rode to see some old houses in Fairhaven, etc., etc. How beautiful the evergreen leaf of the *Prinos glaber*, slightly toothed toward end!

The old Woods place, a quarter of a mile off the road, looked like this: —



The end showed the great stone chimney, all stone to top, except about hearth. The upper story overlapped about eighteen inches, with the ornamental points of timbers dropping from it. Above this, in front, the shingles were rounded, scale-like. There was one half of a diamond window left in front, set in lead, very thin lead, with a groove in each side for sash, and a narrow slit-window for firing through, also another on farther end. Chimney mortared. The old latch to front door was primitive, apparently made by village blacksmith.



Also an old house in the village of Fairhaven, said to have been standing in Philip's War; a small house, a ten-footer, with one end and chimney wholly of stone. The chimney quite handsome, of this form, looking down on it:

Visited the studio in Fairhaven of a young marine painter, built over the water, the dashing and gurgling of it coming up through a grating in the floor.

He was out, but we found there painting Van Best, a well-known Dutch painter of marine pieces whom he has attracted to him. He talked and looked particularly Dutchman-like. Then visited Fort Nobscot [1] on a rocky point.

Oct. 4. Rode to Westport, where R. wished to consult the Proprietors' Records of Dartmouth to find the names, etc., of his ancestors. Passed through Smith's Mills village, the older settlement in Dartmouth, on the stream which comes from Sassacowens Pond, then Westport, about three miles beyond, and crossed the Westport River to Gifford's, a mile beyond, where the Records were.

Returning, lunched by Westport Pond in Dartmouth, said to contain sixty acres but to [be] only about two feet deep. Saw a blue heron in it some rods from the shore, where the water did not come up to its body. Perhaps it might have waded anywhere in it. It stood with the *side* of its head towards us, being wary of us. When it moved, walked with a peculiar stooping and undulating gait in the water. At length thrust its bill in as if feeding. That must be a rare place for it to catch frogs and perhaps minnows in, though we were told that there [were] only turtles, snakes, and pouts in it.

The vanes on this ride were often a whale, rather a lumpish form, but reminding us that the farmer had, perhaps, been a whaler.

[1] [The fort at Fairhaven is called Fort Phœnix.]

Oct. 5. Rode to Plymouth with R., in his buggy. In the north part of Rochester, went into an old uninhabited house which once belonged to John Shearman. It had the date 1753 engraved on an oblong square stone in the stone chimney, though the chimney-top had been rebuilt with the old stone. The house had a singular musty scent when we opened it. The bare joists above in the kitchen all black with smoke. In the cellar grew the apple-of-Peru, *Nicandra physalodes*, then in bloom; a *short* datura-like blossom with a large fruit-like capsule.

After passing the Neck between the two Quitticus Ponds, we turned to the right and passed by the Point road between the Great Quitticus and Pocksha Ponds. This was a mere bar, half a mile long, two or three rods wide, and built up above high water with larger stones. We rode with one wheel in the water. There was in one place a stream crossing it and two or more bridges prepared for high water. Scared up five apparently black ducks. Continued on towards Carver by small winding country roads *via* where was once Nelson's meeting-house and along the east side of Tispaquin Pond, — this was the name of the old sachem of Nemasket, — near which in a field R. picked up a young *Emys picta's* (?) shell, which I have. Beyond this the country was almost uniformly level, sandy, — oak wood, with few dwellings. Lunched near the boundary of Carver. Passed Johns Pond and Wenham Pond and others in Carver, passing a mile or more south of Carver Green, and afterward Clear Pond in Plymouth. We heard the blasting at

the Quincy quarries (so Watson told us) during this ride, I think even as far back as New Bedford township, very distinctly.

According to Bennet, writing 1793 (*vide* Historical Collections), Snipatuet Pond in Rochester has one stream emptying into the sea at Mattapoisett Harbor and another, three quarters of a mile long, emptying into East Quitiquos Pond. "So that the alewife fish come into Snipatuet pond from both streams."

In a description of Carver in the Fourth Volume, Second Series, of the Historical Collections, I read: "The cast iron tea kettle was first cast at Plympton (now Carver) between 1760 and 1765. So modern is this very common utensil in New England. Wrought iron imported tea kettles were used before a copper tea kettle was first used at Plymouth, 1702." Also, "A place called 'Swan Holt' by the first planters, a little southeast of Wenham Pond, denotes the former visits of that bird, the earliest harbinger of spring; for before the ice is yet broken up, the swan finds an open resting place among the ozier holts, while the kildee, flying over the land from the sea shore, soon after confirms the vernal promise." A note adds: "A species of plover, probably the 'que ce qu'il dit' of the French. It may be added that kildee is the Danish word for a spring."

Lodged at Olney's (the old Hedge) House in Plymouth.

Oct. 6. Return to Concord *via* Natural History Library.

De Kay calls the pine marten the American sable.

Oct. 8. On river. — Flocks of tree sparrows by river, slightly warbling. Hear a song sparrow sing. See apparently white-throated sparrows hopping under covert of the button-bushes. Found my boat yesterday full of willow leaves after the rain. See no tortoises now on the rocks and boards. It is too cold.

Oct. 10. A young man has just shown me a small duck which he shot in the river from my boat. I thought it a blue-winged teal, but it has no distinct beauty-spot. The bill broad and, I should say from remembrance, bluish-black, as are the legs and feet, not red or yellow or flesh-color, webbed thus: Above black and brown with no bright colors or distinct white; neck brown beneath and breast; secondaries pale-bluish, tipped with white; a little greenish perhaps on the scapulars.

Mr. William Allen, now here, tells me that when, some years ago, a stream near his house in East Bridgewater, emptying into the Taunton River, was drained, he found a plant on the bottom very similar to a sponge — of the same form and color — and say six inches wide.

Oct. 12. P. M. — Up Assabet.

The leaves fallen apparently last night now lie thick on the water next the shore, concealing it, — fleets of dry boats, blown with a rustling sound.[1] I see a painted

[1] Probably maple chiefly, — the Leaf Harvest, call it.

tortoise still out on shore. Three of his back scales are partly turned up and show fresh black ones ready beneath. When I try to draw these scales off they tear first in my hand. They are covered, as are all the posterior ones, with a thick shaggy muddy fleece of moss (?). No wonder they must shed their scales to get rid of this. And now I see that the six main anterior scales have already been shed. They are fresh black and bare of moss. Apparently no fresh scales on the sternum. Is not this the only way they get rid of the moss, etc., which adhere to them?

Carried home a couple of rails which I fished out of the bottom of the river and left on the bank to dry about three weeks ago. One was a chestnut which I have noticed for some years on the bottom of the Assabet, just above the spring on the east side, in a deep hole. It looked as if it had been there a hundred years. It was so heavy that C. and I had as much as we could do to lift it, covered with mud, on to the high bank. It was scarcely lighter to-day, and I amused myself with asking several to lift one half of it after I had sawed it in two. They failed at first, not being prepared to find it so heavy, though they could easily lift it afterward. It was a regular segment of a log, and though the thin edge was comparatively firm and solid, the sap-wood on the broad and rounded side, now that it had been lying in the air, was quite spongy and had opened into numerous great chinks, five eighths of an inch wide by an inch deep. The whole was of a rusty brown externally, having imbibed some iron from the water. When split up it was of a dark blue

black, if split parallel with the layers, or alternately black and light brown, if split across them. There were concentric circles of black, as you looked at the end, coinciding nearly with the circles of pores, perhaps one sixteenth of an inch wide. When you looked at these on the side of a stick split across the circles, they reminded you of a striped waistcoat or sheepskin. But after being exposed to the air a little while, the whole turned to an almost uniform pale slate-color,[1] the light brown turning slate and the dark stripes also paling into slate. It had a strong dye-stuff-like scent, etc.

The other was a round oak stick, and, though it looked almost as old as the first, was quite sound even to the bark, and evidently quite recent comparatively, though full as heavy. The wood had acquired no peculiar color. Some farmers load their wood with gunpowder to punish thieves. There 's no danger that mine will be loaded.

Pieces of both of these sank at once in a pail of water.[2]

Oct. 13. P. M. — To Conantum.

The maples now stand like smoke along the meadows. The bass is bare. A thick carpet of white pine needles lies now lightly, half an inch or more in thickness, above the dark-reddish ones of last year. Larks in flocks in the meadows, showing the white in their tails as they fly, sing sweetly as in spring. Methinks I have seen one or two myrtle-birds, sparrow-like.

[1] After a few weeks it became quite uniform.

[2] On the 18th they floated, after drying in my chamber.

Oct. 14. Some sparrow-like birds with yellow on rump flitting about our wood-pile. One flies up against the house and alights on the window-sill within a foot of me inside. Black bill and feet, yellow rump, brown above, yellowish-brown on head, cream-colored chin, two white bars on wings, tail black, edged with white, — the yellow-rump warbler or myrtle-bird without doubt. They fly to several windows, though it is not cold.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

The muskrats eat a good many clams now and leave their pearly shells open on the shore. Sometimes I find a little one which they have brought ashore in the night but left entire and alive. The green-rayed ones, — are they not a peculiar light blue within?

I still see the *Emys insculpta* coupled, the upper holding with its claws under the edge of the lower shell.

Oct. 15. P. M. — Go to look for white pine cones, but see none.

Saw a striped squirrel on a rail fence with some kind of weed in his mouth. Was it milkweed seed? At length he scud swiftly along the middle rail past me, and, instead of running over or around the posts, he glided through the little hole in the post left above the rails, as swiftly as if there had been no post in the way. Thus he sped through five posts in succession in a straight line, incredibly quick, only stooping and straightening himself at the holes.

The hornets' nests are exposed, the maples being bare, but the hornets are gone. I see one a very perfect cone, like a pitch pine cone, uninjured by the birds, about twelve feet from the ground, by a swamp, three feet from the end of a maple twig and upheld by it alone passing through its top, about an inch deep, seven and a half inches wide, by eight long. A few sere maple leaves adorn and partly conceal the crown, at the ends of slight twigs which are buried in it. What a wholesome color! somewhat like the maple bark (and so again concealed) laid on in successive layers in arcs of circles a tenth of an inch wide, eyebrow-wise, gray or even white or brown of various shades, with a few dried maple leaves sticking out the top of it.

Oct. 16. P. M. — To the white pine grove beyond Beck Stow's.

What has got all the cones? How evenly the freshly fallen pine-needles are spread on the ground! quite like a carpet. Throughout this grove no square foot is left bare. I dug down with a stick and found that the layers of three or four years could be distinguished with considerable ease, and much deeper the old needles were raised in flakes or layers still. The topmost, or this year's, were fawn-colored; last year's, dark dull reddish; and so they went on, growing darker and more decayed, till, at the depth of three inches, where, perhaps, the needles were fifteen or twenty years old, they began to have the aspect of a dark loose-lying virgin mould, mixed with roots (pine cones and sticks a little higher). The freshly fallen needles lay as evenly strewn as if sifted over the whole surface, giving it

a uniform neat fawn-color, tempting one to stretch himself on it. They rested alike on the few green leaves of weeds and the fallen cones and the cobwebs between them, in every direction across one another like joggle-sticks. In course of years they are beaten by rain and snow into a coarse, thick matting or felt to cover the roots of the trees with.

I look at a grass-bird on a wall in the dry Great Fields. There is a dirty-white or cream-colored line above the eye and another from the angle of the mouth beneath it and a white ring close about the eye. The breast is streaked with this creamy white and dark brown in streams, as on the cover of a book.

Oct. 17. P. M. — Up river.

A fine Indian-summer afternoon. There is much gossamer on the button-bushes, now bare of leaves, and on the sere meadow-grass, looking toward the sun, in countless parallel lines, like the ropes which connect the masts of a vessel.

I see the roots of the great yellow lily lying on the mud where they have made a ditch in John Hosmer's meadow for the sake of the mud, gray-colored when old and dry. Some are three and a half inches in diameter, with their great eyes or protuberant shoulders where the leaf-stalks stood in quincunx order around them. What rank vigor they suggest! like serpents winding amid the mud of the meadow. You see where the ditcher's spade has cut them into masses about as thick as long. What are those clusters of cuplike cavities between the eyes, some nearly a quarter of an inch in diameter, with a pistil-like prominence within?

I saw behind (or rather *in front of*) me as I rowed home a little dipper appear in mid-river, as if I had passed right over him. It dived while I looked, and I could not see it come up anywhere.

Oct. 18. Last night I was reading Howitt's account of the Australian gold-diggings, and had in my mind's eye the numerous valleys with their streams all cut up with foul pits, ten to a hundred feet deep and half a dozen feet across, as close as they can be dug, and half full of water, where men furiously rushed to probe for their fortunes, uncertain where they shall break ground, not knowing but the gold is under their camp itself; sometimes digging a hundred and sixty feet before they strike the vein, or then missing it by a foot; turned into demons and regardless of each other's rights in their thirst after riches; whole valleys for thirty miles suddenly honeycombed by the pits of the miners, so that hundreds are drowned in them. Standing in water and covered with mud and clay, they work night and day, dying of exposure and disease. Having read this and partly forgotten it, I was thinking of my own unsatisfactory life, doing as others do without any fixed star habitually in my eye, my foot not planted on any blessed isle. Then, with that vision of the diggings before me, I asked myself why I might not be washing some gold daily, though it were only the finest particles, or might not sink a shaft down to the gold within me and work that mine. There

is a Ballarat or Bendigo for you. What though it were a "Sulky Gully"? Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence. Wherever a man separates from the multitude and goes his own way, there is a fork in the road, though the travellers along the highway see only a gap in the paling.[1]

P. M. — To Great Meadows to observe the hummocks left by the ice.

They are digging the pond at the new cemetery. I go by Peter's path. How charming a footpath! *Nihil humanum*, etc. I was delighted to find a new footpath crossing this toward Garfield's. The broad and dusty roads do not remind me of man so much as of cattle and horses. There are a great many crows scattered about on the meadow. What do they get to eat there? Also I scare up a dozen larks at once. A large brown marsh hawk comes beating the bush along the river, and ere long a slate-colored one (male), with black tips, is seen circling against a distant wood-side. I scare up in midst of the meadows a great many dark-colored sparrows, one or two at a time, which go off with a note somewhat like the lesser redpoll's, — some migrating kind, I think.[2]

There is a hummock in the lower part of the meadows near the river every two or three rods, where they appeared as thick last year, sometimes consisting of that coarse meadow-grass or sedge but quite as often

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, pp. 465, 466; *Misc.*, Riv. 266, 267.] *Vide* [4] pages forward.

[2] Probably what I think must be shore larks in fall of '58.

of the common meadow sod. Very often it has lodged on one of those yellowish circles of the sedge, it being higher. Last winter's hummocks are not much flattened down yet. I am inclined to think that the coarse sedgy hummocks do not fall so round at first, but are wont to grow or spread in that wise when a fragment has been dropped. Perhaps the sedge is oftenest lifted because it is so coarse.

There is no life perceptible on this broad meadow except what I have named. The crows are very conspicuous, black against the green. The maple swamps, bare of leaves, here and there about the meadow, look like smoke blown along the edge of the woods. Some distinct maples, wholly stripped, look very wholesome and neat, nay even ethereal.

To-day my shoes are whitened with the gossamer which I noticed yesterday on the meadow-grass.

I find the white fragments of a tortoise-shell in the meadow, — thirty or forty pieces, straight-sided polygons, — which apparently a hay-cart passed over. They look like broken crockery. I brought it home and amused myself with putting it together. It is a painted tortoise. The variously formed sections or component parts of the shell are not broken, but only separated. To restore them to their places is like the game which children play with pieces of wood completing a picture. It is surprising to observe how these different parts are knitted together by countless minute teeth on their edges. Then the scales, which are not nearly so numerous, and therefore larger commonly, are so placed over the former as to break joints always,

as appears by the indented lines at their edges and the serrations of the shell. These scales, too, *slightly* overlap each other, *i. e.* the foremost over the next behind, so that they may not be rubbed off. Thus the whole case is bound together like a very stout band-box. The bared shell is really a very interesting study. The sternum in its natural position looks like a well-contrived drag, turned up at the sides in one solid piece.

Noticed a single wreath of a blood-red blackberry vine on a yellow sand slope, very conspicuous by contrast.

When I was surveying for Legross, as we went to our work in the morning, we passed by the Dudley family tomb, and Legross remarked to me, all in good faith, "Would n't you like to see old Daddy Dudley? He lies in there. I 'll get the keys if you 'd like. I sometimes go in and look at him."

The upper shell of this tortoise is formed of curved rafters or ribs, which are flatted out to half an inch or five eighths in width, but the rib form appears in an elevated ridge along the middle and in a spine at the lower end, fitting firmly into a deep hole in an edge bone, and also a projection (or process?) to meet the spinal column at the upper end. Some of these plates (?) I fitted together far more closely and wonderfully, considering the innumerable sharp serrations, than any child's wooden sections of a picture. Yet it is impossible to put the whole together again, so perfectly do the plates interlock and dovetail into each other at different angles, and they could only have grown together and shrunk apart. It is an admirable system of breaking joints, both in the arrangement of the

parts of the shell and in that of the scales which overlap the serrations of the former. The sternum consists of nine parts, there being an extra trigonal or pentagonal piece under the head or throat. The two middle pieces on each side curve upward to meet the edge bones, without any serration or joint at the lower edge of the sternum there; nor is there any joint in the scales there. In the upper shell there *appear to be* eight or nine small dorsal pieces, about sixteen rib pieces, and about twenty-two edge or marginal pieces; but of the parts of the upper shell I am not quite certain.

The sternums of the box turtles and the stinkpot are much flatter, *i. e.* not so much curved up at the sides, and are nearer to the upper shell. The painted tortoise has the flattest back; the *Cistudo Carolina*, the highest and fullest (with a ridge); the stinkpot, the sharpest. The *C. Blandingii* is very regularly arched. The *Emys insculpta* is of moderate elevation (with a ridge).

Those bright-red marks on the marginal scales of the painted tortoise remind me of some Chinese or other Oriental lacquer-work on waiters (?). This color fades to a pale yellow. The color is wholly in the scale above the bone. Of the bright colors, the yellow marks on tortoise-shells are the fastest.

How much beauty in decay! I pick up a white oak leaf, dry and stiff, but yet mingled red and green, October-like, whose pulpy part some insect has eaten beneath, exposing the delicate network of its veins. It is very beautiful held up to the light, — such work

as only an insect eye could perform. Yet, perchance, to the vegetable kingdom such a revelation of ribs is as repulsive as the skeleton in the animal kingdom. In each case it is some little gourmand, working for another end, that reveals the wonders of nature. There are countless oak leaves in this condition now, and also with a submarginal line of network exposed.

Men rush to California and Australia as if the true gold were to be found in that direction; but that is to go to the very opposite extreme to where it lies. They go prospecting further and further away from the true lead, and are most unfortunate when most successful. Is not our native soil auriferous? Does not a stream from the golden mountains flow through our native valley? and has it not for more than geologic ages been bringing down the shining particles and the nuggets? Yet, strange to tell, if a digger steal away prospecting for this true gold into the unexplored solitudes, there is no danger, alas, that any will dog his steps and endeavor to supplant him. He may claim and undermine the whole valley, even the cultivated and uninhabited portions, his whole life long in peace, and no one will ever dispute his claim. They will not mind his cradles or his toms. He is not confined to a claim twelve feet square, as at Ballarat, but may mine anywhere, and wash the whole wide world in his tom.[1]

To rebuild the tortoise-shell is a far finer game than any geographical or other puzzle, for the pieces

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 466; *Misc.*, Riv. 267, 268.] *Vide* [4] pages forward.

do not merely make part of a plane surface, but you have got to build a roof and a floor and the connecting walls. These are not only thus dovetailed and braced and knitted and bound together, but also held together by the skin and muscles within. It is a *band*-box.

Oct. 19. P. M. — To Pine Hill for chestnuts.

It is a very pleasant afternoon, quite still and cloudless, with a thick haze concealing the distant hills. Does not this haze mark the Indian summer?

I see Mrs. Riordan and her little boy coming out of the woods with their bundles of fagots on their backs. It is surprising what great bundles of wood an Irishwoman will contrive to carry. I confess that though I could carry one I should hardly think of making such a bundle of them. They are first regularly tied up, and then carried on the back by a rope, — somewhat like the Indian women and their straps. There is a strange similarity; and the little boy carries his bundle proportionally large. The sticks about four feet long. They make haste to deposit their loads before I see them, for they do not know how pleasant a sight it is to me. The Irishwoman does the squaw's part in many respects. Riordan also buys the old railroad sleepers at three dollars a hundred, but they are much decayed and full of sand.

Therien tells me, when I ask if he has seen or heard any large birds lately, that he heard a cock crow this morning, a wild one, in the woods. It seems a dozen fowls (chickens) were lost out of the cars here a fortnight ago. Poland has caught some, and they have

one at the shanty, but this cock, at least, is still abroad and can't be caught. If they could survive the winter, I suppose we should have had wild hens before now. Sat and talked with Therien at the pond, by the railroad. He says that James Baker told the story of the perch leaping into a man's throat, etc., of his father or uncle (Amos?).

The woods about the pond are now a perfect October picture; yet there *have been* no very bright tints this fall. The young white and the shrub oak leaves were withered before the frosts came, perhaps by the late drought after the wet spring.

Walking in E.'s path west of the pond, I am struck by the conspicuous wreaths of waxwork leaves about the young trees, to the height of twelve or fifteen feet. These broad and handsome leaves are still freshly green, though drooping or hanging now closely about the vine, but contrast remarkably with the bare trunks and the changed leaves above and around.

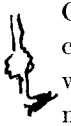
I hear many crickets by this path and see many warily standing on the *qui vive* in awkward positions, or running their heads under a chip, or prying into a hole, but I can see none creaking. I see at last a few white pine cones open on the trees, but almost all appear to have fallen. The chestnuts are scarce and small and apparently have but just begun to open their burs.

That globular head of pale-yellow spheres of seed-parachutes along the wood road is the rough hawkweed. The single heads of savory-leaved aster are of the same color now.

When, returning at 5 o'clock, I pass the pond in the road, I see the sun, which is about entering the grosser hazy atmosphere above the western horizon, brilliantly reflected in the pond, — a dazzling sheen, a bright golden shimmer. His broad sphere extended stretches the whole length of the pond toward me. First, in the extreme distance, I see a few sparkles of the gold on the dark surface; then begins a regular and solid column of shimmering gold, straight as a rule, but at one place, where a breeze strikes the surface from one side, it is remarkably spread or widened, then recovers its straightness again, thus:

Again it is remarkably curved, say thus:

then broken into several pieces, then straight and entire again, then spread or blown aside at the point like smoke from a chimney, thus:



Of course, if there were eyes enough to occupy all the east shore, the whole pond would be seen as one dazzling shimmering lake of melted gold. Such beauty and splendor adorns our walks!

I measured the depth of the needles under the pitch pines east of the railroad (behind the old shanties), which, as I remember, are about thirty years old. In one place it is three quarters of an inch in all to the soil, in another one and a quarter, and in a hollow under a larger pine about four inches. I think the thickness of the needles, old and new, is not more than one inch there on an average. These pines are only four or five inches thick.

See slate-colored snowbirds.

Talking with Bellew this evening about Fourierism and communities, I said that I suspected any enterprise in which two were engaged together. "But," said he, "it is difficult to make a stick stand unless you slant two or more against it." "Oh, no," answered I, "you may split its lower end into three, or drive it single into the ground, which is the best way; but most men, when they start on a new enterprise, not only figuratively, but really, *pull up stakes*. When the sticks prop one another, none, or only one, stands erect."

He showed me a sketch of Wachusett. Spoke of his life in Paris, etc. I asked him if he had ever visited the Alps and sketched there. He said he had not. Had he been to the White Mountains? "No," he answered, "the highest mountains I have ever seen were the Himalayas, though I was only two years old then." It seems that he was born in that neighborhood.

He complains that the Americans have attained to bad luxuries, but have no comforts.

Howitt says of the man who found the great nugget which weighed twenty-eight pounds at the Bendigo diggings in Australia: "He soon began to drink; got a horse, and rode all about, generally at full gallop, and when he met people, called out to inquire if they knew who he was, and then kindly informed them that he was 'the bloody wretch that had found the nugget.' At last he rode full speed against a tree, and nearly knocked his brains out. He is a hopelessly ruined man." In my opinion there was no danger, for he had already

knocked his brains out against the nugget. But he is a type of the class. They are all fast men. Hear some of the names of the places where they dig: "Jackass Flat," — "Sheep's-Head Gully," — "Sulky Gully," — "Murderer's Bar," etc.[1]

Oct. 20. P. M. — To Nawshawtuct.

Agreeable to me is the scent of the withered and decaying leaves and pads, pontederias, on each side as I paddle up the river this still cloudy day, with the faint twittering or chirping of a sparrow still amid the bare button-bushes. It is the scent of the year, passing away like a decaying fungus, but leaving a rich mould, I trust.

On the 18th I found the Great Meadows wet, yet Beck Stow's was remarkably dry. Last summer the case was reversed.

I find, here and there on the hill, apples, sometimes three or four, carried to the mouth of a striped squirrel's hole, four or five rods from the tree, with the marks of his teeth in them, by which he carried them, and the chankings or else fragments of the skin of others there. There is no heap of sand to betray these little holes, but they descend perpendicularly in the midst of a clean sod. I was at first admiring the beauty of the wild apples, — now is the time, — some freckled with blood-red spots and perhaps also touched with a greenish rust here and there, like a fine lichen or fungus.[2]

[1] [*Cape Cod, and Miscellanies*, p. 467; *Misc.*, Riv. 268.]

[2] [*Excursions*, p. 315; Riv. 386.]

I see on the dead top of a hickory, twittering very much like swallows, eighteen and more bluebirds, perhaps preparing to migrate.

I have collected and split up now quite a pile of driftwood, — rails and riders and stems and stumps of trees, — perhaps half or three quarters of a tree. It is more amusing, not only to collect this with my boat and bring [it] up from the river on my back, but to split it also, than it would be to speak to a farmer for a load of wood and to saw and split that. Each stick I deal with has a history, and I read it as I am handling it, and, last of all, I remember my adventures in getting it, while it is burning in the winter evening. That is the most interesting part of its history. It has made part of a fence or a bridge, perchance, or has been rooted out of a clearing and bears the marks of fire on it. When I am splitting it, I study the effects of water on it, and, if it is a stump, the curiously winding grain by which it separates into so many prongs, — how to take advantage of its grain and split it most easily. I find that a dry oak stump will split pretty easily in the direction of its diameter, but not at right angles with it or along its circles of growth. I got out some good knees for a boat. Thus one half the value of my wood is enjoyed before it is housed, and the other half is equal to the whole value of an equal quantity of the wood which I buy.

Some of my acquaintances have been wondering why I took all this pains, bringing some nearly three miles by water, and have suggested various reasons for it. I tell them in my despair of making them understand me that it is a profound secret, — which it has proved, — yet I did hint to them that one reason was that I wanted to get it. I take some satisfaction in eating my food, as well as in being nourished by it. I feel well at dinner-time as well as after it. The world will never find out why you don't love to have your bed tucked up for you, — why you will be so perverse. I enjoy more drinking water at a clear spring than out of a goblet at a gentleman's table. I like best the bread which I have baked, the garment which I have made, the shelter which I have constructed, the fuel which I have gathered.

It is always a recommendation to me to know that a man has ever been poor, has been regularly born into this world, knows the language. I require to be assured of certain philosophers that they have once been barefooted, footsore, have eaten a crust because they had nothing better, and know what sweetness resides in it.

I have met with some barren accomplished gentlemen who seemed to have been to school all their lives and never had a vacation to live in. Oh, if they could only have been stolen by the Gypsies! and carried far beyond the reach of their guardians! They had better have died in infancy and been buried under the leaves, their lips besmeared with blackberries, and Cock Robin for their sexton.

Oct. 21. It began to rain about 10 o'clock last evening after a cloudy day, and it still rains, gently but steadily, this morning. The wind must be east,

for I hear the church bell very plainly; yet I sit with an open window, it is so warm.

Looking into the yard, I see the currant bushes all bare of leaves, as they have been some time; but the gooseberries at the end of their row are covered with reddened leaves. This gradualness in the changing and falling of the leaves produces agreeable effects and contrasts. The currant row is bare, but the gooseberries at the end are full of scarlet leaves still.

I have never liked to have many rich fruits ripening at the same season. When Porter apples, for instance, are ripe, there are also other early apples and pears and plums and melons, etc. Nature by her bounteousness thus disgusts us with a sense of repletion — and uncleanness even. Perhaps any one of these fruits would answer as well as all together. She offers us too many good things at once.

I enjoyed getting that large oak stump from Fair Haven some time ago, and bringing it home in my boat. I tipped it in with the prongs up, and they spread far over the sides of the boat. There was no passing amidships. I much enjoyed this easy carriage of it, floating down the Musketaquid from far. It was a great stump and sunk my boat considerably, and its prongs were so in the way that I could take but a short stroke with my paddle. I enjoyed every stroke of my paddle, every rod of my progress, which advanced me so easily nearer to my port. It was as good as to sit by the best oak wood fire. I still enjoy such a conveyance, such a victory, as much as boys do riding on a rail. All the upper part of this, when I came to split it, I found to be very finely honeycombed, reduced to a coarse cellular mass, apparently by shrinkage and wasting; but it made excellent fuel, nevertheless, as if all the combustible part remained. Only the earthy had returned to earth.

When Allen was here the other day, I found that I could not take two steps with him. He taught school in Concord seventeen [?] years ago, and has not been here since. He wished much to see the town again, but nothing living and fair in it. He had, I should say, a very musty recollection of it. He called on no living creature among all his pupils, but insisted on going [to] the new burying-ground and reading all the epitaphs. I waited at the gate, telling him that that ground did not smell good. I remembered when the first body was placed in it. He did, however, ask after one or two juvenile scamps and one idiotic boy who came to school to him, — how they had turned out, — and also after a certain caged fool, dead since he was here, who had lived near where he boarded; also after a certain ancient tavern, now pulled down. This at odd intervals, for he improved all the rest of his time while he was here in attending a Sabbath-school convention.

I have been thinking over with Father the old houses in this street. There was the Hubbard (?) house at the fork of the roads; the Thayer house (now Garrison's); Sam Jones's (now Channing's); Willoughby Prescott's (a bevel-roof, which I do not remember), where Loring's is (Hoar's was built by a Prescott); Ma'm Bond's; the Jones Tavern (Bigelow's); the old Hurd (or Cumming's?) house; the Dr. Hurd house;

the old mill; and the Richardson Tavern (which I do not remember). On this side, the Monroe house, in which we lived; the Parkman house, which William Heywood told me twenty years ago that he helped raise the rear of sixty years before (it then sloping to one story behind), and that then it was called an old house (Dr. Ripley said that a Bond built it); the Merrick house; a rough-cast house where Bates's is (Betty ?); and all the south side of the Mill-Dam. Still further from the centre the old houses and sites are about as numerous as above. Most of these houses slanted to one story behind.

P. M. — Up Assabet.

A damp cloudy day only, after all, and scarcely any rain; a good day for all *hunters* to be out, especially on the water.

The yellowish leaves of the black oak incline soon to a decayed and brown look. The red oak is more red. But the scarlet is very bright and conspicuous. How finely its leaves are cut against the sky with sharp points, especially near the top of the tree! They look somewhat like double or treble crosses.[1] The squirrels appear to have stripped this tree entirely, and I find the fragments of nutshells beneath it. They have also eaten the white and red and black oak acorns very generally, but there are more of the last left.

Further up, on the big red maple in Wheeler's Swamp, I see two gray squirrels chasing each other round and round the trunk of the tree, now close to each other, now

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 278; Riv. 341.]

far apart, one stealing off behind a limb, and now resting on opposite sides of the trunk, — where they might not be noticed, being of the same color with the bark, — indifferently with their heads down or up. Then away goes one out on a twig, and leaps into the next tree, and the other swiftly follows, and sometimes, when the twig is slight or chiefly leaves they leap into, they have to make a swinging somerset of it, to save themselves while they cling to it.

At length they separate to feed, and I see them running up to the very tops of the swamp white oaks and out to the extremities of the boughs, and jumping at the extreme twig which bears acorns, which they cut off, and devour, sitting on a firmer limb. It is surprising how rapidly they devour one after another, dropping the cups and scales and bits of the meat. It is surprising also to observe, when one wishes to reach a certain part of a neighboring tree, how surely he runs back to the trunk and then selects the right limb by which to reach it, without any hesitation, as if he knew the road.

You see, around the muskrat-houses, a clear space, where they have cut off the pontederias of which they are built; and now, after last night's rain, the river is risen some, and the pontederia roots, etc., which have been eaten by them, are washed up together next the shore.

That apparently shell-less snail or slug which is so common this damp day under apple trees, eating the apples, is evidently one of the naked *Mollusca*, the Division *Gasteropoda*, a *Limax*, perhaps the *Limax*

tunicata of Gould. He describes but one other species.

Almost all wild apples are handsome. Some are knurly and peppered all over or on the stem side with fine crimson spots on a yellowish-white ground; others have crimson blotches or eyes, more or less confluent and fiery when wet, — for apples, like shells and pebbles, are handsomest in a wet day. Taken from under the tree on the damp sward, they shrivel and fade. Some have these spots beneath a reddened surface with obscure rays. Others have hundreds of fine blood-red rays, running regularly, though broken, from the stem dimple to the blossom, like meridian lines, on a straw-colored ground, — perfect spheres. Others are a deep, dark red, with very obscure yet darker rays; others a uniform clear, bright red, approaching to scarlet.[1]

Oct. 22. Another cloudy day without rain.

P. M. — To Fair Haven Hill *via* Hubbard's Grove.

How welcome this still, cloudy day! An inward sunniness more than makes up for the want of an external one. As I pass this grove, I see the open ground strewn and colored with yellow leaves, which have been wafted from a large black birch ten rods within the wood. I see at a distance the scattered birch-tops, like yellow flames amid the pines, also, in another direction, the red of oaks in the bosom of a pine wood, and, in sprout-lands on Fair Haven, the deep and uniform red of young oaks.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 314, 315; Riv. 385–387.]

I sat on a bank at the brook crossing, beyond the grove, to watch a flock of *seringos*, perhaps Savannah sparrows, which, with some *F. hyemalis* and other sparrows, were actively flitting about amid the alders and dogwood. At last I saw one resting a moment to prune himself, and in this operation he opened his plumage very thoroughly to me. Distinct yellow eyebrows, extending round beneath the bill; tail blackish or dusky; primaries bay or chestnut; secondaries (?) edged with white; some white lines on shoulders; *pale* flesh-colored bill and legs; toward vent beneath, pure white. Suddenly a pigeon hawk[1] dashed over the bank very low and within a rod of me, and, striking its wings against the twigs with a clatter close to a sparrow, which escaped, it alighted amid the alders in front, within four rods of me. It was attracted by the same objects which attracted me. It sat a few moments, balancing itself and spreading its tail and wings, — a chubby little fellow. Its back appeared a sort of deep chocolate-brown. Every sparrow at once concealed itself, apparently deep in the bushes next the ground. Once or twice he dashed down there amid the alders and tried to catch one. In a few minutes he skimmed along the hedge by the path and disappeared westward. But presently, hearing the sound of his wings amid the bushes, I looked up and saw him dashing along through the willows and then out and upward high over the meadow in pursuit of a sparrow (perhaps a seringo). The sparrow flew pretty high and kept doubling. When it flew

[1] Was I sure?

direct, the hawk gained, and got within two or three feet of it; but when it doubled, it gained on the hawk; so the latter soon gave up the chase, and the little bird flew off high over my head, with a panting breath and a rippling ricochet flight, toward the high pine grove. When I passed along the path ten minutes after, I found that all those sparrows were still hid under the bushes by the ditch-side, close to the ground, and I saw nothing of them till I scared them out by going within two or three feet. No doubt they warned each other by a peculiar note. What a corsair the hawk is to them! — a little fellow hardly bigger than a quail.

Birds certainly are afraid of man. They [allow] all other creatures, — cows and horses, etc., — excepting only one or two kinds, birds or beasts of prey, to come near them, but not man. What does this fact signify? Does it not signify that man, too, is a beast of prey to them? Is he, then, a true lord of creation, whose subjects are afraid of him, and with reason? They know very well that he is not humane, as he pretends to be.

In Potter's pasture, as you go to Fair Haven Hill, where he had grain in the summer, the great mullein leaves are strewn as thick as turnips that have been sown. This the first year. The next I suppose they will blossom. They have felled and carted off that middling-sized white oak just beyond. I count about one hundred and twenty rings of growth. In Potter's maple swamp, where the red maple leaves lie in thick beds on the ground, what a strong mustiness, even sourness in some places! Yet I like this scent. With

the present associations, sweet to me is the mustiness of the grave itself. I hear a hyla.

The swamp pyrus (*Amelanchier*) is leafing again. One opening leaflet is an inch long, while the reddish-yellow leaves still hold on at the end of the twig above. Its green swollen buds are generally conspicuous, curving round the stems. There is a twig full of those dead black leaves on one. It is a new spring there. I hear the sound of the first flail from William Wheeler's barn. I mark the gray diverging stems of the dogwood, which is now bare, topped with the long, recurved, dry panicles like loose barbs.

I think that the trees generally have not worn very brilliant colors this month, but I find to-day that many small shrubs which have been protected by the forest are remarkably fair and bright. They, perhaps, have not felt the drought nor been defaced by insects. They are the best preserved and the most delicately tinted. I see the maple viburnum leaves a dark, dull spotted crimson toward the edges, like some wild apples. I distinguish it from the red maple at first only by its downy feeling beneath and the simple form of some leaves. These have also a short petiole and not a sharp sinus. Then there is the more or less crimson *nudum* viburnum, passing from scarlet through crimson to black-spotted and crimson in its decay. The blackness spreads very fast in one night. The glossy scarlet blueberries and the redder huckleberries; the scarlet choke-berry, or vermilion; some red maples which are yellow with only scarlet eyes. But still, in the shade and shelter of the woods as fair as anything,

the leaves of the wild cherry, so clear of injury from insects, passing from green through yellow or a cherry red to the palest and purest imaginable cherry-color, the palest fawn with a mere tinge of cherry, with their fine overlapping serrations. Those great twisted yellow leaves of hickory sprouts, yellow and green, from which I used to drink. And here is a very handsome orange-red high blackberry leaf, with its five leafets all perfect; most are dark-red. But all these, like shells and pebbles must be seen on their own seashore. There are two seasons when the leaves are in their glory, their green and perfect youth in June and this their ripe old age. Some of the very young oak leaves have the deepest lustreless or inward scarlet of any. Most of the reddish oak leaves now in the woods are spotted, mildewed as it were, by the drip from above.

Brought home the three kinds of lechea, whose pretty whorls of radical shoots or branches are now, methinks, more conspicuous than before. I should distinguish the two lesser by the one having larger pods and being more slender, taller, and more simple every way, the other low, bushy, spreading, the branches making a larger angle with the stems, fine-leaved, small and few pods, and the radical shoots (alone of the three specimens I have) very densely *branched* and leafed. Those of the other two are simple. All have a part of the radical leafets above recurved.

The Plymouth fishermen have just come home from the Banks, except one.

Oct. 23. P. M. — To Saw Mill Brook.

The streets are strewn with buttonwood leaves, which rustle under your feet, and the children are busy raking them into heaps, some for bonfires. The large elms are bare; not yet the buttonwoods. The sugar maples on the Common stand dense masses of rich yellow leaves with a deep scarlet blush, — far more than blush. They are remarkably brilliant this year on the exposed surfaces. The last are as handsome as any trees in the street.[1] I am struck with the handsome form and clear, though very pale, say lemon, yellow of the black birch leaves on sprouts in the woods, finely serrate and distinctly *plaited* from the midrib. I plucked three leaves from the end of a red maple shoot, an underwood, each successively smaller than the last, the brightest and clearest scarlet that I ever saw. These and the birch attracted universal admiration when laid on a sheet of white paper and passed round the supper table, and several inquired particularly where I found them. I never saw such colors painted. They were without spot;[2] ripe leaves. The small willows two or three feet high by the roadside in woods have some rich, deep chrome-yellow leaves with a gloss. The sprouts are later to ripen and richer-colored.

The pale whitish leaves of horehound in damp grassy paths, with its spicy fruit in the axils, are tinged with purple or lake more or less.

Going through what was E. Hosmer's muck-hole

[1] [*Excursions*, p. 271; Riv. 332, 333.]

[2] Yet some spots appeared and they were partly wilted the next morning, so delicate are they.

pond, now almost entirely dry, the surface towards the shore is covered with a dry crust more or less cracked, which crackles under my feet. I strip it up like bark in long pieces, three quarters of an inch thick and a foot wide and two long. It appears to be composed of fine mosses and perhaps utricularia and the like, such as grow in water. A *little* sphagnum is quite conspicuous, *erect* but dry, in it.

Now is the time for chestnuts. A stone cast against the trees shakes them down in showers upon one's head and shoulders. But I cannot excuse myself for using the stone. It is not innocent, it is not just, so to maltreat the tree that feeds us. I am not disturbed by considering that if I thus shorten its life I shall not enjoy its fruit so long, but am prompted to a more innocent course by motives purely of humanity. I sympathize with the tree, yet I heaved a big stone against the trunks like a robber, — not too good to commit murder. I trust that I shall never do it again. These gifts should be accepted, not merely with gentleness, but with a certain humble gratitude. The tree whose fruit we would obtain should not be too rudely shaken even. It is not a time of distress, when a little haste and violence even might be pardoned. It is worse than boorish, it is criminal, to inflict an unnecessary injury on the tree that feeds or shadows us. Old trees are our parents, and our parents' parents, perchance. If you would learn the secrets of Nature, you must practice more humanity than others. The thought that I was robbing myself by injuring the tree did not occur to me, but I was affected as if I had

cast a rock at a sentient being, — with a duller sense than my own, it is true, but yet a distant relation. Behold a man cutting down a tree to come at the fruit! What is the moral of such an act?

Faded white ferns now at Saw Mill Brook. They press yellow or straw-color.

Ah! we begin old men in crime. Would that we might grow innocent at last as the children of light!

A downy woodpecker on an apple tree utters a sharp, shrill, rapid *tea te t, t, t, t t t t t.*

Is that tall weed in Mrs. Brooks's yard *Cacalia suaveolens??* Yet stem more angled than grooved; four or five feet high. Some time ago.

Cousin Charles writes that his horse drew 5286 pounds up the hill from Hale's factory, at Cattle-Show in Haverhill the other day.

Oct. 24. Rained last night and all this day for the most part, bringing down the leaves, buttonwoods and sugar maples, in the street. The rich yellow and scarlet leaves of the sugar maple on the Common, which now thickly cover the grass in great circles about the trees, half having fallen, look like the reflection of the trees in water, and light up the Common, reflecting light even to the surrounding houses. The gentle touch of the rain brings down more leaves than the wind.

Looked at the old picture of Concord at Mrs. Brooks's, — she says by a Minott. an uncle (or grand-uncle?) of hers. There are the British marching into town in front of the meeting-house and facing about

in front of where the tavern now stands, scattered Britons going up Main Street and about the town, and two officers on the Burying Hill looking west with a spy-glass.

The meeting-house stands as I remember it, but with three stories of windows, door in front toward Common, and no porches or spire; horse-sheds and noon (?) house behind and one side. The Jarvis house; then Wright's Tavern very plain; a bevel-roofed house endwise to the road where the Middlesex House is, which Mrs. B. calls Dr. Minott's house;[1] then a little hut; then the old court-house about where the brick schoolhouse is (this the extreme right). Left of the bevel-roofed house is a small house where the stable and sheds are, — some say Betty Hartshorne's; then a small building on the Mill-Dam; then the old mill; the Vose house, plain, three stories; another house *just* beyond and apparently in front of it; E. Hubbard's plain, and a small house back and towards the Vose house, and a dozen or fifteen provincials there; then some houses, probably Peter Wheeler's three or four storehouses, whence redcoats are rolling barrels into the pond, — and maybe partly from E. Hubbard's; and perhaps that is the Timothy, and after Peter, Wheeler house seen a little further east, where N. Stow's house is now. A large house apparently where the brick house is, and a row seen behind it up the street; Dr. Hurd's house, and four small buildings far behind it; and others seen up street behind Hurd

[1] Yes, and President Langdon lived there. The same, altered, was the tavern I knew.

house. But we see no further up *in* the street than where N. Brooks now lives. Beyond, the town appears well wooded. Lee's Hill also on this side. Great and Little Wachusett are seen in the horizon, and Nobscot.

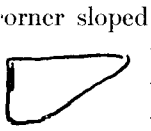
Oct. 25. Quite cold it has cleared up after the rain.

P. M. — I row up the river, which has risen eight or nine inches After these pleasant and warm days it is suddenly cold and windy, and the risen waters have an angry look. It is uncomfortable rowing with wet hands in this wind. The muskrats must now prepare for winter in earnest. I see many places where they have left clamshells recently. Now gather all your apples, if you have not before, or the frost will have them. The willows along the river now begin to look faded and somewhat bare and wintry. The dead wool-grass, etc., characterizes the shore. The meadows look sere and straw-colored.

Oct. 26. P. M. — To Conantum.

Another clear cold day, though not so cold as yesterday. The light and sun come to us directly and freely, as if some obstruction had been removed, — the windows of heaven had been washed.

The old house on Conantum is fast falling down. Its chimney, laid in clay, measures, on the lower floor, twelve and a half feet in breadth across the hearth, oven, and a small fireplace, parallel with the end of the house. On a level with the chamber floor it measures on the front side eight feet. The mantel-tree of a *small*

fireplace in a chamber is an oak joist with the inside corner sloped off thus:  That of the great kitchen fireplace is a pine timber, ten inches by thirteen, also with a great sloped surface within, showing traces of fire. The small girders (?) of the roof overlap a foot or more on the rafters (?).

I see some farmers now cutting up their corn. The sweet viburnum leaves hang thinly on the bushes and are a dull crimsonish red. What apples are left out now, I presume that the farmers do not mean to gather. The witch-hazel is still freshly in flower, and near it I see a houstonia in bloom. The hillside is slippery with new-fallen white pine leaves. The leaves of the oaks and hickories have begun to be browned, — lost their brilliancy.

I examine some frostweed there near the hazel. It is still quite alive, — the leaves now a purplish brown, — indeed just out of bloom, and its bark at the ground is quite tight and entire. Pulling it up, I find bright-pink shoots to have put forth half an inch long and starting even at the surface of the sod. Is not this, as well as its second blossoming, somewhat peculiar to this plant? And may it not be that, when at last the cold is severe, the sap is frozen and bursts the bark and the breath of the dying plant is frozen about it?

I return by way of the mocker-nut trees. The squirrels have already begun on them, though the trees are still covered with yellow and brown leaves, and the nuts do not fall. It is surprising to see how they have gnawed in two and made wrecks of the great, hard

nuts, not stopping to take any advantage. A little this side I see a red squirrel dash out from the wall, snatch an apple from amid many on the ground, and, running swiftly up the tree with it, proceed to eat it, sitting on a smooth dead limb, with its back to the wind and its tail curled close over its back. It allows me to approach within eight feet. It holds the apple between its two fore paws and scoops out the pulp, mainly with its lower incisors, making a saucer-like cavity, high and thin at the edge, where it bites off the skin and lets it drop. It keeps its jaws a-going very fast, from time to time turning the apple round and round with its paws (as it eats), like a wheel in a plane at right angles to its body. It holds it up and twirls it with ease. Suddenly it pauses, having taken alarm at something, then drops the remainder of the apple in [the hollow] of the bough and glides off by short snatches, uttering a faint, sharp bird-like note.

The song sparrow still sings on a button-bush.

A columbine leaf curiously marked by the eating of an insect, — a broad white trail, corresponding mainly to the lobes of the leaf. That little grayish-green and rigid moss-like plant on top of Lee's Cliff, now dropping fine orange-colored pellets or spores (?), seems to be the *Selaginella rupestris?*

I sometimes think that I must go off to some wilderness where I can have a better opportunity to play life, — can find more suitable materials to build my house with, and enjoy the pleasure of collecting my fuel in the forest. I have more taste for the wild sports of

hunting, fishing, wigwam-building, making garments of skins, and collecting wood wherever you find it, than for butchering, farming, carpentry, working in a factory, or going to a wood market.

Oct. 27. P. M. — A-chestnutting down the Turnpike.

There are *many* fringed gentians, now considerably frost-bitten, in what was E. Hosmer's meadow between his dam and the road. It is high time we came a-nutting, for the nuts have nearly all fallen, and you must depend on what you can find on the ground, left by the squirrels, and cannot shake down any more to speak of. The trees are nearly all bare of leaves as well as burs. The wind comes cold from the northwest, as if there were snow on the earth in that direction. Larches are yellowing.

I try one of the wild apples in my desk. It is remarkable that the wild apples which I praise as so spirited and racy when eaten in the fields and woods, when brought into the house have a harsh and crabbed taste. As shells and pebbles must be beheld on the seashore, so these October fruits must be tasted in a bracing walk amid the somewhat bracing airs of late October. To appreciate their wild and sharp flavors, it seems necessary that you be breathing the sharp October or November air. The outdoor air and exercise which the walker gets give a different tone to his palate, and he craves a fruit which the sedentary would call harsh and crabbed even. The palate rejects a wild apple eaten in the house — so of haws and

acorns — and demands a tamed one, for here you miss that October air which is the wine it is eaten with. I frequently pluck wild apples of so rich and spicy a flavor that I wonder all orchardists do not get a scion from them, but when I have brought home my pockets full, and taste them in the house, they are unexpectedly harsh, crude things. They must be eaten in the fields, when your system is all aglow with exercise, the frosty weather nips your fingers (in November), the wind rattles the bare boughs and rustles the leaves, and the jay is heard screaming around.

So there is one thought for the field, another for the house. I would have my thoughts, like wild apples, to be food for walkers, and will not warrant them to be palatable if tasted in the house.

To appreciate the flavor of those wild apples requires vigorous and healthy senses, papillæ firm and erect on the tongue and palate, not easily tamed and flattened. Some of those apples might be labelled, "To be eaten in the wind." [1]

Oct. 28. P. M. — By boat to Leaning Hemlocks.

I think it was the 18th that I first noticed snow-fleas on the surface of the river amid the weeds at its edge. Green leaves are now so scarce that the polypody at the Island rock is more conspicuous, and the terminal shield fern (?) further up.

As I paddle under the Hemlock bank this cloudy afternoon, about 3 o'clock, I see a screech owl sitting on the edge of a hollow hemlock stump about

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 311–314: Riv. 382, 383, 385.]

three feet high, at the base of a large hemlock. It sits with its head drawn in, eying me, with its eyes partly open, about twenty feet off. When it hears me move, it turns its head toward me, perhaps one eye only open, with its great glaring golden iris. You see two whitish triangular lines above the eyes meeting at the bill, with a sharp reddish-brown triangle between and a narrow curved line of black under each eye. At this distance and in this light, you see only a black spot where the eye is, and the question is whether the eyes are open or not. It sits on the lee side of the tree this raw and windy day. You would say that this was a bird without a neck. Its short bill, which rests upon its breast, scarcely projects at all, but in a state of rest the whole upper part of the bird from the wings is rounded off smoothly, excepting the horns, which stand up conspicuously or are slanted back. After watching it ten minutes from the boat, I landed two rods above, and, stealing quietly up behind the hemlock, though from the windward, I looked carefully around it, and, to my surprise, saw the owl still sitting there. So I sprang round quickly, with my arm outstretched, and caught it in my hand. It was so surprised that it offered no resistance at first, only glared at me in mute astonishment with eyes as big as saucers. But ere long it began to snap its bill, making quite a noise, and, as I rolled it up in my handkerchief and put it in my pocket, it bit my finger slightly. I soon took it out of my pocket and, tying the handkerchief, left it on the bottom of the boat. So I carried it home and made a small cage in which to keep it, for a night. When I took it up,

it clung so tightly to my hand as to sink its claws into my fingers and bring blood.

When alarmed or provoked most, it snaps its bill and hisses. It puffs up its feathers to nearly twice its usual size, stretches out its neck, and, with wide-open eyes, stares this way and that, moving its head slowly and undulatingly from side to side with a curious motion. While I write this evening, I see that there is ground for much superstition in it. It looks out on me from a dusky corner of its box with its great solemn eyes, so perfectly still itself. I was surprised to find that I could imitate its note as I remember it, by a *guttural* whinnering.

A remarkably squat figure, being very broad in proportion to its length, with a short tail, and very cat-like in the face with its horns and great eyes. Remarkably large feet and talons, legs thickly clothed with whitish down, down to the talons. It brought blood from my fingers by clinging to them. It would lower its head, stretch out its neck, and, bending it from side to side, peer at you with laughable circumspection; from side to side, as if to catch or absorb into its eyes every ray of light, strain at you with complacent yet earnest scrutiny. Raising and lowering its head and moving it from side to side in a slow and regular manner, at the same time snapping its bill smartly perhaps, and faintly hissing, and puffing itself up more and more, — cat-like, turtle-like, both in hissing and swelling. The slowness and gravity, not to say solemnity, of this motion are striking. There plainly is no jesting in this case.

I saw yesterday at Saw Mill Brook a common salamander on a rock close to the water, not long dead, with a wound in the top of its head.

General color of the owl a rather pale and perhaps slightly reddish brown, the feathers centred with black. Perches with two claws above and two below the perch. It is a slight body, covered with a mass of soft and light-lying feathers. Its head muffled in a great hood. It must be quite comfortable in winter. Dropped a pellet of fur and bones (?) in his cage. He sat, not really moping but trying to sleep, in a corner of his box all day, yet with one or both eyes slightly open all the while. I never once caught him with his eyes shut. Ordinarily stood rather than sat on his perch.

Oct. 29. P. M. — Up Assabet.

Carried my owl to the hill again. Had to shake him out of the box, for he did not go of his own accord. (He had learned to alight on his perch, and it was surprising how lightly and noiselessly he would hop upon it.) There he stood on the grass, at first bewildered, with his horns pricked up and looking toward me. In this strong light the pupils of his eyes suddenly contracted and the iris expanded till they were two great brazen orbs with a centre spot merely. His attitude expressed astonishment more than anything. I was obliged to toss him up a little that he might feel his wings, and then he flapped away low and heavily to a hickory on the hillside twenty rods off. (I had let him out in the plain just east of the hill.) Thither I followed and tried to start him again. He was now on

the *qui vive*, yet would not start. He erected his head, showing some neck, narrower than the round head above. His eyes were broad brazen rings around bullets of black. His horns stood quite an inch high, as not before. As I moved around him, he turned his head always toward me, till he looked *directly* behind himself as he sat crosswise on a bough. He behaved as if bewildered and dazzled, gathering all the light he could and ever straining his great eyes toward [you] to make out who you are, but not inclining to fly. I had to lift him again with a stick to make him fly, and then he only rose to a higher perch, where at last he seemed to seek the shelter of a thicker cluster of the sere leaves, partly crouching there. He never appeared so much alarmed as surprised and astonished.

When I first saw him yesterday, he sat on the edge of a hollow hemlock stump about three feet high, at the bottom of a large hemlock, amid the darkness of the evergreens that cloudy day. (It threatened to rain every moment.) At the bottom of the hollow, or eighteen inches beneath him, was a very soft bed of the fine green moss (hypnum) which grows on the bank close by, probably his own bed. It had been recently put there.

When I moved him in his cage he would cling to the perch, though it was in a perpendicular position, one foot above another, suggesting his habit of clinging to and climbing the inside of hollow trees. I do not remember any perpendicular line in his eyes, as in those of the cat.

I see many aphides very thick and long-tailed on the alders. Soapwort gentian and pasture thistle still. There are many fresh election-cake toadstools amid the pitch pines there, and also very regular higher hemispherical ones with a regularly warted or peppered surface.

As I was passing Merrick's pasture, I saw and counted about a hundred crows advancing in a great rambling flock from the southeast and crossing the river on high, and cawing.

There is a wild apple on the hill which has to me a peculiarly pleasant bitter tang, not perceived till it is three quarters tasted. It remains on the tongue. As you cut it, it smells exactly like a squash-bug. I like its very acerbity. It is a sort of triumph to eat and like it, an ovation. In the fields alone are the sours and bitters of nature appreciated; just as the woodchopper eats his meal in a sunny glade in middle of a winter day, with contentment, in a degree of cold which, experienced in the house, would make the student miserable, — basks in a sunny ray and dreams of summer, in a degree of cold which, felt in a chamber, would make a student wretched. They who are abroad at work are not cold; it is they who sit shivering in houses. As with cold and heat, so with sweet and sour. This natural raciness, sours and bitters, etc., which the diseased palate refuses, are the true casters and condiments. What is sour in the house a bracing walk makes sweet. Let your condiments be in the condition of your senses. Apples which the farmer neglects and leaves out as unsalable, and unpalatable to those

who frequent the markets, are choicest fruit to the walker.[1] When the leaves fall, the whole earth is a cemetery pleasant to walk in. I love to wander and muse over them in their graves, returning to dust again. Here are no lying nor vain epitaphs. The scent of their decay is pleasant to me. I buy no lot in the cemetery which my townsmen have just *consecrated* with a poem and an auction, paying so much for a choice. *Here* is room enough for me.[2] The swamp white oak has a fine, firm, leathery leaf with a silver under side, half of them now turned up. Oaks are now fairly brown; very few still red. Water milkweed discounts.

I have got a load of great hardwood stumps. For sympathy with my neighbors I might about as well live in China. They are to me barbarians, with their committee-works and gregariousness.

Returning, I scare up a blue heron from the bathing-rock this side the Island. It is whitened by its droppings, in great splotches a foot or more wide. He has evidently frequented it to watch for fish there. Also a flock of blackbirds fly eastward over my head from the top of an oak, either red-wings or grackles.

Oct. 30. *Wednesday.* Going to the new cemetery, I see that the scarlet oak leaves have still some brightness; perhaps the latest of the oaks.

[1] [*Excursions*, pp. 311–313; Riv. 382–385.]

[2] [*Excursions*, p. 270; Riv. 331, 332.]

END OF VOLUME VII