

THE UNDERTIME OF THE YEAR.

A CONTINUED CALENDAR.

THE Year Book goes on to say. . . . Long before any calendared announcement of the turn of summer tide, we have unmistakable monitions that the season is growing old. Autumn lies close upon our border, even while the summer goldenrod sways its sceptre over the fields, and from time to time makes incursions into a realm nominally not his own. Waking about dawn, I heard the wind singing at my window an old tune remembered from the other side of the year. Many a disloyal bright leaf I found the same day in the midst of the summer woods. I know that the season is growing old by the fact that a full-plumed dandelion head now strikes me as an anachronism. The middle flowers of the ironweed cymes already show their crimson-purple. It is yet August by the almanac, but already the aster has risen as the floral evening-star of the year. I have just discovered the beauty of the vervain flower; it shows above the grass and sedge in moist pastures, like a thin waving flame of some chemical that burns changeably blue and violet. The large blue lobelia blooms by the water's edge, and seems to strive to lend a complementary foil to the prevailing yellow bloom of the season in its ripening age. I observe that pokeweed loves to come up to comfort the spot where a tree lately stood, just as white clover smooths the cicatrix left by a fire.

If it were required to typify August, I would suggest the month be likened to an oriental merchant, dealer in all manner of incense and perfume. In these still warm nights, the wandering merchant has traffic with woody slashings and thickets where grow blackberry brambles, fireweed and milkweed, and wild

lettuce. Coming straight from these, and gathering a tithe from poppied and lilled gardens, such as the country still loves to cultivate, the merchant brings to town a sachet of rural sweetnesses potent to wake delicious memories. August might be portrayed as swinging a censer in which are burning fragrant leaves and blossoms. Furthermore, the month might be characterized as the Month of Butterflies; for it is at this point in the season that the most splendid specimens of the butterfly tribe make their appearance. The white and yellow rovers are everywhere present, — the butterfly commonalty. Here and there is seen a creature of such brilliant dyes, texture so exquisite, as to suggest that it could scarcely have had an earthly origin. What spirit clothes itself in the jetty darkness of night, relieved only by the patch of bright daytime azure at the base of its wings? One with colors of fire or of sunset I saw, hovering about the dusty sidewalk in a sort of fatuous fascination; I could have caught it easily, so absorbed was the foolish insect. Another, vivid as an autumn leaf and as helpless a voyager, was seen floating down the stream. A butterfly might be said to be a winged scroll of mystic picture-writing. There is one point of likeness to the bird: a butterfly has plumage, but all of down or feathery dust instead of true feathers.

With the white and yellow butterflies, everywhere flickering in this still sunshiny world, go their botanic counterparts, the white thistle-balls, luminous, slowly drifting, like some kind of large diurnal firefly "with white fire laden." These rise at the least whisper of the air from many a sleepy, oblivious field mistily brushed over with *thistle-down*

soft and fine as the wool of the lambs in spring born in the rough pasture. . . .

As if anticipating the deciduous time and fashion of the leaves, certain myriads of the insect world shed the corporeal habit that was theirs. So was it with the legionary "Canada soldiers," as our Lake-dwellers term the gauzy troops that the wind blows from the water-side, and that in due time leave their old tenements drifting about the beach sands, or even clinging to window pane and casement of the near houses. Voiceless, noiseless, they came and went; but if they had possessed a voice, their chorus might have run somewhat as follows, —

Room for our myrmidons,
Heirs of a day —
We the ephemerids
Claim our brief sway,
As from the summer wave
Spring we away!
Art thou our birth-fellow, —
Heir of a day ?

There on the margin sand,
Lighter than snow,
See how our former selves
Fluttering go
What we once tenanted
No more we know!
Art thou our changeling-mate,
Dost thou not so ?

Air is our heritage,
Our realm is Now ;
Joy of the far future
Fates disallow ;
When comes the evening,
Stricken we bow, —
We the ephemerids ; —
Where goest thou ?

As we sat on the beach in the faint light of the early morning, for living sounds we had the dreamful long-drawn note "pee-a-wee," and the cry of "witches here! witches here!" from the Maryland yellowthroat. There were also some orchestral tunings from the frogs, — sounds like those produced by sonorous strings, as of the bassviol, picked with leisurely distinctness. The land was dim and dark as yet. The

little waves as they fell on the shore seemed to make a shadow, the only variation in tint from the uniform delicate grayness of sky and water. Both were of the same solution of ethereal pearl. The water looked as though it might have oozed slowly out of some skyey fountain; indeed, there was one point in the outline of the Lake where so interblended were the two elements as to suggest that therethrough had been poured the misty expanse before us.

All day some spirit of utter peace has walked the waters, leaving, to witness of its passing, smooth grayish pathways stretching east and west. The Lake at last became another sky, and whatever sailed thereon an inter-celestial voyager. This undersky reminded us of the real heaven as seen sometimes in spring, — glimpses of blue between long, horizontal mist-gray clouds. The gently breaking wave, with its fluted border, almost seemed to belong to the shore rather than to the outlying water. On a hot day, with no other show of foam than this crisp, waved line following the margin of the sand, one might fancy that the Lake boiled and bubbled at its confines, just as when some boiling liquid washes against the heated sides of the vessel that contains it. In the dazzling afternoon sunshine, the wave as it runs along the sand seems like a long, keen, tapering knife-blade on which the light leaps and flashes fitfully. Or, it is suggested that a rocket, glittering-white in its deflagration, is shot horizontally through the water.

A white boat skimming over the smooth water made itself beautiful in our eyes. With its softly dipping oars of the same color, it looked as might some rare specimen of aquatic flower, chalice and lily-shaped. The two dipping oars appeared like mobile filaments instinctively thrust out from the heart of the floating blossom.

Absolutely still water — that of a slow stream or glassy pool — sometimes

presents to the eye the appearance of having two surfaces: first, the actual surface, defined by the ruffling stir of insects or the slight breathing of the air, — this, duly horizontal; then, as through the transparent medium of the actual surface, appears another plane which is perpendicular, opaque, etched with the inverted image of the bank or margin. This pictured under surface, with its vertically smoothed shadows of reeds, trees, and remoter landscape, by a very light touch of imagination becomes a watered silk curtain or fine flowing tapestry, let fall straight downward from the water's edge into an airy room in nether space.

CRYSTALS IN CLAY.

Our hills no lustrous ore conceal,
No diamond beds our rivers lave,
And never yet did diver steal
Aught precious from the Lake's blue wave.

Yet, searcher by the crumbling shore,
Thou hast divined (and made thy prize)
What the rough argil held in store,
And hid so well from other eyes, —

Crystals as lucent as the spars
Wrought by the spirit of the cold,
Forging beneath the lamping stars
Shapes wonderful and manifold!

The ruins of a leafy frieze,
That elfin mansionry once decked,
Lie unregarded here — yet these
Betray a master architect.

To thee alone these banks of clay,
Herbless, and cracked with summer drought,
Of their sole treasure make display, —
Crystals, to match thy crystal thought!

Yet can thine utmost lore divine
How long earth's hidden streams were tasked,
To gather here these fragments fine,
Thou findest in the clay unmasked?

With the pronounced turning of the year towards autumn, how tremulous and palpitant is the quality of all the sounds in nature, — the flute-stop of the vast organ. The goldfinches now take up their sweet, broken, pensive twitterings

as they alight for seeds upon the drooping head of that bleak saint who wears an aureole, — the sunflower. The young birds, with wide open mouths and fluttering wings, beg to be fed by their parents; and the whole brood, young and old, converse in a language which, among birds, may represent the Italian, for they lisp, with soft but plaintive persistence, "chee vee! chee vee!" from morning until night. Incessantly, at night, the tree-crickets impart to the air an aspen-like quivering (if sound could be seen). One of these insects, from some coign of vantage in my room, has nightly lent a measured accompaniment to my dreams; at least this was the last sound heard before sleep intervened. Its muses never nod, its song never tires. Fleshless and bloodless as Anacreon's grasshopper (like ivory tinted by a moonbeam, in its pallid array), it has not found the day long enough to tell its happiness in, but it must consume the night, too. How many times in the twenty-four hours does it bring together those dry, rosined wings? How many of its trim, monosyllabic notes does it thus utter? Under the tone sound, I hear a labored, mechanical rasp which at a little distance would not be noticeable. After a week of unwearied nocturnes, it has at last "hung up the fiddle and the bow," and yielded to inevitable fate; and last night I heard only the remoter chorusing of its surviving fellows, indistinctly but pleasingly borne to the ear, like the music of some very long-gone time, — tune mainly forgotten.

The jugglery of honey-making! The sweet merchant takes not alone what the flowers pay in consideration for the bee's pollen-scattering service, but wherever any fruit with dulcet juices has been broached, as a grape dropped from the cluster and bleeding unfermented wine, and wherever the provident housekeeper converts the fruits of the season into jelly or preserves, there hums the bee,

a shrewd economist; as though the season had not been long enough, nor nature flush enough with nectareous supplies in the flowers she has furnished, but that picking and stealing in all these surreptitious ways should be needful! How does the honey taste which is made from such contraband material? All suffers a bee change into something rich and strange.

A farmer tells me that his bees, having a field of buckwheat convenient to the hive, work there continually during the morning hours until about eleven o'clock, after which time, for the rest of the day, the flowery field is deserted by the industrious company. Has this desertion anything to do with the failing of the honey supply? Apparently the nectar springs become exhausted after a certain period, and the bees must wait until they again flow. Other questions occur: Whether the dew has any agency in the matter, — the honey failing to be secreted as the dew dries? Whether flowers secrete more nectar than they would if not continually drained by the bees? Whether, in the course of a season, the balance has been kept, supply regulated by demand, the depletions being made good by a honey-secreting instinct in the flower?

Marcrescent, — a term used in botanical descriptions to designate the habit some flowers have of withering and clinging to the stem; in contradistinction to the flowers that wither and fall. How often is the flower of human life marcescent, tenacious of its old estate when the blooming-time is past. Better, how much, to wither and fall than to wither and cling! Wise are they who, marking the deciduous turn of the season, softly shed the desires and exactions suitable to youth, but not to the waning year; remembering that

"Quiet coves
The soul has in its autumn."

Some one complained in my hearing

the other day, "I hate to be alone." To which the reply was, "But you are never alone when you think." "But I hate to think," pursued the repining one. I could but sympathize, — could but feel the touch of nature implied in this protest. Now, the soul of the artist, of the mechanician in Fancy's wonder-world, often enough finds it purgatory to be alone. "Thoughts for company," at the best, are indifferent convivals, and commend themselves most when they most revivify some passage we have had with our talking, laughing, mourning, tragic-humorous kind. It requires more than mere thrasonic egotism to resolve to withdraw from social delights, and to announce, with the old Elizabethan, —

"Leave me, there's something come into my thought

That must and shall be sung high and aloof!" Yet how necessary is a measure of solitude to the ideal workman. Plutarch speaks of a tenth muse called Tacita, which is but to hint that much silence goes, of necessity, before the speech we qualify as "golden." This Tacita had, perhaps, her own temple inviolable and inaccessible to the unshrived and uninitiated.

The recreant saw, and hastened through the wood.

Cool ivies roofed it, and deep trees around it stood;

Wide open lay the door, — a space of light
Through which still-breathing incense winged its flight.

Thence music flowed, — such full, commingled sound

It seemed all music there its fountain found.
The recreant heard, and thirsted toward that well;

Across his path was laid a sudden spell!
And then, the temple's hidden choir began austere:

"Spirit unruled, unquiet, come not near!
Here, where Song dwells and has her constant seat,

Came never any save true pilgrim feet;
But thou dost bring the turmoil of the crowd,

Thorn-sharp regrets and mid-world echoes loud.

Long must thou tarry in this sacred wood,
 Long feed upon sweet solitary food,
 Long listen to thy teachers, and be mute:
 Then shalt thou be as is the docile flute,
 And, blown upon by the supernal Breath,
 Shalt sing of Life and Love and Time and
 Death."

In these shimmering, sun-and-mist enchanted mornings, I see illustrated the old myth of Apollo the quoit-player. I do not see Hyacinth, the youth beloved and slain by an inadvertent cast, but I do see the quoits, — innumerable shining disks vibrating in air; glancing gold or silver as the breeze and sun dispose them. Looking again, I see that the orb-weaving spider has been at work, hanging countless webs among the bushes; but the threads which attach them to branch or twig are invisible. I do not remember when, before, I have seen such perfect and durable specimens of Arachne's craftsmanship. The eye grows half giddy examining closely the concentric lines of such a web: the pattern seems capable of being pursued to an indefinite extent, until its misty screen shall cover the earth and sky. When such a subtle piece of mechanism becomes tattered and raveled, it then acquires some such value to the eye as a choice bit of old lace might have when its threads become too tender to allow of handling. As for those webs which are commonly spread upon grass and stubble, as they are lifted slightly by the wind, undulating gently with its motion, — I see in them bits of woven stuff, as it might appear floating from the loom, before suffering the shears.

If there is not, there might be, a vesper-spider. Walking at dusk between the trees, one continually takes across the face and hands the silken, clinging webs of the spider whose task appears to begin at evening, about dew-fall. Any path, however public and traveled, is thus declared barred and abandoned, and, feeling the stress of these soft filaments, it is easy to believe one's self

walking through enchanted ground. I draw a fairy ban upon me unawares, yet am not an unwilling nor a displeased captive. My thoughts, correspondingly, are sent under a sort of silken thralldom, — the delicate bondage of the mystery of the evening twilight!

This afternoon the wind arose, and, judging by the appearance of the clouds, a caravan of storms swept through the heavens, though here there were but light showers. Awhile before sunset, the world put on a spring-in-autumn aspect not unusual to this stage of the season. The low sun came out in sudden splendor and touched the wet grass and leaves with diamond magnificence, which the wind, as though fain to demonstrate that these seeming gems were no real brilliants, blew about and scattered widely. A little congeries of these flashing raindrops, collected in one place amidst the grass, hinted that thus might Lamia have looked, sunning her jewels and awaiting the transforming touch of Hermes' wand.

Our occasional mountain in the west was seen to-night; a long slope of bluish-gray cloud, reaching from uttermost south to farthest north, wonderfully lengthening out the perspective between those two points. The mountain was not fixed; but so slow was its upward movement that the eye was bejuggled by its apparent steadfastness. Its top was delicately acuminate, and the faint shading and lighting were such as belong to the true mountain.

There is already an autumnal presence in the clouds, a sombre oceanic grandeur in the long purple waves of evening cloud lying along the east, and for a moment smitten with sunset-red. They have for a background an aerial field of faint rose color, bounded on the horizon side by waves of pale windy green.

AN AUTUMN SUNRISE.

The autumn sun, mounting through morning haze,
Looks forth with haggard face all shorn of rays;
So still the air, so wan the light, it seems
Some harvest moon belated, wrapped in dreams.

The first severe frost of the season.
The first morning in which the early riser
could see his breath,

"Like pious incense from a censor old,"

ascend into the air, and, by that unconscious act, feel himself, for the moment, vowed to a kind of lofty quietism and acquiescence. I mark in my calendar of seasonal changes this date as the Morning of Visible Breath. I might have known also, when I set out on my walk, that I should hear, as I did hear, the haunting, far-up cry of a single killdeer flying over the town. That solitary flight serves both as an autumnal and a vernal signal, since, invariably, each autumn and spring I record the incident. . . .

The season is nearing its second childhood, bland and idle. It persuades one that to let the time carelessly slip through one's fingers is, after all, no serious neglect of opportunity. "I've done with thrift," says yonder sunshiny field covered with gossamer; "how is it with you?" There is less thistle-down afloat since the rain. The pappus has been glued down to the stalk, as it were, and it takes this plumage some time to dry out and become buoyant again. I notice the dry fragrance of the asters along the angles of the rail-fence, — a fragrance suggesting the flavor of brown honey, or that here might be obtained vast supplies of the meal which enters into the making of bread. Already there begins to be some silverrod among the goldenrod: the pluming of the seed starts at the top of the spike, thus corresponding with the order which the flower observed in blooming, — from the top downward.

I see, still, many meadow-larks, and

the grass-finch flits ahead, after his usual fashion, along the rail-fence, leaving as we come up. Those two white tail-feathers look like clerical quills or pens thrust hastily through the plumage, as is the clerical wont to lodge them behind the ear and beneath the hair. Or, perhaps, they are merely ornamental, — a sort of insignia denoting sparrow high caste.

Wherever I look across the pasture, I see a rusty olive back or a red breast. True to robin custom, these birds grow social as the sun lowers. They scatter small notes of affability, pipings of confidence and compliment. I hear the wet clapping of wings. There is a diminutive, clear little lake formed by the recent rain in a dimple of the pasture. Two robins are bathing therein; a third waits his turn, hops near, then retreats, as though the splashing of the others were somewhat too vigorous for his liking; else he requires more room for his ablutions. The bathers fling a fine spray around them as they shake out their wings and trip away, — small body and soul refreshed. Call this time in the season The Little Summer of Robin Redbreast.

I find the delicate faces of the daisy fleabane dwindled to a fourth of their usual size; one might almost have taken them for a pretty starwort or chickweed. The dwarfing of flowers as the season grows old (just as in climbing a mountain, and perhaps for the same reason of cooler temperature) is worth noting. Perhaps one could acquire the trick of telling the exact age of the season, to a day, by mere inspection of the flowers in this scale of decreasing magnitude.

The sun sinks so rapidly at last that the watcher has an impression he is glad to go; as if he looked upon felicity far below the round of the earth, and hastened thither. An etherealized evening, when the sun, shining through a transient gap in the clouds, lends an effect

rather of moonlight, in the white, flickering, half-mournful, half-humorous play of beam and shaft. It is a wistful radiance as of Day's final leave-taking,—as though there were to be no more to-morrows, since the fire of heaven is flickering out before the gaze of mortals. Such a day, with such a closing, in memory wears the nimbus, and is reckoned among the galaxy of the blessed. . . .

AN AUTUMN SUNSET.

What wildfire runs about the stooping sheaves,
Climbs up the hill and dips in fervid bath
The tender promise of the aftermath,
And fans to redder flame the frost-bright leaves
On forest bough and path?

What liquid amber overlays the stream,
And paints the quick, dark swallows, as they
dart
Through windless heaven, gathering to depart,
And gilds the web and floating notes that seem
A crowd in airy mart?

What flame has lit a lamp in window-panes
That westward look, and poured such glamour
down
Upon the roofs and gables of the town,
That now they stand in pomp of Moorish fanes
And towers of old renown?

The distant woods at last take on the regalia of autumn, and begin to stand much nearer in the perspective, by virtue of their warmer coloring. Close at hand, the leaves crackle and rustle under the wind, as though a crisping fire, instead of the season's long, slow heat, were "doing them brown."

Is the color of water somewhat changed from its summertime tinting? A little bluer in the shadows, I fancy it has become. How like a continuous flock, with twinkling, even-paced feet, the ripples draw around that bend of the bank, like a flock of sheep coming through a little pass or defile. And who drives this silver-footed flock, carefully "shepherding her bright fountains"? The voice of the water takes the tone of lulling tranquillity in which the autumn steps our acquiescent

senses; and sound and sight are colored by the same soothing medium.

It is a day on the sunny south side of October, reviving insect life and its pleasures. White and yellow butterflies rove along the grass, and grasshoppers and crickets slip through its warm dry blades with a summer leisureliness. A large fly rippled past just now, humming its recollections of midsummer; the tune might have been that of the old song,

"Joys that we 've tasted
May sometimes return."

Ruthless disturber of the peace was I! A mullein looked so warm and comfortable, I thought it would be pleasant to feel a leaf in my hand, so stooped and plucked one. Out flew a bumblebee, who, it seems, had the same opinion as to the mullein leaf's softness and warmth, for he was curled up in its bed of velvet, probably for a quiet afternoon doze; certainly, there was no flower to tempt him there.

In the next field the corn-shocks stand in stately ranks, with the vagrant vines of the pumpkin interspersed. One big golden globe has slipped its agricultural moorings, and gone to lead an aquatic life in the pool. The pumpkin, with its festoon of vine, makes a graceful and native looking water-plant, intimating that there is, or should be, some paludal branch of the gourd family. Into the pool the stone-crops wade, making a fleck of rich ochre color in that quarter. The bitter-nut tree, just behind me, from time to time drops a nut, to signify, apparently, that its hamadryad is friendly, and that by this repeated gentle sound she would remind me of her presence. . . .

Philosophy permits and encourages us to extract pleasure from little things, but not pain. We are to taste vividly all the delights that Nature affords in the humblest detail of a landscape, in the sight of bird, or flower, or leaf; to have a keen sense of all small acts of graciousness and kindness on the part of our

fellow-creatures, while we are to let pass all discomforts and discourtesies from whatever source. In this case, it is a good rule which does not work both ways. The rule is based upon the principle that we are bound by all lawful means to quiet, reassure, and enrich the soul, and to avoid, as much as possible, anything that would fret or lacerate the tender inmate and ruler. The indwelling good genius says, circumspectly and out of experience, "*These little things shall be for my gain and happiness, therefore, I give them welcome; these other little things, which are ill, I will prevent from doing me harm by closing my doors against them, nor will I parley long enough with them even to take the impression of their inauspicious faces.*" It is only in the brave Gallic land of youth that we can afford to be as "sad as night from very wantonness." One would better learn by heart the exorcising and objuratory strains of L'Allegro, to use whenever approached by emissaries from the realm of "low spirits," missioned to steal vigor and courage from one's thoughts.

When I but lightly deemed of Life,
(Ah, youth when I but dreamed of Life!)
I questioned all, in sophist pride,
And much affirmed — still more denied!
Then Melancholy was my mate,
With whom I sat above the gate,
And drove away who sought to bring
Forgetful balm to Fortune's sting, —
Contemned the wiser kind and gay,
And gloomed apart on holiday.

Now I so deeply deem of Life,
(Forbid to know the scheme of Life!),
I dare not, for heart-heaviness,
Mine unregarded questions press;
Nor sit I now above the gate
With her who was my besom-mate.
Instead, the portal throwing wide,
I bid come in from every side
All who in kindly simple way,
Whene'er Fate wills, keep holiday.

In October the *leaves* bloom. As the light wind plucks them from the bough, fast strewing the yards and

streets, the children stoop to gather the brightest as they might gather flowers in the fields or woods.

The day being sober-colored, the trees have a good foil upon which to display their rich foliage. Three small maples, in a row yonder, have arranged, apparently, an exhibition of mutual advantage to their contrasting colors; the first is a warm yellow, the next, mahogany, and the third a nameless shade of crimson. The red oak on the hillside wears a splendid parti-colored suit of green and maroon. I notice that the red color comes on the margins of the leaf first, and that the veins and midrib are last to take such tinting. The light green leaves of a young and thrifty grapevine have judiciously scattered themselves over a groundwork of scarlet Virginia creeper. These effects seem as though studied by an invisible colorist and designer, to give pleasure to whatever eye may care to note them.

As we came through the woods in the late afternoon, the light that fell between the trunks and the thinning branches was like the wavering illumination from a torch or a lamp, falling in flecks and bars through an open door. The sacred worshipful stillness of the oak and beech woods is not to be forgotten. I thought to hear at last the breath and pulse of Nature's self, where no other motion or sound was. But all was in abeyance, held by the mystic trance or retirement of the hour. The rich umber and rose-wood colors of that autumnal forest, in the mellow light and still air gave the semblance of a carven frieze, whose background was the depths of the woods themselves. The browns of the foliage and the purple of the evening air seemed about to be blended in fine solution.

With the odor that comes from the fallen leaves is borne the impression that if I should search among them I might find maple-nuts, so individualized is this

tree among its neighbors, so savorily pungent and pervading the fragrance of its autumnal breath. Its foliage strews thickly the road, hiding the wheel traces. The streets seem like sylvan lanes, which no secular travel has ever profaned, and there appears no good reason why the houses should face in one direction rather than in the other. So, once in the year, at least, Nature takes possession of the town, and makes its ways a gentle wilder-ness. At night the children burn the leaves along the street side. As I watch the swiftly consuming heap, the leaves show like scraps of fire, glow for a moment in their original outlines, and then wither into ashes. The flame strikes me as particularly clear and beautiful,—a precious fuel worthy to burn as incense in the last honors paid to the ripe year. This glow of the maple leaves in burning might be reckoned as only a last flash in the progressive series of autumnal coloring; as though they burned spontaneously and not through the application of fire. The smoke blues the twilight, and lends the obscurity of some vespertine religious rite.

From moon to moon, most faithfully is the tally of the year and its changes kept, to those who mark the record on the page of night. From the light of the summer moon, so mellow, refined, and fancy-stirring flows the fabric of much romance dear to the poets. At any time under those enchanted beams might Cynthia have been looked for to stoop from the orb and lift Endymion into the heavens. Up comes the September full moon, red-faced, flushed with the feasting and the wine of the season. A glow precedes her in the smoky east, a hint of dull carmine,—the dark flush of a swarthy cheek;—for the moon, as well as the sun, would have us recognize the dawn. On the burning leafage of October the moon sprinkles “cool patience;” throws the deep reds into indistinguishable shadow and transforms

the orange and yellow of other foliage into a pale illuminating light, making the trees thus tinted stand forth in dim and misty beauty,—the sainthood or apotheosis of a tree. The first full moon of the unleaved year pours its flooding light upon places surprised to find themselves revealed once more to the gaze of heaven. We seem, looking forth upon the full tide of this splendor, to be dwelling in the inside of a silver sphere; so does the moon’s light wrap us around with the shining sky filled with her presence. Sometimes the heavens flecked with white clouds, great and small, glittering wonderfully, present the same appearance as the “spotty orb” herself, only that we see the concave instead of the convex of the sphere. The language of the moon to the earth might be, “Lend me your shadow, and I will lend you my light. Be dark and humbly ignorant, and I will throw divine illumination in upon you!”

O Year, that dreamest of thy morning-time,
The heavens humor thee with cloudless blue,
And earth sends up the grass blade, soft and
new,

To bring thee back the pleasings of thy prime.
Ah, gentle pity! now the barbéd rime
That all night long the elfin archers threw,
Is wept away in quick repentant dew,
That to its native sky makes haste to climb.
Oh listen, listen! for the rapturous air
Tells thee the bluebird hope of spring yet
stays,

And for thy sake the redbreast still delays.
When, beckoned to the south, they onward
fare,
From thy stript realm what message shall they
bear

To summer kingdoms crowned with equal
nights and days?

It is spring-in-autumn — one of the masking or equivocal days of Autumn. It might be either April or November. The foliage of the woods, now scant and of a wan reddish hue; that of the apple-trees, the fallow green appearing in early spring; to this, add the formless pale-tinted clouds, the fitful play of wind and showers, and phantom gleams

of the sun,—and the April likeness is complete. The few remaining leaves on the peach-trees, blown by the wind all in one direction, look like so many crescents cut out of gold-foil. The willows that line the banks of the creek at this distance appear to have a yellow-green haze thrown over their brown stems, as though the spring had awakened a thought of new leafage. To still farther add to the ambiguous look of the landscape and the season, the farm lands show, here a checker of russet, in the fallow or the stubble field, there a checker of green, where the autumn wheat comes on apace.

The king of Thule in the night came down
And laid a stealthy siege to field and town;
In ashes gray the Autumn's flame expired;
The Indian Summer to his lodge retired,
Or else in snow-shoes skimmed along the
waste,
While whistling winds the dead-leaf covies
chased.

The morning came in with the "white glove." Not that delicate snowflake which suggests shredded lamb's wool, not stars and wheels from the heavens of arabesque, but large, crude kernels, like rice, or some other cereal, well swollen and ready for the table; small snowballs such as perhaps the sky-elves love to toss. This snow came in showers rustling,—a sound as dry as the fitful stirrings of the crisp leaves, the upper surfaces of which are powdered, making them look as though smitten by a cold, white light. This first snow affects one as a touch of cruelty. One shivers both physically and in the imagination, and feels an exaggerated sympathy with nature, with the trees and plants in their transitional state, not yet, as it seems

wholly reconciled to the approaching rigor of winter.

When the sun shines, we discover that November is not less graced than other months of the later summer and autumn. The sky is ample, and reaches around us visibly, the trees having taken down their embroidered screens; and the leaves are still sunny along the ground. They follow all the little creases and ridges of a hillside, the lines of color which they thus produce suggesting that the hillside is alive with a circulation of amber-colored veins. Many a tree, having softly and leisurely disrobed, stands amid a mat of cloth-of-gold or a rug of blended oriental colors. Where the bright leaves have fallen into the water, they lie on the bed of the stream and send forth a sheen such as plates of gold or thin laminæ of precious gems might yield, cut in the shapes of leaves and rendered more brilliant by a watery bath.

I was in error. The woods and the fields are resigned. "Let come what will" (they now say to me), "we are ready. We have our comforts deeper than the frost can pry, and the storms can never blow in so far as that our hearts shall grow faint, or our musing spirits wake to repining." I wish to understand further the nature of their content, that I may, if possible, share it, for it seems, indeed, not indifference, not a benumbing of vitality, but the impulse of an intenser life drawing back towards its sources.

"Shed no tear, oh, shed no tear,
The flower will bloom another year;
Weep no more, oh, weep no more,
Young buds sleep at the root's white core."

Edith M. Thomas.